

U . N . E . S . C . O .

# MUSEUMS & DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES



Embajada Alemana  
Ciudad de México



Mexico  
Office  
Oficina  
en México

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura





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*Working Paper*

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Printed in Mexico.





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# MUSEUMS & DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES

NURIA SANZ  
EDITOR



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## I. Prefaces

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## I. Prefacios



### **Viktor Elbling**

Embajador de la República Federal de Alemania en México

El diálogo de igual a igual entre las culturas del mundo es una cuestión de vital importancia para el futuro del globo. ¿Cómo podemos resaltar los extraordinarios paralelos, es decir, la universalidad de las formas de expresión culturales, y al mismo tiempo respetar su evidente diversidad y canalizarla hacia un debate fructífero? ¿Qué papel pueden desempeñar en ello los museos como espacios de encuentro, comunicación y difusión de conocimiento?

Estas cuestiones fueron el foco de atención del taller de trabajo que la Embajada de Alemania, el Instituto Goethe y la Oficina de la UNESCO en México realizaron conjuntamente el 15 de junio de 2017 en la Ciudad de México en el marco del Año de Alemania en México. Destacados expertos internacionales aportaron sus visiones acerca de cómo se debería seguir desarrollando la idea del museo como lugar para ese diálogo innovador entre las culturas, así como para la cohesión social y el desarrollo sostenible. Esto teniendo en cuenta el actual proyecto de construcción del Foro Humboldt en Berlín, en cuyo concepto confluyen varios de estos alcances.

El Foro Humboldt será inaugurado en otoño de 2019, a tiempo para la celebración del 250 aniversario del natalicio de Alexander von Humboldt. Una de las tareas centrales del Foro será exponer —y no sólo en el sentido tradicional— objetos de arte procedentes de culturas no europeas. Se trata de reemplazar una visión estática por un diálogo dinámico entre y con sus sociedades de origen, así como entre las piezas exhibidas y los visitantes: un diálogo que demuestre que la creación artística de cada continente y cada época debe considerarse como una aportación del mismo valor a la historia y la cultura de la humanidad. Se cuenta con la intención de que los objetos que formen parte de las colecciones de los museos alemanes sean exhibidos con información sobre su origen, para que los espectadores no sólo puedan entender mejor la estética y el mensaje de la obra, sino también el contexto histórico de su creación, su origen y su valor.

México ocupará un lugar muy especial en el Foro Humboldt: en el acervo de las colecciones de la Fundación Patrimonio Cultural Prusiano, que antes se exponía en Berlín Dahlem, hay alrededor de 50 mil objetos de la época prehispánica,



probablemente la colección más importante fuera de México. Los objetos incluyen desde sistemas gráficos de comunicación mesoamericanos a objetos de culto hasta llegar al “Lienzo Seler II” y a la estatua de una diosa de la fertilidad que Humboldt trasladó desde México a Berlín. Desde luego, es evidente que los viajes y las investigaciones de Humboldt siguen produciendo formas de cooperación aún después de más de 200 años, van a permitir que el reconstruido antiguo Palacio de Berlín se convierta en el lugar de encuentro de la creación artística y cultural de otros continentes.

El año 2019 no sólo marca el 250 aniversario del natalicio de Alexander von Humboldt, sino también el 215 aniversario de su llegada a México. Su estancia aquí despertó la curiosidad de Europa por el Nuevo Mundo y, sobre todo, por México, sus culturas, su historia, geografía y botánica. El viaje de investigación de un año, de Acapulco a Veracruz, pasando por la Ciudad de México, marcó de forma decisiva las relaciones entre Alemania y México. No es casualidad que México adquiriera un lugar muy importante en el nuevo Foro Humboldt ubicado en el corazón de la capital alemana.

Podemos suponer que Alexander von Humboldt habría aprobado la interacción entre el Foro nombrado en su honor y los museos “clásicos” de la Isla de los Museos, declarada Patrimonio de la Humanidad de la UNESCO en 1999. Como representante de un pensamiento que sobrepasa los límites de su país de origen, Humboldt encarna como ningún otro el diálogo respetuoso e igualitario entre las culturas. Los inicios de este diálogo se caracterizaron en su momento por los primeros encuentros entre los exploradores europeos y el arte de los otros continentes. En el futuro próximo, este diálogo tendrá lugar en el Foro Humboldt. Los objetos exhibidos no cuentan una única historia de nuestro mundo, sino muchas.

Quiero agradecer de manera especial al Instituto Goethe en México y a su director, Rudolf de Baey, a la Oficina de la UNESCO en México y a su directora, Nuria Sanz, así como a sus respectivos equipos, por el incansable compromiso en la preparación e implementación de este importante programa de colaboración.





Reunión  
Internacional  
sobre museos,  
antropología  
y diálogo  
entre culturas,  
a propósito  
del Humboldt  
Forum







### Nuria Sanz

Directora y Representante de la Oficina de la UNESCO en México

la vida no es de nadie, todos somos  
la vida —pan de sol para los otros,  
los otros todos que nosotros somos—,  
soy otro cuando soy, los actos míos  
son más míos si son también de todos,  
para que pueda ser he de ser otro,  
salir de mí, buscarme entre los otros,  
los otros que no son si yo no existo,  
los otros que me dan plena existencia,  
no soy, no hay yo, siempre somos nosotros [...]

Extracto del poema *Piedra de sol*  
Octavio Paz, México, 1957

No hay un concepto más recurrente y poderoso para caracterizar el trabajo de la UNESCO que el de *diversidad cultural*. Pero la concepción teórica y su traducción en la práctica han variado significativamente a lo largo de más de siete décadas de historia de nuestra institución. Desde sus inicios, la reflexión internacional sobre museos ha encontrado en el seno de nuestra institución una plataforma jurídica y científica de carácter mundial que, con el correr del tiempo, ha ido generando una doctrina multilateral sobre el significado y mandato de estas instituciones ante el reto de salvaguardar la diversidad de las culturas del mundo. Ahora bien, en los últimos 40 años el número de museos se ha duplicado en el mundo y la comunidad internacional ha desarrollado un conjunto de iniciativas, a fin de responder sobre cómo esa proliferación de infraestructuras ha contribuido a dicha causa. En el intento de sistematizar las formas de respuesta a ese interrogante y de generar nuevas proposiciones que guíen el trabajo de la cooperación, en diciembre de 2015 la UNESCO propone una nueva *Recomendación relativa a la protección y promoción de los museos y colecciones, su diversidad y su función en la sociedad*, ello a pocos meses de que 193 países adoptaran la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas.

Dicha Agenda no debiera ser entendida como otra gran narrativa de intención totalizadora, sino como instrumento sensible y pertinente al respeto a las diferentes formas de concebir el desarrollo y que entiende esa pluralidad como su garante. En ese



Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode-Museum. © Nuria Sanz





*Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode-Museum.*  
© Nuria Sanz

sentido, el museo se convierte en un escenario privilegiado del ejercicio antropológico, un lugar donde exigir y disfrutar la diversidad y, con ello, el lugar desde donde pluralizar los horizontes epistemológicos teóricos, metodológicos y los políticos de la disciplina.

Con este propósito iniciamos una reflexión polifónica entre instituciones mexicanas e internacionales, a propósito de una de las más significativas apuestas mundiales de renovación museográfica y museológica de colecciones no europeas que puso en marcha del proyecto el Foro Humboldt, en el marco del Año Dual entre México y Alemania. Pusimos en diálogo tradiciones institucionales, disciplinarias y técnicas entre especialistas provenientes de todos los continentes, que en su cotidianidad se enfrentan con la oportunidad/dificultad de generar diálogos constructivos sobre la alteridad.

La Oficina de la UNESCO en México agradece a la Embajada de Alemania en México, al Instituto Goethe, al Instituto de Antropología e Historia de México y a todas las instituciones y personalidades participantes, la generosidad con la que compartieron sus experiencias y también sus dudas e interrogantes a la hora de enfrentar la tarea de poner en práctica esta nueva Recomendación de la UNESCO. Creemos que estas páginas dan buena cuenta de lo fructífero que fue el intercambio y colocan este volumen en una posición aventajada y pionera en la formulación de renovadas políticas culturales a favor del diálogo entre diversidades.

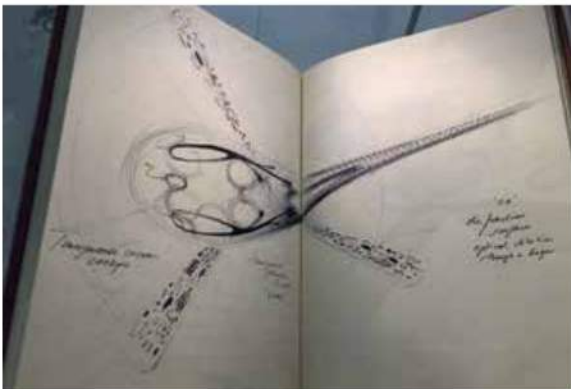
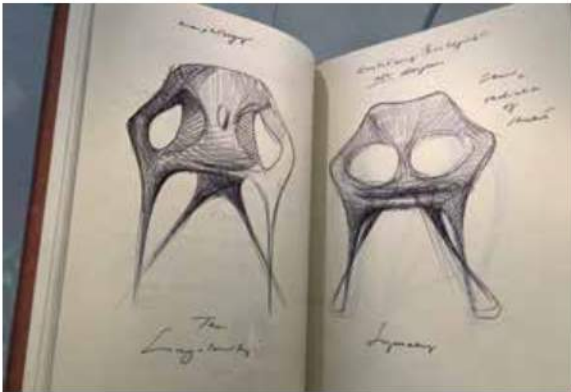


*Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode-Museum. © Nuria Sanz.*



*Representaciones indígenas realizadas por artistas contemporáneos. Museo de las Culturas del Norte conocido como Centro Cultural Paquimé; es un museo de sitio localizado en la Zona Arqueológica de Paquimé, declarada Patrimonio de la Humanidad por la UNESCO. © Eduardo Gamboa*





Convergence, Exhibition by Ross Lovegrove, Centre George Pompidu, Paris 2017. © Nuria Sanz



### **Diego Prieto**

Director General del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH)

Hace medio siglo, George Stocking hizo notar que las antropologías centrales habían contribuido de manera decisiva a la creación de imperios, mientras que las antropologías periféricas habían abonado el terreno para la construcción de naciones. Tal como fueron concebidos a lo largo del siglo XIX, los museos prolongaron durante décadas esa tendencia inicial, al grado de convertirse en los recintos culturales del colonialismo o del nacionalismo, cuyos discursos forjaron el perfil de las naciones durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. De ahí que en los países periféricos, donde la herencia colonial había dejado una huella imborrable, los museos jugaran

inicialmente el papel de recintos en que se reflejaba la identidad nacional, generalmente asociada a la idea de un patrimonio cultural uniforme, expresión de una visión unicultural y monocroma de la nación, integrando objetos de distinta procedencia, pero que se articulaban en un mismo relato histórico y en un solo universo simbólico.

Las colecciones museográficas no fueron en este sentido distintas a los componentes centrales del patrimonio monumental, que bajo la forma de sitios arqueológicos, ciudades históricas y edificaciones relevantes, contribuyeron a forjar la identidad de numerosas naciones. Hasta la década de los setenta del siglo XX, las grandes convenciones de la UNESCO definieron su campo de aplicación, de acuerdo con una concepción del patrimonio cultural constreñida esencialmente a su dimensión monumental. Con los años, sin embargo, tanto la UNESCO como sus Países Miembros entendieron que la noción de cultura comprendía diversos aspectos simbólicos, rituales y cognitivos de carácter inmaterial, y desde mediados de los años setenta reemplazaron paulatinamente la visión monumental del patrimonio cultural, en beneficio de una concepción más antropológica, integral y diversificada de la cultura.

En 1972, durante la Convención de la UNESCO, se introduce por primera vez una reflexión que ya flotaba en el ambiente académico y que consistía en concebir a los elementos materiales del patrimonio cultural como soportes de saberes, prácticas y representaciones colectivas que conferían identidad a los pueblos. En lugar de considerar tan sólo los aspectos tangibles u objetuales de la cultura, la estrategia consistió, treinta años después, en proponer una categoría adicional que, bajo el nombre de "patrimonio cultural inmaterial", incluyera los usos, expresiones, conocimientos y representaciones que



tanto los grupos como los individuos reconocieran como parte de su propio patrimonio, promoviendo así el respeto a la diversidad cultural y la creatividad humana.

Dado que los virajes en la noción de cultura afectan directamente los recintos donde ésta se expresa, los museos contemporáneos han asumido el desafío de convertirse en espacios propicios para la pluralidad y el diálogo intercultural. La antigua fascinación por los productos, así como el descuido por los procesos y los agentes sociales que los hacen posibles, llevaba en otros tiempos a valorar en los objetos sólo su dimensión estética y su apego a nociones artísticas considerablemente etnocéntricas, perdiendo de vista frecuentemente el sentido que los actores atribuyen a sus propios actos. Las posibilidades de un diálogo intercultural, en que los museos jueguen un papel relevante, exigen hoy en día una nueva configuración de las exposiciones museográficas, cuyas colecciones no sólo están destinadas a destacar las semejanzas, sino también las diferencias que permiten a una cultura cristalizarse como tal.

Con la afirmación y reconocimiento de la pluralidad cultural, las nociones de democracia, equidad y diversidad se han vuelto sin duda convergentes, lo que obliga a reconsiderar la función de los museos en el marco de las políticas públicas. Estamos convencidos que la aparición de esta obra, sabiamente conducida por Nuria Sanz, habrá de constituir un referente indispensable para ese nuevo horizonte que se perfila en el futuro.

Estoy seguro de que las aportaciones recogidas en este volumen redundarán en beneficio de la investigación que realizan los museos antropológicos. Al ámbito de estos espacios pertenece la inquietud en torno a la exhibición adecuada de objetos etnográficos o las crecientes y cambiantes responsabilidades de la museografía, las formas de representación en el espacio o los desafíos de las viejas colecciones para los nuevos paradigmas y perspectivas de las disciplinas, la apropiación o la resignificación de los objetos museables. Y sin embargo la naturaleza de estas inquietudes atañe a la misión de cualquier museo contemporáneo, esto es, la mejor comunicación con sus públicos, su compromiso con el estudio de sus colecciones y la construcción de nuevos saberes, valores y referentes simbólicos, capaces de enriquecer el universo vital y diverso de la experiencia humana.









II. As a preamble

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II. A modo de  
preámbulo

# QUESTION THE GAZE. MUSEUMS AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE XXI CENTURY

**Nuria Sanz**

Head and Representative of the UNESCO Office in Mexico

In the framework of the Dual Year of Germany and Mexico 2016–2017, the German Embassy in Mexico, the Goethe-Institut Mexiko and the UNESCO Office in Mexico organized an International Meeting on Museums, Anthropology and Dialogue between Cultures, in the spirit of the Humboldt Forum. The meeting took place on 15, 16 and 17 June 2017, at the National Museum of Cultures, in Mexico City.

By way of preamble, in order to finalize and establish the objectives and content of the Meeting, and in close collaboration with Mexican institutions and experts, the organizers held a working session on 9 May 2017. The aim was to generate a reflection on the main topics to be discussed at the International Meeting in June, to incorporate and agree on the topics of major interest to the Mexican authorities and to generate proposals to finalize the agenda of the June event.

The Forum brought together national and international experts in the field of social sciences, museography and artistic creation, with the aim of generating recommendations that will strengthen the concept of museums as spaces for dialogue between cultures, social cohesion and sustainable development.

## **Explanatory Memorandum**

- Since 1960, UNESCO has elaborated a collection of works on the protection of cultural heritage in the area of museum practice. Recently, the international community adopted a new collaboration instrument between the Member States. On 17 November 2015, the ‘Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society’ was approved.
- As seven UNESCO international cultural conventions have been adopted and ratified, it is important to question ourselves on how we safeguard heritage in public international law and how museums echo the precepts and actions linked to the safeguarding of cultural diversity.



- The Recommendation is, without a doubt, an opportunity to analyze how museums serve as an essential platform to ensure the diversity of cultures and especially the dialogue between them.
- In the past 40 years, the number of museums has doubled around the world, but we have not reflected on how this has contributed to generating respect for the great array of cultural diversity and dialogues between the different forms of cultural creativity. The 55 years of doctrine at the heart of the Organization and the aims of the new recommendation entails the need to question the coupling of museum/diversity in the contemporary world in order to review with it the evolution of anthropological thought and the consequences of its application in terms of museology and museography in the world.
- The National Anthropology Museum and the long and important tradition of anthropological research in the country make this country, indisputably, an extraordinary setting to start a world reflection.
- The Dual Year of Germany and Mexico 2016–2017 constitutes a framework for rethinking a series of world practices, in the spirit of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, because it is unquestionably the most ambitious infrastructure and programme in the world to update the discourse on cultural diversity in museographic code in the 21st century.



The participants can find a guide for the discussion in the formulation of the following questions:

1. How do museums help to complicate cultural perspectives if, to date, all museums define their unique identity as irrefutable?
2. How can museums and the anthropological discipline collaborate to generate other forms of discernment on cultural diversity?
3. How can we engage in culturally dialogue without juxtaposing two ethnographic perspectives?
4. How should we deal with aspects linked to the cultural rights of migrants?
5. How should we highlight the role of cultural mixing, hybridization and cultural interrelationships and reciprocal influences between cultures?
6. How can we move away from historicist discourse and the ethnogenesis of collections?
7. How can museums collaborate in decolonizing history and how can they offer alternative visions of the past?
8. How can museums collaborate in building agreed versions of the importance of collections in a specific contemporary community?
9. How can museums of universal vocation help establish ethics of diversity with supracultural validity?

10. Do the halls of museum institutions today think of themselves as transnational spaces in terms of knowledge?
11. Who are responsible for translating between cultures within museums?
12. How can museums promote dialogue in terms of diversity of richness and how can they avoid relating the intercultural with the notion of disorder?
13. How do anthropology museums currently practice? At a distance? By minority? By subordinate? By another peculiarity?
14. How can museums today practice anthropology that is more transitive and universal?
15. How can we rescue a certain common sense of contemporary humanity?

### **Cultural diversity in discourses and cultural expressions. Collections “of others,” collections as “the others.”**

Diversity does not represent a new paradigm in international law, but has been an ongoing challenge for more than seven decades and the work of seven cultural conventions within UNESCO. Whether because the international community can be understood as an anthropological subject in itself, or because the management of diversity was always considered a guarantee of peace in an unstable equilibrium, diversity has always been a moving target for global cooperation.

The museum as cultural infrastructure par excellence has usually belonged to the category of a facilitator of access to culture, as a threshold that brought learning and the exercise of curiosity closer, as a space to present one's own or others', but in general separating those two categories. The collections, domestic by nature or appropriated by history, spatialized their own narratives. Since the 18th century in Europe, the attempt to escape from everyday life has become widespread ever since the founding of encyclopedic museums. Dominique Vivant Denon, the eye of Napoleon, found accommodation in Paris for foreign legates that automatically went on to swell the universal museum of imperial France. The purpose of these pages is not to return once again to concepts such as pillaging, or the forms of cultural colonialism of the 19th or 20th centuries, or the need to find more successful diplomatic mechanisms for the return of works. It is more about finding reasons, practices and formulations that allow forms of cultural dialogue between pieces, collections and narratives, that go beyond historiography and that become propositions of analysis and facilitators of coexistence between different ways of seeing and being in the world.

Anthropology as a discipline and anthropological collections as a subject of analysis seemed good advisors when it came to underpinning our intention here, and essential to convening the participants, to gathering the group of specialists and to selecting the scenarios for reflection.

We propose to address a series of preliminary themes, namely:



## **Theme 1: Museums and cultural diversity. History and present of the relationship**

- We were interested in discussing the evolution of concepts and practices around the presentation of cultural diversity: the cabinets of curiosities, encyclopedic museums of the 18th century, neoclassicism and otherness of the 19th century, the avant-gardes and the approach to the exotic as inspiration, ethnographic collections and colonialism, the decolonization of curatorial discourse, and approaching the museum as a platform for cultural dialogue in the globalized world.
- We set out to systematize criteria on what might be today's response by museums to civilizational challenges, namely: migration, cultural rights, linguistic diversity, a horizontal dialogue of knowledge.

## **Theme 2: Exhibition design and curating for cultural diversity**

- We wanted to learn about and break down specific practices, exhibitions or curatorial practices that have generated a satisfactory reflection/action in terms of the presentation-analysis-discussion of cultural diversity.
- We also defined a range of useful criteria for exhibiting and reflecting on cultural diversity in contemporary societies.

## **Theme 3: Anthropology in the world. The role of anthropological disciplines in the conceptualization of the contemporary dialogue between cultures**

- We discussed how the discipline of anthropology has guided exhibition design and curatorial criteria for at least a century of museum creation. We focused on the relationship between the anthropologist and the curator, the analysis of identity-based policy programs and discourses on diversity, and on the strategies for thinking about contemporary cultures in dialogue on the basis of everyday cultural practices.
- And all this under the influence of the currents of contemporary anthropological thought and how they can be added to this reflection on museums and cultural diversity.

## **Theme 4: Credibility and cultural appropriation. New anthropologies for old collections.**

- We reflected on the evolution between national museums, or generated by institutional initiatives, and community museums, generated on the basis of their own cultural intention.
- We called on community initiatives that generated collections and their exhibition design discourse, and we questioned how they define their forms of visiting and the type of collective enjoyment that they aim to establish.
- We debated the role of the museum in generating links and collective identities, and how it becomes a space for reflection on historical, social, cultural and scientific issues.

- Similarly, there were plenty of presentations illustrating the practices of reappropriation of ethnographic collections by contemporary indigenous communities and the associated projects on research/conservation and enjoyment.

We commenced our reflection from a conception of a museum committed to the exercise of cultural rights; from forms of visits conceived as an exchange, more horizontal and transitive between sender-receiver; from a conception of a citizenship concerned with understanding the social advantages of diversity; from the need to question the forms of transmission and inter- and/or intra-generational dialogue in museums today; on the need to reflect on how museums contribute to social debate and generate opinions.

We also set about discovering the methodologies of analysis that are used today to deal with the most dialogic forms of diversity, the opportunities that historical collections offer to the construction of history in contemporary contexts, the possibilities of promoting creativity to think about more collective identities, and the meaning of inter-institutional / international cooperation in all this.

We wanted to know how museum institutions built and contributed to making the view more complex than approaching ethnographies, and how they helped to practice an interculturality that became a resource for coexistence, based on the conviction that miscegenation and hybrid culture are also a tradition and, above all, an antidote against the disjunctive versions of the past. We were interested in finding reasons to define an ethics with a supracultural validity.

We also wanted to understand who were the translators among cultures today in terms of museum design and curating, their commitment, their background, their way of conceiving spaces and forms of dialogue and preparing rooms and collections that create conditions of hospitality, which to paraphrase Ricoeur would be something like the professional exercise of generating capacity to accept the foreign in their own language.

We wanted to uncouple binomials: diversity-wealth or interculturality-disorder. From a conception in which the minority is not the subaltern, in the understanding that it is necessary to deterritorialize a certain common sense of humanity and with the conviction that anthropology could help in that attempt to understand that all differences are found in one and the same world, and to verify why the ancient questions of the anthropological discipline remained relevant in our reflection.

We are currently celebrating the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is worth recalling that the main obstacle to its final approval at the end of 1948 was taking into account the notion of culture, and UNESCO played a leading role in this. The notion of culture serves the construction of the individual through relationships with otherness, and the rules that define that relationship are strict: class, kinship, etc.; the social sense is inevitably in tension with individual autonomy, and today we continue to have a need to analyze how differences between individuals are respected within cultures.



Each culture brings together the great themes of our humanity: life, death, status, etc. All cultures provide elements for observation; in response we can think of a disciplinary exercise through museums that is more oriented to a concept of transculturalism, we can imagine a future humanity composed of individuals sensitive to their cultural origins but aligned with each culture, recognizing the contributions of each; this would be an anthropological revolution “against culture,” against the limited conception of approach to the singularities of a (single and different) subject of study. We were interested in going deeper into something like the exercise of a transcultural humanism, a kind of secular anthropology that doesn’t adhere to any particular culture, whose purpose was to respond to questions shared by all cultures, an anthropology committed to more universal forms of what each one is and how each one contributes to a project of humanity. The aim was thus to analyze how museums can also work together with this humanist demand and return human relations to the heart of the discipline of anthropology, as its fundamental subject of focus.

We require this transcultural anthropology in order to think about human mobility and its forms of filiation; we need it in order to rethink the forms of acceleration, ubiquity and instantaneity of the relationship between the individual and the media. It would be a cultural anthropology that, without abandoning its deep analysis of systems of representation, would be more concerned with stories of cultural contact. An anthropology committed to clarifying the confusion between the global and the universal, one that made itself available to analysis from a generic dimension of the human, the universal, which goes by way of the individual, and which is located in the tension between the individual and its cultural system. What is global brings together, blends or negates cultures. What is universal is a value, the opposite of all relativism and essentially the objective of this committed anthropology. We were therefore interested in analyzing how museums fit into and can be a part of this global ethical project, and how they can contribute to this project of a universalist spirit. These pages offer a good account of this investigation.



# INTERROGAR LA MIRADA. EL MUSEO Y LA DISCIPLINA ANTROPOLÓGICA EN EL SIGLO XXI

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En el marco del Año Dual Alemania-México 2016-2017, la Embajada de la República Federal de Alemania en México, el Goethe-Institut Mexiko y la Oficina en México de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO) organizaron una “Reunión Internacional sobre museos, antropología y diálogo entre culturas, a propósito del Humboldt Forum”. La Reunión se llevó a cabo los días 15, 16 y 17 de junio de 2017, en el Museo Nacional de las Culturas, en la Ciudad de México.

A modo de preámbulo, para ultimar el establecimiento de objetivos y contenidos, y en estrecha colaboración con las instituciones y expertos mexicanos, los organizadores se propusieron iniciar con una jornada de trabajo, realizada el día 9 de mayo. La finalidad fue generar una reflexión en torno a los principales temas que se discutieron en la Reunión Internacional de junio, incorporar y consensuar los temas que sean de interés principal de las autoridades mexicanas y generar propuestas para finalizar la agenda de la Reunión de junio.

La jornada de trabajo convocó a expertos nacionales e internacionales del ámbito de las ciencias sociales, la antropología, la museografía y la creación artística, con el objetivo de generar recomendaciones que potencien el concepto de los museos como espacios de diálogo entre las culturas, la cohesión social y el desarrollo sostenible.

## Exposición de motivos

- Desde 1960, la UNESCO ha elaborado un corpus sobre la protección del patrimonio cultural en el ámbito de la práctica museística. Hace sólo algunos meses, la comunidad internacional ha adoptado un nuevo instrumento de colaboración entre los Estados Miembros. El 17 de noviembre de 2015, se aprobó la “Recomendación relativa a la protección y promoción de los museos y colecciones, su diversidad y su función en la sociedad”.
- Una vez adoptadas y ratificadas las siete convenciones internacionales de la UNESCO en materia de Cultura, es importante interrogarse sobre la articulación



entre las formas de salvaguardia patrimonial en el derecho internacional público y sobre la manera en la que los museos se hacen eco de los preceptos y acciones vinculadas a la salvaguarda de la diversidad cultural.

- La Recomendación es sin duda una oportunidad para analizar cómo los museos sirven de plataforma esencial para asegurar la diversidad de las culturas y especialmente el diálogo entre ellas.
- En los últimos 40 años, el número de museos se ha duplicado en el mundo, pero no hemos reflexionado sobre cómo ello ha contribuido a generar respeto por la diversidad en términos de cultura y diálogo entre las diferentes formas en las que se manifiesta la creatividad. Los 55 años de doctrina en el seno de la Organización y los propósitos de la nueva recomendación conllevan la necesidad de interrogarse por el binomio museo/diversidad en el mundo contemporáneo, para con ello poder revisar la evolución del pensamiento antropológico y las consecuencias de su aplicación en términos de museología y museografía en el mundo.
- El Museo Nacional de Antropología en México y la larga tradición y relevancia de la investigación antropológica en el país hacen sin duda de este país un escenario extraordinariamente significativo para abonar a una reflexión mundial.
- El Año Dual Alemania-México constituye un marco propicio para repensar toda una serie de prácticas mundiales a propósito de la construcción del Foro Humboldt en Berlín, pues sin duda se trata de la infraestructura y del programa más ambicioso en el mundo para actualizar el discurso sobre la diversidad cultural en clave museográfica en el siglo XXI.



Los participantes encontraron una guía para la discusión en la articulación de los siguientes interrogantes:

1. ¿Cómo ayuda el museo a complejizar las miradas culturales si hasta ahora cada museo ha definido su identidad singular como algo irrenunciable?
2. ¿Cómo los museos y la disciplina antropológica pueden colaborar generando otras formas de discernimiento sobre la diversidad cultural?
3. ¿Cómo hacer dialogar culturalmente sin que esa práctica sea la de yuxtaponer dos miradas etnográficas?
4. ¿Cómo tratar aspectos ligados a los derechos culturales migrantes?
5. ¿Cómo subrayar el papel del mestizaje, de la hibridación y de las interrelaciones culturales y las influencias recíprocas entre culturas?
6. ¿Cómo salir del discurso historicista y de la etnogénesis de las colecciones?
7. ¿Cómo los museos pueden colaborar a descolonizar la historia y a ofrecer visiones alternativas del pasado?
8. ¿Cómo los museos pueden colaborar a construir versiones consensuadas del significado de las colecciones en una comunidad contemporánea específica?

9. ¿Cómo pueden ayudar los museos de vocación universal a fundamentar una ética de la diversidad con validez supracultural?
10. ¿Las salas de una institución museística se piensan hoy como espacios transnacionales en términos de conocimiento?
11. ¿Quiénes son los que traducen entre las culturas en el seno de los museos?
12. ¿Cómo el museo puede dialogar en términos de diversidad como riqueza y cómo puede evitar relacionarse lo intercultural con la noción de desorden?
13. ¿Cuál es la práctica actual de los museos de antropología?, ¿lo lejano?, ¿lo minoritario?, ¿lo subalterno?, ¿otro tipo de peculiaridad?
14. ¿Cómo el museo puede ejercer hoy una práctica antropológica más transitiva y universal?
15. ¿Cómo rescatar un cierto sentido común de humanidad contemporánea?

### **Diversidad cultural en discursos y expresiones culturales. Colecciones “de otros”, colecciones como “los otros”**

La diversidad no representa un nuevo paradigma del derecho internacional, pero sí ha sido un reto permanente a lo largo de más de siete décadas y del quehacer de siete convenciones culturales en el seno de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO). Bien porque la comunidad internacional puede ser comprendida como un sujeto antropológico en sí, o bien porque la gestión de lo diverso fue siempre considerada como garantía de una paz en equilibrio inestable, la diversidad ha sido siempre un blanco móvil para la cooperación mundial.

El museo como infraestructura cultural por excelencia ha pertenecido normalmente a la categoría de facilitador de acceso a la cultura, como un umbral que acercaba al aprendizaje, al ejercicio de la curiosidad, y también como espacio de presentación de lo propio o de lo ajeno; pero en general esas dos categorías están separadas. Las colecciones, tanto las domésticas por naturaleza como las apropiadas por la historia, espacializaban narrativas desde lo propio. Desde el siglo XVIII en Europa se generaliza el intento de escapar a lo cotidiano a partir de la fundación de los museos de carácter enciclopédico. Dominique Vivant Denon, el ojo de Napoleón, encontraba acomodo en París a legados extranjeros que automáticamente pasaban a engrosar el museo universal de la Francia imperial. El objetivo de estas páginas no es repensar conceptos como “rapiña” o las formas de colonialismo cultural de los siglos XIX o XX, tampoco lo es encontrar mecanismos diplomáticos más exitosos de restitución de obras; de lo que se trata más bien es de hallar razones, prácticas y formulaciones que permitan formas de diálogo cultural entre piezas, colecciones y narrativas, que trasciendan la historiografía y que se conviertan en proposiciones de análisis y facilitadoras de convivencias entre formas diversas de ver-estar en el mundo.

La antropología como disciplina y las colecciones antropológicas como sujeto de análisis nos parecieron buenas consejeras a la hora de dar solidez a nuestro propósito, y esenciales



para convocar a los participantes, para reunir al grupo de especialistas y para elegir los escenarios de reflexión. Así, nos planteamos tratar una serie de temas preliminares, a saber:

### Tema 1: Museos y diversidad cultural. Historia y contemporaneidad de la relación

- Nos interesaba debatir sobre la evolución de conceptos y prácticas en torno a la presentación de la diversidad cultural: los gabinetes de curiosidades, museo enciclopédico del siglo XVIII, el neoclasicismo y la otredad del siglo XIX, las vanguardias y el acercamiento a lo exótico como inspiración, las colecciones etnográficas y el colonialismo, la descolonización del discurso museográfico y llegar al museo como plataforma de diálogo cultural en el mundo globalizado.
- Nos propusimos sistematizar criterios sobre cuál puede ser la respuesta actual de los museos ante los retos civilizatorios, a saber: migración, derechos culturales, diversidad lingüística, diálogo horizontal de saberes...

### Tema 2: Museología y museografía para la diversidad cultural

- Quisimos conocer y desmenuzar prácticas específicas, exposiciones o curadurías que han generado una reflexión/acción satisfactoria en términos de la presentación-análisis-discusión de la diversidad cultural.
- Y llegamos a definir diversos criterios útiles para exhibir y reflexionar sobre la diversidad cultural en las sociedades contemporáneas.



### Tema 3: Las antropologías en el mundo. El papel de las disciplinas antropológicas en la conceptualización del diálogo contemporáneo entre culturas

- Debatimos sobre cómo la disciplina antropológica ha guiado criterios museográficos y museológicos durante al menos un siglo de creación museística. Nos focalizamos en la relación entre antropólogo y curador, en el análisis de los programas políticos identitarios y de los discursos sobre la diversidad, así como en las estrategias para pensar las culturas contemporáneas en diálogo desde la cotidianidad de las prácticas culturales.
- Y todo ello al socaire de las corrientes del pensamiento antropológico contemporáneo y de cómo éstas pueden sumarse a esta reflexión sobre museos y diversidad cultural.

### Tema 4: Credibilidad y apropiación cultural. Nuevas antropologías para antiguas colecciones

- Reflexionamos sobre la evolución entre los museos nacionales, o creados por iniciativas institucionales, y los museos comunitarios, que surgen desde una intención cultural de lo propio.

- Llamamos a iniciativas de comunidades que conjuntaron colecciones y desarrollaron su discurso museográfico, e interrogamos la forma en que definen sus formas de visita y el tipo de disfrute colectivo que pretenden.
- Se debatió sobre el papel del museo en la creación de vínculos e identidades colectivas y sobre cómo se convierte en un espacio de reflexión de cuestiones históricas, sociales, culturales y científicas.
- De igual manera, no faltaron presentaciones en las que se ilustraban prácticas de reapropiación de las colecciones etnográficas por parte de las comunidades contemporáneas originarias y sobre los proyectos de investigación/conservación y disfrute asociados.

Iniciamos nuestra reflexión desde una concepción de museo comprometida con el ejercicio de los derechos culturales; desde puntos de visita concebidos a manera de intercambio, más horizontal y transitivo, entre emisor-receptor; desde una concepción de ciudadanía interesada en comprender cuáles son las ventajas sociales de la diversidad; desde la necesidad de interrogar cuáles son hoy las formas de transmisión y de diálogo intra o intergeneracional en los museos; sobre la necesidad de reflexionar cómo los museos contribuyen al debate social y son generadores de opinión.

Nos proponíamos además conocer cuáles son las metodologías de análisis con las que hoy se atiende a las formas de diversidad más dialógicas, sobre las oportunidades que las colecciones históricas brindan a la construcción de la historia en contextos contemporáneos, sobre las posibilidades de promoción de la creatividad para pensar identidades más colectivas, y sobre el significado de la cooperación interinstitucional/internacional en todo ello.

Quisimos conocer cómo las instituciones museales construían y contribuían a complejizar la mirada más allá de acercar etnografías, y cómo coadyuvaban a practicar una interculturalidad que se convirtiera en recurso para la convivencia, desde el convencimiento de que el mestizaje y lo híbrido en cultura también son tradición y, sobre todo, antídoto contra las versiones disyuntivas del pasado. Nos interesaba encontrar razones para definir una ética con validez supracultural.

Quisimos además entender quiénes eran hoy los traductores entre culturas en temas de museología y museografía, su compromiso, su currículum, su forma de concebir espacios y formas de diálogo, la manera de preparar salas y colecciones, creando condiciones de hospitalidad que, para decirlo con Ricoeur, sería algo así como el ejercicio profesional de generar capacidad de acoger lo ajeno en la propia lengua.

Quisimos desacoplar binomios, el de diversidad-riqueza o el de interculturalidad-desorden, desde una concepción en la que lo minoritario no es lo subalterno, en el entendido de que es necesario desterritorializar un cierto sentido común de humanidad. Ello con la convicción de que la antropología podía ayudar en ese intento de entender que todos los diferentes se encuentran en un mismo mundo, y de



verificar por qué las preguntas antiguas de la disciplina antropológica seguían siendo pertinentes en nuestra reflexión.

Nos encontramos en la celebración del 70 aniversario de la adopción de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos. Puede resultar interesante recordar que la principal traba para su aprobación definitiva a finales de 1948 residía en las consideraciones sobre la noción de cultura, y en ello la UNESCO tuvo un papel destacado. La noción de cultura sirve a la construcción individual a través de relaciones con la alteridad, y las reglas que definen esa relación son estrictas: clase, parentesco...; el sentido social está en tensión, de manera inevitable, con la autonomía individual, y seguimos hoy en la necesidad de analizar cómo dentro de las culturas se respetan las diferencias entre los individuos.

Cada cultura conjuga los grandes temas de nuestra humanidad: vida, muerte, rango... y todas las culturas aportan elementos de observación. Frente a ello podemos pensar en un ejercicio disciplinario a través de los museos que se oriente más a un concepto de transculturalismo; podremos imaginar una humanidad futura, compuesta por individuos sensibles a sus orígenes culturales pero que se alinean a cada cultura, reconociendo los aportes de cada una; se trataría de una revolución antropológica “contra la cultura”, contra la limitada concepción de acercamiento a las singularidades de un (solo y diferente) sujeto de estudio. Nos interesaba profundizar en una suerte de ejercicio de un humanismo transcultural, una especie de antropología laica que no se apegara a ninguna cultura, cuyo propósito fuera el de responder a cuestiones que comparten todas las culturas, una antropología comprometida con formas más universales de lo que es cada uno y de cómo cada uno aporta a un proyecto de humanidad. Se trataba entonces de analizar cómo los museos también pueden colaborar con esa exigencia humanista y de devolver al centro de la disciplina antropológica su objeto fundamental: la relación.

Necesitamos esa antropología transcultural para pensar la movilidad humana y sus formas de filiación; la necesitamos para repensar las formas de aceleración, de ubicuidad y de instantaneidad de la relación entre el individuo y los media. Se trataría de una antropología cultural que, sin abandonar el análisis profundo de los sistemas de representación, se sintiera más preocupada por las historias de contacto cultural. Una antropología comprometida con aclarar la confusión entre lo global y lo universal, que se dispusiera al análisis a partir de una dimensión genérica del hombre, la universal, que pasa por el individuo, y que se ubicara en la tensión entre éste y su sistema cultural. La globalidad junta, mezcla o niega culturas. Lo universal es un valor, lo contrario a todo relativismo y esencialmente el objetivo de esta antropología comprometida. Nos interesaba por lo tanto analizar cómo los museos caben y forman parte de un proyecto ético mundial y sobre cómo contribuyen a ese proyecto de espíritu universalista. Estas páginas dan buena cuenta de ello.

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# **CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND MUSEUMS AS A PARADIGM OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. CONCEPTUAL BASES OF THE DISCUSSION**

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## General Aspects

This compilation of thoughts is based on the “Working session dedicated to reflecting on Museums, Anthropology and Dialogue between Cultures: with regard to the Humboldt Forum” that was held at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, on 9 May 2017, with the participation of national and international experts in the fields of social sciences, museography and artistic creation. The debate was a preamble to generate content for the “International Meeting of Museums, Anthropology and Dialogue between Cultures” scheduled that took place on 15, 16 and 17 June 2017, in Mexico City, as part of the Dual Year Germany-Mexico 2016-2017. The following content reflects the collective contributions of an open and productive discussion. As will be seen, the text’s sections are closely related to each other and are only presented separately for expository purposes.

Museums are related to western re-presentation policies and their associated ideologies that change according to the scale where a specific museum is located. We separate the prefix re- from the noun presentation to indicate that in any re-presentation something is presented again by someone who is not necessarily the subject directly interested in the matter. Thus, the main issue is, who speaks for whom and why? In this instance, museums clearly appear as communication, pedagogic, ideological, utopian and identity construction devices.

There are several re-presentation problems in museum practice (as well as in anthropological practice) that can be seen more clearly in global and national museums, although local museums are not exempt from such problems either.

Anthropology has faced these issues in a more comprehensive manner. Further below, they will be linked to decolonization and cognitive justice issues.

## Museums and diversity

In recent years, the number of museums has grown significantly. We must start by recognizing the diversity and history of museums, of anthropology and of cultural dialogues. For this reason, issues such as the purpose of museums and their role in society need to be continually revised. It must also be noted that museums exist as part of a network, that there is a kind of “intertextuality” among them, that they have different themes and objectives that are also expressed on different scales. These scales, notwithstanding the universality of museums’ intentions, have different geopolitical scopes that can be expressed in local, national and global levels which, in a global world, often overlap.

## Global Level

Large global encyclopedic museums are earmarked by an imperialist history and legacy. How did art pieces come to be in the museums? How is a specific culture re-presented? Do collections represent a tribute to universal human creativity or to a nation-state’s imperialism? Global museums must deal with these difficult issues, especially in the face of an increasingly interconnected world. The construction of a contemporary global vision needs to address certain issues in a critical, complex, participatory and collaborative manner. Such issues include themes such as: How to include the entire world? What is considered universal nowadays? How to deal with the most terrible and sensitive aspects of human history, without being sensationalist? Also, it is important to develop non-essentialist and glocal visions (those resulting from the merger of global and local), endeavoring to go beyond monumentality in order to emphasize diversity as a source of wealth. How can the world’s diversity and the importance of intercultural dialogue be shown in the age of globalization?

## National level

The past is clearly present in the narratives of national museums, which play a central role in nation-building. These construction processes reflect different ideologies and political forces that include or exclude certain segments from participating in national imagined communities. The Mexican case is a clear example, given that the monumentality of the pre-Columbian past obfuscates, both in museums and in anthropology, the presence and contributions of nomadic peoples, for example. There are differences in the role played by museums and anthropology in the construction of national identities and nationalist discourses. Anthropology has been more critical of nation-building, homogenizing ideologies and has centered its efforts on understanding and disseminating the value of diversity both within nation-states and internationally. In any case, we cannot exclude a vision of miscegenation in countries where cultural fusion was an important element of the nation-building process. How can museums let go of nationalism?



## Local Level

What is at stake here, is the re-presentation of local communities. The results can vary according to the size of the museum (large museums or community museums), the way in which they re-present local communities and the participation of local communities of interest and epistemic communities in the conception of museums or of certain exhibitions. The vocations of a museum and who is the intended public are equally important issues. A museum dedicated to a certain culture, designed for tourists, is different from a museum designed for the community. The problem of agency and who is the subject of the museum's narrative is, therefore, crucial in the re-presentation of local cultures. It is legitimate for people to have control over their own works and construct their own narratives about themselves. Therefore, it is essential to elaborate on the debates regarding return protocols and copyrights (more so when in many occasions the issue revolves around collective cultural rights). Simultaneously, it is common to find contradictions between the expectation of the public that wants to see monumentality, and other logics and interests of communities and anthropologists. How to explain that what are at stake are living cultures? In what other ways can the culture of a certain place be appreciated, other than the display case of a museum? It is important not to demand from community museums what they cannot deliver, requirements that are usually concerns of outsiders regarding problems that have not been raised by local people.

A perverse result of removing the agency exerted by local communities is to turn local communities into spectators of their own culture. In fact, the sense of community, which is currently strongly influenced by a romantic, homogenizing and parochial vision, should be expanded, to define it in terms of networks among cosmopolitical, epistemic, cooperation and financing "communities".

## Museums and anthropology

Museums and anthropology have several characteristics in common: their purpose is to strengthen the dialogue between cultures, mediating between two or more semantic systems as translators; they imply cosmopolitan visions of the world, reflected in their interest in otherness and on their tense location in a position between the particular and the universal, between the local, the national and the global, between the homogeneous and the heterogeneous; museums and anthropology share the need to record and preserve the diversity of human experiences, especially those thought to be at risk of "disappearing"; they are both activities that depend upon research to generate knowledge, even though they have different production and dissemination objectives. The relationship between museums and knowledge production is especially intense in university museums.

Despite the origin of many anthropological traditions in museums, the relationship between anthropology and museums has decreased over time. Museums preserve enormous amounts of objects, documents and interpretations from a large number of people around the world, as well as records of their cultural diversity and of

their anthropological and archaeological heritage. But it is the anthropological and archaeological investigations that add value to the objects. Without these investigations, those objects would often be reduced to exotic objects of greater or lesser aesthetic and functional value. How to make the anthropology/museum relationship re-enter a virtuous circle that will benefit both sides of the equation? How to involve art and other scientific disciplines in the dynamics of knowledge production from the museums' standpoint?

The differences between museums and anthropology are equally relevant. Anthropologists usually work alone, especially when it comes to their products: articles and books. Their audience is formed by students, by readers. Museums are institutions with rules, divisions of labor by specialty and hierarchies and authorities. Bureaucracies often work against diversity, due to their dynamics and demands. Museum goers need to be seduced in different ways to capture their attention, condensed in narratives. Exhibits should encourage visitors to find their own narrative, for them to become the subject of the knowledge being conveyed. Museums are educational apparatus, but they are increasingly confused with entertainment.

Due to their different structures in the production and dissemination of knowledge, anthropology's creativity and change processes move faster, while changes in museums are slower. This may be one of the reasons why anthropology and museums have distanced themselves from each other. In addition, contrary to what happened in earlier periods in which evolutionism, diffusionism or the theory of cultural circles prevailed (theories that were supported by museums' collections), the theoretical discussions that prevail in anthropology today are abstractions that, in great measure, do not require museology data. How can the interests of contemporary anthropology be reflected in museums and vice-versa? How can the anthropological comparative method be used to generate knowledge in museums today? What are the proper comparative units to be taken into account: nation-states, cultures, indigenous nations, groups differentiated by ideologies and behavior? How to use the critical anthropological vision of the West to build other narratives in museums today?



## Museums and dialogue

It is an inherent objective of museums to strengthen multicultural dialogues, given that they act as platforms, either individually or as part of a network. One of the museums' objectives has always been to preserve and exhibit archives of diverse human beings' activities and behaviors. As custodians of the past, they can be useful to replenish and reproduce lost knowledge from different communities.

The most fruitful cultural dialogues depend on the investments of time and energy and on collaborative arrangements between participants. Museums' dialogues with different communities of interest and epistemological communities





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requires a diversity of agents and entities acting within the grammar of museum production, particularly in the definition of contents, data access modes and the structure of exhibits. Multiculturalism is crisscrossed by social inequality, it needs to be constructed to warrant the inclusion of different ethnic, linguistic and regional decision-making processes. How to manage the question of plurality and diversity within museums and to generate cultural dialogues? In this sense, how to use current audiovisual, communications and information technologies? How to maintain museums as attractive options in view of the growing competition from other sources of information and distractions?

It is necessary to understand how museums dialogue with a broader reality, with important issues such as human rights and migration. Museums can dialogue with public spaces through interventions in different locations throughout cities. Dialogues between museums are a form of cultural dialogue and should include objects and documents.

## **Final Comments**

### **Time**

The scale of museums, the use of space, their exhibition models and ways of seducing the public are not the only important issues that need to be addressed. Even if museums are different in terms of scale and vocation, they are similar in their use of time. Museums,

by definition, are spaces of preservation. In the museum scene, the past prevails for its importance in understanding the contemporary world, for its exotic appeal and because politically, it is usually a safer space than the present. Dead cultures are the most visible ones in museums, to the detriment of living communities. So, it is common for ethnographic collections not to be as attractive as archaeological collections. The ability of museum to freeze the past makes even contemporary objects, once they've been removed from their everyday context and included in collections or exhibitions, to be perceived as historical, as belonging to a specific moment in time. If museums deny the condition of contemporaneity to "the others", that is to say, if they transform "the others" into exotic objects apparently from times past, they must be subject to the criticism to which anthropology was submitted for committing the same ethnocentric mistake.

## Decolonization

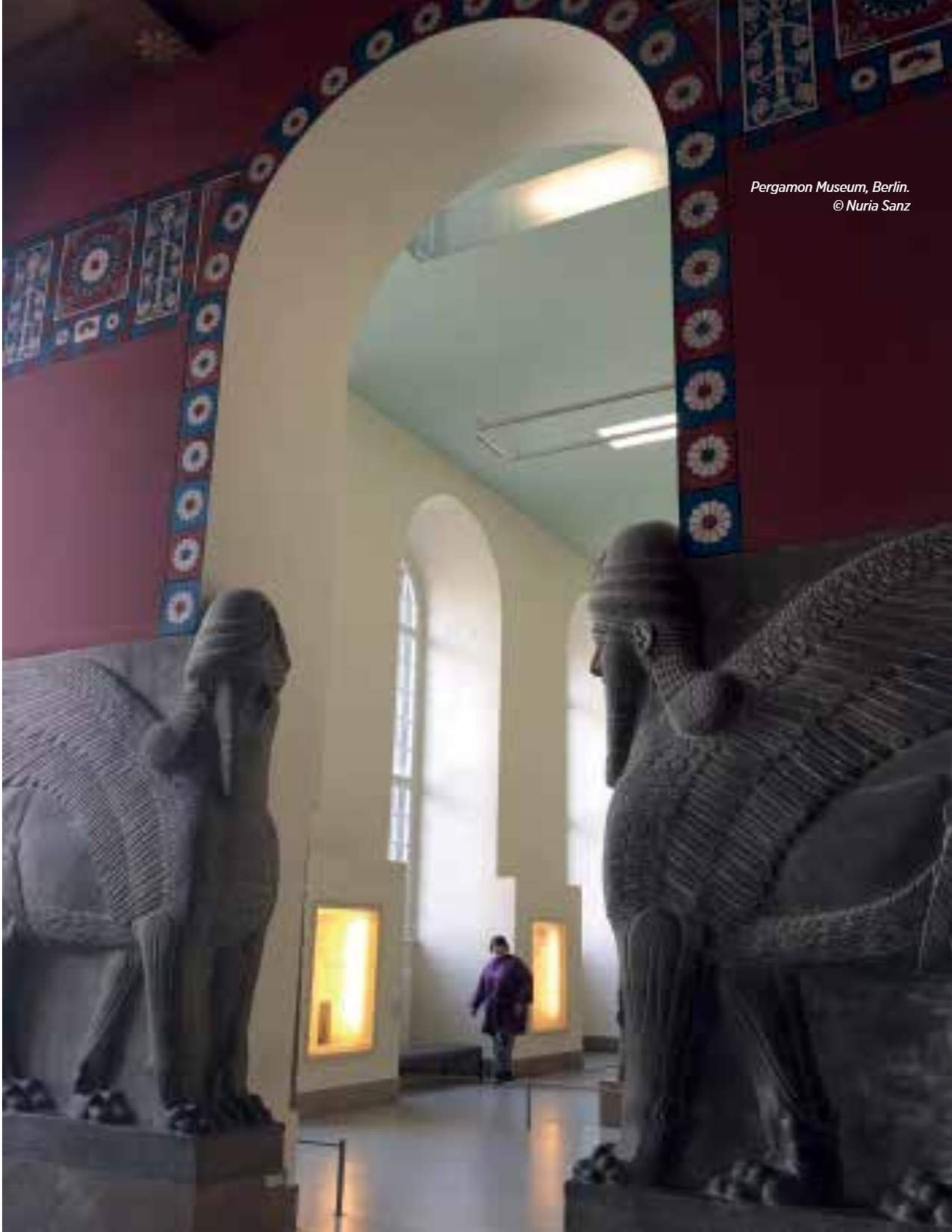
It is essential to deal with the strong legacy of colonialism that still survives throughout the world.

How to decolonize? Among the many kinds of colonialist violence (military, economic, racial, sexual and gender, religious, political, symbolic and cognitive violence), museums, due to the role they play in the production of re-presentations and ideologies, seem destined to contribute more efficiently to the decolonization process in the scope of discursive and ideological critique.

Racism, a set of discriminatory practices and discourses based on ideologies of exclusion, remains one of the worst legacies of colonialism. Racism is a machine of construction of iniquities, based on stigmatizing and stereotyped re-presentation policies. To fight racism, it is necessary to promote equality in diversity. We could call this the promotion of political-economic justice, based on redistribution and equal access to social and political welfare demands. It is also necessary to incorporate the voices of historically subordinated subjects and promote their participation (as subjects not as objects) in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and the policies of identity re-presentation in which they are involved. We could call this the promotion of cognitive-representational justice, based on demands for recognition and dignity.

Museums can hardly make an immediate contribution to end the large economic and material structures inherited from colonialism that support racism. However, in view of their work with diversity, with the construction of narratives and discourses, with the richness of human heterogeneity, museums, while decolonizing themselves, can make a fundamental contribution against racism by promoting cognitive-representational justice. To achieve the decolonization of museums, there is an urgent need for an active participation of the agents and entities involved in the construction process of museums' representational narratives. Collaborative anthropology, with its dilemmas and approaches, can be a source of inspiration for a qualitative change in museological practices. Criticism of museums as a western model of re-presentation of "the others"





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involves (a) inquiring about the existence of other forms of re-presentation and (b) seeking to empower “the others” to represent themselves.

We must take advantage of the inclusive vocation of museums and the critical vocation of anthropology as ways to demonstrate the limits of western thought and walk in this direction. Cross-fertilization between anthropology and museums will allow anthropology to regain its visibility in a public space that is important for the (re)production of ideologies and discourses, and it will allow museums to incorporate a forward-thinking vision of modernity, diversity, cultural differences, ethnicity and behavior and of different human destinies.

### A Candle in Dark Times

Despite the visible growth of intolerance and anti-intellectualism in different parts of the globe, museums, with their inclusive and democratic vocations and their cosmopolitan interests, constitute a great opportunity to continue disseminating the message of the importance of plurality and diversity in the contemporary world. We must imagine museums as a network, composed of different scales and purposes, whose wealth lies precisely in its diversity. In any of their scales, museums can provide universal contributions to the construction of solidarities and communities that respect cultural dialogue and the value of diversity. Just like anthropology, museums act as bridges between cultures. Dialogue between cultures is an imperative in a global world that needs to understand humanity’s common problems to be able to develop effective solutions.

### List of topics suggested for further reflection

Derived from the meeting held on 9 May 2017, it was proposed to further reflect on the following themes:

- The relationship between anthropology, museums and policies in the development of museography and museology proposals by institutions that want to address the dialogue between cultures, in their own narrative.
- Reflect on the way in which anthropology needs museums today and in turn how museums need the various ways of defining and understanding the role of anthropologies.
- Reflect on the onset of anthropology in different countries and the role it has played in the formation of museums, as well as in the creation and transformation of their collections.
- The role of museums in the research, recovery and presentation of traditional knowledge and their role as institutions that enable these knowledges; identify the methodologies that allow for the collaborative investigation and curatorial process for these knowledges.





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- The restitution of pieces and collections to their communities of origin; the dynamics of museography in terms of cultural reconciliation and museums as dialogue enabling institutions.
- Museums as contemporary spaces for intercultural learning, presenting challenges and opportunities.
- Museum exhibitions as guarantors of the multiplicity of interpretations and promoters of critical thinking.
- Reflect on how anthropology, as a discipline, is useful to establish a dialogue between cultures and a dialogue of knowledge.
- Explore the possible ways in which to re-signify permanent exhibitions, and predispose collections and visitors to a contemporary and intercultural dialogue.
- Reflect on how museums contribute to an ongoing investigation of cultural diversity; and propose research methodologies that promote the advancement of knowledge in cultural re-signification through museology and museography.
- Discuss narrative and communicative models that offer explicit accounts on the forms of dialogue between cultures; between the common and universal character of human condition and the singularities and space-time differences that characterize the cultural communities of the world.
- Inquire on how to align institutional vision/mission with the character and peculiarities of museum collections, in order to serve as a social agenda committed to the pursuit of cultural rights.





# DIVERSIDAD CULTURAL Y MUSEOS COMO PARADIGMA DE DERECHO INTERNACIONAL. BASES CONCEPTUALES DE LA DISCUSIÓN

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## Aspectos generales

Esta compilación de reflexiones está basada en la “Reunión de trabajo dedicada a la reflexión sobre museos, antropología y diálogo entre culturas: a propósito del Humboldt Forum”, que se llevó a cabo en el Museo Nacional de Antropología, en la Ciudad de México, el 9 de mayo de 2017, con la participación de expertos nacionales e internacionales del ámbito de las ciencias sociales, la museografía y la creación artística. El debate sirvió de preámbulo para generar contenidos para la “Reunión Internacional sobre museos, antropología y diálogo entre culturas, a propósito del Humboldt Forum”, de los días 15, 16 y 17 de junio de 2017, en el Museo Nacional de las Culturas (CDMX), en el marco del Año Dual Alemania-México 2016-2017. El contenido de lo que sigue refleja la contribución colectiva de un debate abierto y productivo. Como se verá, las secciones abajo mantienen estrechas interrelaciones, sólo se presentan separadamente para fines expositivos.

Los museos están inmediatamente relacionados a las políticas de re-presentación occidentales y a sus ideologías asociadas, que cambian según en qué escala se ubique un museo específico. Separamos el prefijo *re* del sustantivo *presentación* para indicar que en la re-presentación algo es presentado de nuevo por alguien que no necesariamente es el sujeto directamente interesado en el asunto. La cuestión principal, entonces, es quién habla por quién y por qué. Aquí los museos aparecen claramente como aparatos de comunicación, pedagógicos, ideológicos, utópicos y de construcción identitaria.

Hay varios problemas de re-presentación en la práctica museística (y también en la antropológica) que se pueden ver más claramente en los museos globales y nacionales, aunque los museos de ámbito local tampoco están exentos de tales problemas. La antropología ha enfrentado estas cuestiones de manera más amplia; más adelante, ellas serán relacionadas a los temas de la descolonización y de la justicia cognitiva.

## Museos y diversidad

En los últimos años, el número de museos ha crecido significativamente. Hay que partir de la constatación de la propia diversidad y de la historia de los museos, de la antropología y de los diálogos culturales. Por ello, cuestiones como para qué sirven los museos y sus funciones en la sociedad necesitan ser retomadas siempre. Además hay que notar que los museos existen en red, que hay una especie de “intertextualidad” entre ellos, que poseen temas y objetivos diferentes que también se expresan en tipos de escalas diferentes. Estas escalas, sin embargo, de la universalidad de las intenciones museísticas tienen alcances geopolíticos distintos que pueden ser expresados, de manera simple, como locales, nacionales y globales, niveles que, en un mundo globalizado, con frecuencia se imbrican.

### Nivel global

Los grandes museos enciclopédicos globales están marcados por pasados y legados imperialistas. ¿Cómo las piezas llegaron a los museos? ¿Cómo se re-presenta un determinado pueblo? ¿Las colecciones significan un tributo a la creatividad humana universal o al imperialismo de un Estado-nacional? Los museos globales deben lidiar con estas difíciles cuestiones, especialmente frente a un mundo cada vez más interconectado. La construcción de una visión global contemporánea necesita tratar, de manera crítica, compleja, participativa y colaborativa, algunos temas entre los cuales se encuentran los siguientes: ¿Cómo abarcar el mundo? ¿Qué es lo universal hoy? ¿Cómo tratar los aspectos más terribles y sensibles de la historia humana sin sensacionalismo? Asimismo, hay que desarrollar visiones *glocales* (esto es, resultantes de la fusión entre lo global y lo local) y no esencialistas, buscando ir más allá de la monumentalidad para enfatizar la diversidad como riqueza. ¿De qué maneras se puede mostrar la diversidad del mundo y la importancia del diálogo intercultural en la era de la globalización?

### Nivel nacional

El uso del pasado aparece claramente en las narrativas de los museos nacionales que tienen un papel central en la construcción de la nación. Estos procesos de construcción reflejan distintas ideologías y fuerzas políticas que incluyen o excluyen determinados segmentos de la participación en las comunidades imaginadas nacionales. El caso mexicano es una ilustración clara en donde la monumentalidad del pasado prehispánico ofusca, tanto en los museos como en la antropología, la presencia y contribución de pueblos nómades, por ejemplo. Hay diferencias en el rol de los museos y de la antropología en la construcción de identidades nacionales y discursos nacionalistas. La







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antropología ha criticado más las ideologías homogeneizadoras de construcción de la nación y ha dedicado sus esfuerzos a comprender y diseminar el valor de las diferencias internamente, hacia los Estados nacionales e internacionalmente. De todas las maneras, no se puede excluir la visión mestiza en países donde el mestizaje fue importante en la construcción de la nación. ¿Cómo hacer que los museos abandonen los nacionalismos?

## Nivel local

Aquí lo que está en juego es la re-presentación de las comunidades locales. Los resultados pueden ser distintos de acuerdo con el tamaño del museo (grandes museos o museos comunitarios), con la forma como las comunidades locales son por ellos re-presentadas y con la participación de las comunidades de intereses y epistemológicas locales en la concepción de los museos o de determinadas exposiciones. Las vocaciones del museo, a quien se destina, son rasgos igualmente importantes. Un museo sobre un pueblo que está hecho para el turismo es diferente de un museo hecho para la comunidad. El problema de la agencia y de quién es el sujeto de la narrativa del museo es, por lo tanto, crucial en la re-presentación de culturas localizadas. Es legítimo el control que los pueblos deben tener sobre sus propias obras y que construyan las narrativas sobre sí mismos. Por ello, hay que desarrollar el debate sobre los protocolos

Green sulfure,  
up side  
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Moño Martha  
Filipino. D. Blum



GREECE



The  
Legend of  
Robin Hood

The story of the  
Robin Hood

Robin  
Hood



de devolución y sobre derechos de autor (aún más cuando muchas veces se trata de derechos culturales colectivos). Al mismo tiempo, es común que exista una contradicción entre la expectativa del público que desea ver la monumentalidad y otras lógicas e intereses de las comunidades y de los antropólogos. ¿Cómo hacer entender que se está hablando de culturas vivas? ¿Cuáles otras formas de valorización de la cultura de un lugar existen más allá de las vitrinas de un museo? Hay que evitar demandar a los museos comunitarios exigencias que les son ajenas y que suelen ser preocupaciones de *outsiders* ante problemas que los pueblos locales no se han planteado.

Un resultado perverso de sustraer la agencia de las comunidades de intereses locales es convertir a los pueblos en espectadores de su propia cultura. En realidad, habría que ampliar el sentido de comunidad, demasiado marcado por una visión localista romántica, homogeneizadora y parroquial, para pensarla en términos de redes entre “comunidades” cosmopolíticas, epistémicas, de cooperación, de financiamiento.

## Museos y antropología

Los museos y la antropología tienen varias características en común: se dedican a fortalecer el diálogo entre las culturas, mediando entre dos o más sistemas semánticos como traductores; implican visiones cosmopolitas del mundo que se reflejan en sus intereses sobre la alteridad y su ubicación en un espacio de tensiones entre lo particular y lo universal, entre lo local, lo nacional y lo global, entre lo homogéneo y lo heterogéneo; comparten la necesidad de registrar y preservar la diversidad de las experiencias humanas, especialmente aquellas que se cree están bajo riesgo de “desaparecer”; son actividades que dependen de la investigación para producir conocimiento, aunque tengan objetivos distintos de producción y difusión. La relación entre museos y producción de conocimiento es especialmente intensa en los museos universitarios.

A pesar del origen en los museos de muchas tradiciones antropológicas, la relación entre antropología y museos ha disminuido con el tiempo. Los museos mantienen colecciones enormes de piezas, documentos e interpretaciones sobre una gran cantidad de pueblos de todo el mundo, archivos de la memoria de la diversidad cultural, de la antropología y de la arqueología. Pero son las investigaciones antropológicas y arqueológicas las que agregan valor a los objetos, los cuales, sin ellas frecuentemente se reducen a objetos exóticos de mayor o menor interés estético y funcional. ¿Cómo hacer que la relación antropología/museo vuelva a entrar en un círculo virtuoso que beneficiará a ambos lados de esta ecuación? ¿Cómo involucrar el arte y a otras disciplinas científicas en la dinámica de producción de conocimiento desde los museos?

Las diferencias entre museos y antropología son igualmente relevantes. Los antropólogos por lo general trabajan solitariamente, especialmente cuando se trata de sus productos:

artículos y libros. Sus públicos son formados por estudiantes, por lectores. Los museos son instituciones con reglas, divisiones del trabajo por especialidades, jerarquías y autoridades. Las burocracias muchas veces trabajan en contra de la diversidad por sus propias dinámicas y exigencias. El público de los museos son los visitantes, a los cuales hay que seducir con distintos modos de capturar sus atenciones, condensados en narrativas. La exposición debe propiciar que el visitante encuentre su propia narrativa, para que él se transforme en el sujeto del conocimiento que se desea transmitir. El museo es un aparato educativo pero cada vez más se confunde con entretenimiento.

Por sus estructuras distintas de producción y difusión de conocimiento, la antropología tiene velocidades más rápidas de creatividad y cambio mientras que el trabajo en los museos es más lento. Ello puede ser uno de los motivos por los que la antropología y los museos se fueron alejando. Además, al contrario de lo que pasó en momentos anteriores dominados, por ejemplo, por el evolucionismo, el difusionismo o la teoría de los círculos culturales (que se apoyaban positivamente en las colecciones de museos), las problemáticas que dominan las discusiones teóricas de la antropología hoy son abstracciones que prescinden, en larga medida, de datos museológicos. ¿Cómo hacer que los intereses de la antropología contemporánea se vean reflejados en los museos y viceversa? ¿Cómo usar el método comparativo antropológico para generar conocimiento internamente en los museos hoy? ¿Cuáles son las unidades comparativas: Estados nacionales, culturas, naciones indígenas, grupos diferenciados por ideologías y formas de comportamiento? ¿Cómo usar la visión antropológica crítica del Occidente para construir otras narrativas en los museos de hoy?

## Museos y diálogo

Es inherente a los museos tener como uno de sus objetivos fortalecer el diálogo, pues son plataformas multiculturales, individualmente o en red. Los museos siempre tuvieron como uno de sus objetivos mantener y presentar inventarios de diferentes actividades y modos de ser humano. Como depositarios del pasado, pueden ser útiles para la reposición y reproducción de conocimientos perdidos de distintas comunidades.

Los diálogos culturales más proficuos dependen de inversiones de tiempo, energía y de la presencia de disposiciones colaborativas entre los partícipes. Los diálogos de los museos con diferentes comunidades de intereses y con diferentes comunidades epistemológicas requieren la inclusión de una diversidad de agentes y agencias en la gramática de la producción museística, en especial en la definición de los contenidos, formas de acceso a los datos y formas de las exhibiciones. La pluriculturalidad se encuentra atravesada por la desigualdad social, ella es una instancia que hay que construir para que sea posible garantizar la presencia de diferentes agentes étnicos, lingüísticos y regionales en los procesos de toma de decisión. ¿Cómo hacer para administrar la cuestión de la pluralidad y de la diversidad dentro de los museos y generar diálogos culturales? En este sentido, ¿cómo usar las tecnologías audiovisuales, de comunicación e información actuales?, ¿cómo mantener a los museos como algo atractivo frente a una competencia creciente de fuentes de información y de distracción?



Es necesario preguntarse cómo dialogan los museos con la realidad más amplia, con temas importantes como los derechos humanos y la migración. Los museos pueden dialogar con otros espacios públicos a través de intervenciones en diferentes lugares de las ciudades. Los diálogos entre los museos son una forma de diálogos culturales y deben incluir objetos y también documentos.

## Comentarios finales

### Tiempo

La escala de los museos, el uso del espacio, sus formas de exhibición y seducción del público no son los únicos aspectos importantes para sus análisis. Si los museos son diferentes en términos de sus escalas y vocaciones, son parecidos en el uso que hacen del tiempo. Los museos, por definición, son espacios de preservación. En la escena museística, prevalece el pasado, tanto por su importancia para comprender la contemporaneidad como por su apelo exótico y por ser un terreno políticamente más seguro que el presente. Las culturas muertas son las más visibles en detrimento de las poblaciones vivas. Así es común que las colecciones etnográficas no tengan la misma capacidad de atracción que las arqueológicas. La capacidad de los museos de congelar el pasado hace que hasta los objetos contemporáneos, una vez retirados del mundo de la vida e incluidos en colecciones o exposiciones, pasen a ser vistos como históricos, pertenecientes a un determinado momento. Si los museos niegan la condición coetánea de los otros, esto es, si transforma a los otros en objetos exóticos supuestamente existentes en tiempos pasados, hay que someterlos a la crítica por la que la antropología pasó por cometer este mismo error etnocéntrico.

### Descolonizar

Es imperativo lidiar con el legado del colonialismo que sobrevive con fuerza en todo el mundo.

¿Cómo descolonizar? Entre las muchas violencias estructurales del colonialismo (violencias militares, económicas, raciales, sexuales y de género, religiosas, políticas, simbólicas y cognitivas), los museos, por sus roles en la producción de representaciones e ideologías, parecen destinados a contribuir de manera más eficiente a la descolonización en el plano de la crítica ideológica y discursiva.

El racismo, un conjunto de prácticas y discursos discriminatorios fundamentados en ideologías de exclusión, sigue siendo una de las peores herencias del colonialismo en el mundo. El racismo es una máquina de construcción de iniquidades basada en políticas de re-presentación estereotipadas y estigmatizadoras. Para combatir al racismo es necesario promover la igualdad en la diversidad. Podríamos llamar a esto de la promoción de una justicia político-económica anclada en demandas por redistribución y ecuanimidad de acceso al bienestar social y político. Es también necesario incorporar

las voces de los sujetos históricamente subalternizados y promover sus participaciones, como sujetos y no como objetos, en los procesos decisorios que afectan sus vidas y que afectan las políticas de re-presentación identitaria en las cuales están involucrados. Esto podría considerarse promoción de una justicia cognitiva-representacional, anclada en demandas de reconocimiento y dignidad.

Difícilmente los museos pueden contribuir de forma inmediata al término de las grandes estructuras económicas y materiales heredadas del colonialismo y que sostienen al racismo. Pero, por su trabajo con la diversidad, con la construcción de narrativas y discursos, con el tesoro de la heterogeneidad humana, los museos, al mismo tiempo que se descolonizan a ellos mismos, pueden dar una contribución fundamental contra el racismo por medio de un impulso en la justicia cognitiva-representacional. Para la descolonización de los museos es urgente la participación activa de los agentes y agencias representados en los procesos involucrados en la construcción de las narrativas representacionales museísticas. La antropología colaborativa, con sus dilemas y planteamientos, puede ser una fuente de inspiración para un cambio cualitativo en la práctica museológica. La crítica a los museos como forma occidental de re-presentar a los otros implica: (a) preguntar sobre la existencia de otras formas de re-presentar y (b) buscar capacitar a los otros para que se auto re-presenten.

Hay que aprovechar la vocación inclusiva de los museos y la vocación crítica de la antropología como formas de demostrar los límites del pensamiento occidental y caminar en esta dirección. La fertilización mutua entre antropología y museos permitirá que la antropología recupere su visibilidad en un espacio público importante para la (re) producción de ideologías y discursos, y permitirá a los museos que incorporen visiones de punta de la modernidad, de la diversidad, de las diferencias culturales, étnicas, y comportamentales, de los diferentes destinos humanos.

## Luces en tiempos sombríos

A pesar del crecimiento visible de la intolerancia y del anti-intelectualismo en distintas partes del mundo, los museos, con sus vocaciones inclusivas, democráticas, y con sus intereses cosmopolitas, constituyen una gran oportunidad para seguir pasando los mensajes de la importancia de la pluralidad y la diversidad en el mundo contemporáneo. Hay que pensar a los museos como una red compuesta de distintas escalas y propósitos cuya riqueza se encuentra justamente en su diversidad. En cualquiera de sus escalas, los museos pueden dar contribuciones universales para la construcción de solidaridades y comunidades que respeten el diálogo cultural y el valor de la diferencia. Así como la antropología, los museos son puentes entre culturas. El diálogo entre culturas es un imperativo en un mundo globalizado que necesita conocer los problemas comunes de la humanidad para proponer soluciones efectivas.





## Lista de temas que fueron sugeridos para reflexiones ulteriores

Como consecuencia de la Reunión del 9 de mayo de 2017, se subrayó la pertinencia de seguir abordando la reflexión en relación con las siguientes temáticas:

- la relación entre antropologías, museos y política a la hora de desarrollar propuestas museográficas y museológicas en instituciones que quieran abordar en sus narrativas expositivas el diálogo entre culturas;
- preguntarse por cómo la antropología necesita a los museos hoy y los museos a las diversas formas de hacer y entender el papel de las antropologías;
- la reflexión sobre cómo surge la antropología en diferentes países y qué papel tuvo en la formación de los museos y, con ello, en la creación y transformación de sus colecciones;
- el papel de los museos en la investigación, recuperación y presentación de saberes tradicionales y su alcance como instituciones facilitadoras de estos saberes, y con ello identificar las metodologías que permitan una investigación y curaduría colaborativas de esos saberes;
- la repatriación de piezas y colecciones a las comunidades de origen, las dinámicas museográficas en términos de reconciliación cultural y el museo como institución facilitadora del diálogo;
- el museo como espacio contemporáneo de aprendizaje intercultural, los retos y oportunidades;
- la exposición museística como garante de la multiplicidad de interpretaciones y alentadora del pensamiento crítico;
- preguntarse por la manera en la que hoy la antropología es una disciplina útil para el establecimiento de un diálogo entre culturas y un diálogo de saberes;
- indagar sobre cómo es posible resignificar las exposiciones permanentes, y predisponer a las colecciones y a los visitantes a un diálogo contemporáneo e intercultural;
- preguntarse por cómo el museo continúa contribuyendo a la investigación de la diversidad cultural; y reflexionar sobre cómo proponer metodologías de investigación que propicien un avance en el conocimiento de la re-significación cultural a través de la museología y la museografía;



- discutir sobre modalidades expositivas y comunicativas que den cuenta explícita de las formas de diálogo entre las culturas, entre lo común y universal de la condición humana y las singularidades y diferencias espacio-temporales que caracterizan a las comunidades culturales en el mundo;
- indagar sobre cómo alinear la visión/misión institucional y el carácter y la peculiaridad de las colecciones de los museos, para disponerlas al servicio de una agenda social comprometida con el ejercicio de los derechos culturales.

# UNESCO RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS, THEIR DIVERSITY AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

## NOVEMBER 17, 2015

### **The General Conference,**

*Considering* that museums share some of the fundamental missions of the Organization, as stipulated in its Constitution, including its contribution to the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice, liberty and peace, the foundation of the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity, full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge,

Also *considering* that one of the functions of the Organization, as laid out in its Constitution, is to give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture: by collaborating with Members, at their request, in the development of educational activities; by instituting collaboration among countries to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity

without regard to race, gender or any distinctions, economic or social; and to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge,

*Recognizing* the importance of culture in its diverse forms in time and space, the benefit that peoples and societies draw from this diversity, and the need to strategically incorporate culture, in its diversity, into national and international development policies, in the interest of communities, peoples and countries,

*Affirming* that the preservation, study and transmission of cultural and natural, tangible and intangible heritage, in its movable and immovable conditions, are of great importance for all societies, for intercultural dialogue among peoples, for social cohesion, and for sustainable development,

*Reaffirming* that museums can effectively contribute towards



accomplishing these tasks, as stated in the 1960 Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 11th session (Paris, 14 December 1960),

Further *affirming* that museums and collections contribute to the enhancement of human rights, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular its Article 27, and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in particular its Articles 13 and 15,

*Considering* museums' intrinsic value as custodians of heritage, and that they also play an ever-increasing role in stimulating creativity, providing opportunities for creative and cultural industries, and for enjoyment, thus contributing to the material and spiritual well-being of citizens across the world,

*Considering* that it is the responsibility of every Member State to protect the cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable, in the territory under its jurisdiction in all circumstances and to support the actions of museums and the role of collections to that end,

*Noting* that a body of international standard-setting instruments – adopted at UNESCO and elsewhere – including conventions, recommendations and

declarations, exists on the subject of the role of museums and collections, all of which remain valid,

*Taking into account* the magnitude of socio-economic and political changes that have affected the role and diversity of museums since the adoption of the 1960 Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone,

*Desiring* to reinforce the protection provided by the existing standards and principles referring to the role of museums and collections in favour of cultural and natural heritage, in its tangible and intangible forms, and to related roles and responsibilities,

*Having considered* proposals on the Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society,

*Recalling* that a UNESCO recommendation is a non-binding instrument that provides principles and policy guidelines addressing different stakeholders,

*Adopts* this Recommendation on the seventeenth day of November 2015.

The General Conference recommends that Member States apply the following provisions by taking whatever legislative or other measures may be required to implement, within the respective

territories under their jurisdiction, the principles and norms set forth in this Recommendation.

## INTRODUCTION

**1.** The protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity are major challenges of the twenty-first century. In this respect, museums and collections constitute primary means by which tangible and intangible testimonies of nature and human cultures are safeguarded.

**2.** Museums as spaces for cultural transmission, intercultural dialogue, learning, discussion and training, also play an important role in education (formal, informal, and lifelong learning), social cohesion and sustainable development. Museums have great potential to raise public awareness of the value of cultural and natural heritage and of the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to their care and transmission. Museums also support economic development, notably through cultural and creative industries and tourism.

**3.** This Recommendation draws the attention of Member States to the importance of the protection and promotion of museums and collections, so that they are partners in sustainable development through the preservation and protection of heritage, the protection and promotion of cultural diversity, the transmission of scientific

knowledge, the development of educational policy, lifelong learning and social cohesion, and the development of the creative industries and the tourism economy.

## I. DEFINITION AND DIVERSITY OF MUSEUMS

**4.** In this Recommendation, the term museum is defined as a “non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment”<sup>ii</sup>. As such, museums are institutions that seek to represent the natural and cultural diversity of humanity, playing an essential role in the protection, preservation and transmission of heritage.

**5.** In the present Recommendation, the term collection is defined as “an assemblage of natural and cultural properties, tangible and intangible, past and present”<sup>iii</sup>. Every Member State should define the scope of what it understands by collection in terms of its own legal framework, for the purpose of this Recommendation.

**6.** In the present Recommendation, the term heritage is defined<sup>iv</sup> as a set of tangible and intangible values, and expressions that people select and



identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their identities, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, and living environments, deserving of protection and enhancement by contemporary generations and transmission to future generations. The term heritage also refers to the definitions of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, cultural property and cultural objects as included in the UNESCO culture conventions.

## II. PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF MUSEUMS

### Preservation

**7.** The preservation of heritage comprises activities related to acquisition, collection management, including risk analysis and the development of preparedness capacities and emergency plans, in addition to security, preventive and remedial conservation, and the restoration of museum objects, ensuring the integrity of the collections when used and stored.

**8.** A key component of collection management in museums is the creation and maintenance of a professional inventory and regular control of collections. An inventory is an essential tool for protecting museums, preventing and fighting illicit trafficking, and helping museums fulfil their role in society. It also facilitates the sound management of collections mobility.

### Research

**9.** Research, including the study of collections, is another primary function of museums. Research can be carried out by museums in collaboration with others. It is only through the knowledge obtained from such research that the full potential of museums can be realized and offered to the public. Research is of utmost importance for museums to provide opportunities to reflect on history in a contemporary context, as well as for the interpretation, representation and presentation of collections.

### Communication

**10.** Communication is another primary function of museums. Member States should encourage museums to actively interpret and disseminate knowledge on collections, monuments and sites within their specific areas of expertise and to organize exhibitions, as appropriate. Furthermore, museums should be encouraged to use all means of communication to play an active part in society by, for example, organizing public events, taking part in relevant cultural activities and other interactions with the public in both physical and digital forms.

**11.** Communication policies should take into account integration, access and social inclusion, and should be conducted in collaboration with the public, including groups that do not normally visit museums. Museum actions should also be strengthened

by the actions of the public and communities in their favour.

### **Education**

**12.** Education is another primary function of museums. Museums engage in formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning, through the development and transmission of knowledge, educational and pedagogical programmes, in partnership with other educational institutions, notably schools. Educational programmes in museums primarily contribute to educating various audiences about the subject matters of their collections and about civic life, as well as helping to raise greater awareness of the importance of preserving heritage, and fostering creativity. Museums can also provide knowledge and experiences that contribute to the understanding of related societal topics.

## **III. ISSUES FOR MUSEUMS IN SOCIETY**

### **Globalization**

**13.** Globalization has permitted greater mobility of collections, professionals, visitors and ideas which has impacted museums with both positive and negative effects that are reflected in increased accessibility and homogenization. Member States should promote the safeguarding of the diversity and identity that characterize museums and collections without diminishing the museums' role in the globalized world.

### **Museum relations with the economy and quality of life**

**14.** Member States should recognize that museums can be economic actors in society and contribute to income-generating activities. Moreover, they participate in the tourism economy and with productive projects contributing to the quality of life of the communities and regions in which they are located. More generally, they can also enhance the social inclusion of vulnerable populations.

**15.** In order to diversify their sources of revenue and increase self-sustainability, many museums have, by choice or necessity, increased their income-generating activities. Member States should not accord a high priority to revenue generation to the detriment of the primary functions of museums. Member States should recognize that those primary functions, while of utmost importance for society, cannot be expressed in purely financial terms.

### **Social role**

**16.** Member States are encouraged to support the social role of museums that was highlighted by the 1972 Declaration of Santiago de Chile. Museums are increasingly viewed in all countries as playing a key role in society and as a factor in social integration and cohesion. In this sense, they can help communities to face profound changes in society, including those leading to a rise in inequality and the breakdown of social ties.



**17.** Museums are vital public spaces that should address all of society and can therefore play an important role in the development of social ties and cohesion, building citizenship, and reflecting on collective identities. Museums should be places that are open to all and committed to physical and cultural access to all, including disadvantaged groups. They can constitute spaces for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural and scientific issues. Museums should also foster respect for human rights and gender equality. Member States should encourage museums to fulfil all of these roles.

**18.** In instances where the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples is represented in museum collections, Member States should take appropriate measures to encourage and facilitate dialogue and the building of constructive relationships between those museums and indigenous peoples concerning the management of those collections, and, where appropriate, return or restitution in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

### **Museums and information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

**19.** The changes brought about by the rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer opportunities for museums in terms of the preservation, study, creation and transmission of heritage and related knowledge. Member States should support museums to share and

disseminate knowledge and ensure that museums have the means to have access to these technologies when they are judged necessary to improve their primary functions.

## **IV. POLICIES**

### **General policies**

**20.** Existing international instruments relating to cultural and natural heritage recognize the importance and social role of museums in their protection and promotion, and in the overall accessibility of this heritage to the public. In this regard, Member States should take appropriate measures so that museums and collections in the territories under their jurisdiction or control benefit from the protective and promotional measures granted by these instruments. Member States should also take appropriate measures to strengthen museum capacities for their protection in all circumstances.

**21.** Member States should ensure that museums implement principles of applicable international instruments. Museums are committed to observe the principles of international instruments for the protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible. They also should adhere to the principles of the international instruments for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property and should coordinate their efforts in this matter.

Museums must also take into account the ethical and professional standards established by the professional museum community. Member States should ensure that the role of museums in society is exercised in accordance with legal and professional standards in the territories under their jurisdiction.

**22.** Member States should adopt policies and take appropriate measures to ensure the protection and promotion of museums located in the territories under their jurisdiction or control, by supporting and developing those institutions in accordance with their primary functions, and in this regard develop the necessary human, physical and financial resources needed for them to function properly.

**23.** The diversity of museums and the heritage of which they are custodians constitutes their greatest value. Member States are requested to protect and promote this diversity, while encouraging museums to draw on high-quality criteria defined and promoted by national and international museum communities.

### **Functional policies**

**24.** Member States are invited to support active preservation, research, education and communication policies, adapted to local social and cultural contexts, to allow museums to protect and pass down heritage to future generations. In this perspective, collaborative and participative efforts

between museums, communities, civil society and the public should be strongly encouraged.

**25.** Member States should take appropriate measures to ensure that the compilation of inventories based on international standards is a priority in the museums established in the territory under their jurisdiction. The digitization of museum collections is highly important in this regard, but should not be considered as a replacement for the conservation of collections.

**26.** Good practices for the functioning, protection and promotion of museums and their diversity and role in society have been recognized by national and international museum networks. These good practices are continually updated to reflect innovations in the field. In this respect, the Code of Ethics for Museums adopted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) constitutes the most widely shared reference. Member States are encouraged to promote the adoption and dissemination of these and other codes of ethics and good practices and to use them to inform the development of standards, museum policies and national legislation.

**27.** Member States should take appropriate measures to facilitate the employment of qualified personnel by museums in the territories under their jurisdiction with the required expertise. Adequate opportunities for the



continuing education and professional development of all museum personnel should be arranged to maintain an effective workforce.

**28.** The effective functioning of museums is directly influenced by public and private funding and appropriate partnerships. Member States should strive to ensure a clear vision, adequate planning and funding for museums, and a harmonious balance among the different funding mechanisms to enable them to carry out their mission to the benefit of society with full respect for their primary functions.

**29.** The functions of museums are also influenced by new technologies and their growing role in everyday life. These technologies have great potential for promoting museums throughout the world, but they also constitute potential barriers for people and museums that do not have access to them or the knowledge and skills to use them effectively. Member States should strive to provide access to these technologies for museums in the territories under their jurisdiction or control.

**30.** The social role of museums, along with the preservation of heritage, constitutes their fundamental purpose. The spirit of the 1960 Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone remains important in creating a lasting place for museums in society.

Member States should strive to include these principles in the laws concerning the museums established in the territories under their jurisdiction.

**31.** Cooperation within the museum sectors and institutions responsible for culture, heritage and education is one of the most effective and sustainable ways of protecting and promoting museums, their diversity and their role in society. Member States should therefore encourage cooperation and partnerships among museums and cultural and scientific institutions at all levels, including their participation in professional networks and associations that foster such cooperation and international exhibitions, exchanges and the mobility of collections.

**32.** The collections defined in paragraph 5, when held in institutions that are not museums, should be protected and promoted in order to preserve the coherence and better represent the cultural diversity of those countries' heritage. Member States are invited to cooperate in the protection, research and promotion of those collections, as well as in promoting access to them.

**33.** Member States should take appropriate legislative, technical, and financial measures, in order to design public planning and policies enabling the development and implementation of these recommendations in museums situated in the territories under their jurisdiction.

**34.** In order to contribute to the improvement of museum activities and services, Member States are encouraged to support the establishment of inclusive policies for audience development.

**35.** Member States should promote international cooperation in capacity building and professional training, through bilateral or multilateral mechanisms including through UNESCO, in order to better implement these recommendations and especially to benefit the museums and collections of developing countries.



# RECOMENDACIÓN DE LA UNESCO RELATIVA A LA PROTECCIÓN Y PROMOCIÓN DE LOS MUSEOS Y COLECCIONES, SU DIVERSIDAD Y SU FUNCIÓN EN LA SOCIEDAD

## 17 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2015

### La Conferencia General,

*Considerando* que los museos comparten algunas de las misiones fundamentales de la Organización, como dispone su Constitución, incluida su contribución a la amplia difusión de la cultura y la educación de la humanidad para la justicia, la libertad y la paz, el fundamento de la solidaridad intelectual y moral de la humanidad, la necesidad de asegurar a todos el pleno e igual acceso a la educación, la posibilidad de investigar libremente la verdad objetiva y el libre intercambio de ideas y de conocimientos,

*Considerando* también que una de las funciones de la Organización, como define su Constitución, es la de dar un nuevo impulso a la educación popular y a la difusión de la cultura colaborando con los Estados Miembros que así lo deseen para ayudarles a desarrollar sus propias actividades educativas, instituyendo la cooperación entre las naciones con objeto de fomentar el

ideal de la igualdad de posibilidades de educación para todos, sin distinción de raza, sexo ni condición social o económica alguna y contribuyendo a la conservación, el progreso y la difusión del saber,

*Reconociendo* la importancia de la cultura en las diversas formas que ha asumido en el tiempo y el espacio, las ventajas que los pueblos y las sociedades obtienen de esta diversidad y la necesidad de incorporar estratégicamente la cultura, en su diversidad, a las políticas nacionales e internacionales del desarrollo, en interés de las comunidades, los pueblos y los países,

*Afirmando* que la preservación, el estudio y la transmisión del patrimonio cultural y natural, material e inmaterial, en sus versiones muebles e inmuebles, son de gran importancia para todas las sociedades y para el diálogo intercultural entre los pueblos, la cohesión social y el desarrollo sostenible,



*Reafirmando* que los museos pueden contribuir eficazmente a la realización de esas tareas, como se declaraba en la Recomendación sobre los Medios más Eficaces para Hacer los Museos Accesibles a Todos, de 1960, que la Conferencia General de la UNESCO aprobó en su 11a reunión (París, 14 de diciembre de 1960),

*Afirmando* también que los museos y colecciones contribuyen a la promoción de los derechos humanos, como se desprende de la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos, en particular su artículo 27, y del Pacto Internacional de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales, en particular sus artículos 13 y 15,

*Considerando* el valor intrínseco de los museos como custodios del patrimonio, y su función cada vez más importante de estímulo de la creatividad, al ofrecer oportunidades para las industrias creativas y culturales y para las actividades recreativas, contribuyendo así al bienestar material y espiritual de los ciudadanos de todo el mundo,

*Considerando* que cada Estado Miembro tiene la responsabilidad de proteger el patrimonio cultural y natural, material e inmaterial, mueble e inmueble, en el territorio bajo su jurisdicción en todas las circunstancias, y de apoyar las actividades de los museos y el papel de las colecciones con esta finalidad,

*Observando* que existe un conjunto de instrumentos normativos internacionales sobre el tema de la función de los museos y colecciones

—aprobados en la UNESCO y en otras instancias— que comprende convenciones, recomendaciones y declaraciones, todas las cuales están vigentes,

*Teniendo en cuenta* la magnitud de los cambios socioeconómicos y políticos que han afectado a la función y la diversidad de los museos desde que se aprobó, en 1960, la Recomendación sobre los Medios más Eficaces para Hacer los museos Accesibles a Todos,

*Deseosa* de reforzar la protección que ofrecen las normas y los principios existentes relativos a la función de los museos y colecciones en favor del patrimonio cultural y natural en sus formas materiales e inmateriales y a sus funciones y responsabilidades conexas,

*Habiendo considerado* las propuestas sobre la Recomendación relativa a la protección y promoción de los museos y colecciones, su diversidad y su función en la sociedad,

*Recordando* que una recomendación de la UNESCO es un instrumento no vinculante que enuncia principios y pautas de política para diferentes partes interesadas,

*Aprueba* la presente Recomendación el 17 de noviembre de 2015.

La Conferencia General recomienda a los Estados Miembros que apliquen las siguientes disposiciones, adoptando las medidas legislativas o de otro orden que puedan ser necesarias para poner en práctica, en los respectivos territorios bajo su jurisdicción, los principios y



normas enunciados en la presente Recomendación.

el fomento de industrias creativas y la economía del turismo.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

**1.** La protección y promoción de la diversidad cultural y natural es uno de los grandes desafíos del siglo XXI. A este respecto, los museos y colecciones son medios primordiales para salvaguardar los testimonios materiales e inmateriales de la naturaleza y las culturas humanas.

**2.** En su condición de espacios para la transmisión cultural, el diálogo intercultural, el aprendizaje, el debate y la formación, los museos desempeñan también una importante función en la educación (formal y no formal, y el aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida), la cohesión social y el desarrollo sostenible. Los museos encierran un gran potencial de sensibilización del público acerca del valor del patrimonio cultural y natural y la responsabilidad de todos los ciudadanos de contribuir a su cuidado y transmisión. Además, los museos apoyan el desarrollo económico, en particular por conducto de las industrias culturales y creativas y el turismo.

**3.** La presente Recomendación señala a la atención de los Estados Miembros la importancia de la protección y la promoción de los museos y colecciones, de modo que participen en el desarrollo sostenible mediante la preservación y la protección del patrimonio, la protección y la promoción de la diversidad cultural, la transmisión del conocimiento científico, la elaboración de políticas de la educación, el aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida y la cohesión social, y

## I. DEFINICIÓN Y DIVERSIDAD DE LOS MUSEOS

**4.** En la presente Recomendación, por museo se entiende “una institución permanente, sin fines lucrativos, al servicio de la sociedad y de su desarrollo, abierta al público, que adquiere, conserva, investiga, comunica y expone el patrimonio material e inmaterial de la humanidad y su medio ambiente con fines de educación, estudio y recreo”<sup>ii</sup>. En esta condición, los museos son instituciones que tratan de representar la diversidad natural y cultural de la humanidad y desempeñan una función esencial en la protección, preservación y transmisión del patrimonio.

**5.** En la presente Recomendación, por colección se entiende “un conjunto articulado de bienes naturales y culturales, materiales e inmateriales, pasados y presentes”<sup>iii</sup>. Cada Estado Miembro debería definir lo que entiende por colección en el marco de su ordenamiento jurídico, a los efectos de la presente Recomendación.

**6.** En la presente Recomendación, por patrimonio<sup>iv</sup> se entiende un conjunto de valores y expresiones materiales e inmateriales que las personas seleccionan e identifican, independientemente de quien sea su propietario, como reflejo y expresión de sus identidades, creencias, conocimientos, tradiciones y entornos vivos, y que merecen que las generaciones contemporáneas las



protejan y mejoren, y las transmitan a las generaciones futuras. El término patrimonio se refiere también a las definiciones de patrimonio cultural y natural, material e inmaterial, bienes culturales y objetos culturales que figuran en las convenciones de la UNESCO sobre la cultura.

## II. FUNCIONES PRIMORDIALES DE LOS MUSEOS

### Preservación

**7.** La preservación del patrimonio comprende actividades relacionadas con la adquisición y gestión de las colecciones, con inclusión de análisis de riesgos y la creación de capacidades de preparación y planes de emergencia, así como seguridad, conservación preventiva y correctiva y restauración de los objetos museísticos, garantizando la integridad de las colecciones utilizadas y almacenadas.

**8.** Un elemento fundamental de la gestión de las colecciones museísticas es la creación y el mantenimiento de un inventario profesional y el control periódico de las colecciones. El inventario es un instrumento esencial para proteger los museos, prevenir y combatir el tráfico ilícito y ayudar a los museos a cumplir su función en la sociedad; además facilita la gestión adecuada de la movilidad de las colecciones.

### Investigación

**9.** La investigación, incluido el estudio de las colecciones, es otra función primordial de los museos. Los museos pueden llevar a cabo las investigaciones en colaboración con terceros. Solo

mediante el conocimiento obtenido de las investigaciones puede materializarse y ofrecerse al público el potencial íntegro del museo. La investigación es de la máxima importancia para los museos porque ofrece la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre la historia en un contexto contemporáneo, así como para la interpretación, representación y exposición de las colecciones.

### Comunicación

**10.** Otra función primordial de los museos es la comunicación. Los Estados Miembros deberían alentar a los museos a interpretar y difundir activamente los conocimientos sobre las colecciones, los monumentos y los sitios de sus esferas de especialización, y organizar exposiciones según proceda. Además, debería incitarse a los museos a utilizar todos los medios de comunicación para desempeñar un papel activo en la sociedad, por ejemplo organizando actos públicos y participando en actividades culturales pertinentes y otras interacciones con el público en forma física y digital.

**11.** Las políticas de la comunicación deberían tener en cuenta la integración, el acceso y la inclusión social, y deberían llevarse a la práctica en colaboración con el público, con inclusión de grupos que normalmente no van al museo. La actividad de los museos debe reforzarse también con las acciones del público y de las comunidades en su favor.

### Educación

**12.** La educación es otra función primordial de los museos. Los museos imparten educación formal y no formal y aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida





mediante la elaboración y transmisión de conocimientos y programas educativos y pedagógicos en asociación con otras instituciones docentes, en particular la escuela. Los programas educativos de los museos contribuyen principalmente a la educación de diversos públicos en las disciplinas a las que pertenecen sus colecciones y en la vida cívica, y contribuyen a crear una mayor conciencia de la importancia de preservar el patrimonio y promover la creatividad. Además, los museos pueden proporcionar conocimientos y experiencias que permitan entender mejor las cuestiones sociales con ellos relacionadas.

### III. CUESTIONES RELACIONADAS CON LOS MUSEOS EN LA SOCIEDAD

#### Mundialización

**13.** La mundialización ha permitido una mayor movilidad de las colecciones, los profesionales, los visitantes y las ideas; ello ha tenido efectos positivos y negativos en los museos, que se reflejan en un aumento de la accesibilidad y la homogenización. Los Estados Miembros deberían promover la salvaguardia de la diversidad e identidad que caracterizan a los museos y las colecciones, sin mermar por ello la función de los museos en un mundo globalizado.

#### Relaciones de los museos con la economía y la calidad de vida

**14.** Los Estados Miembros deberían reconocer que los museos pueden ser agentes económicos en la sociedad y contribuir a actividades generadoras de ingresos. Además, los museos participan en la economía del turismo y en proyectos productivos que

contribuyen a la calidad de vida de las comunidades y regiones en las que están situados. Más en general, los museos pueden mejorar la integración social de las poblaciones vulnerables.

**15.** Con objeto de diversificar sus fuentes de ingresos y aumentar su autosuficiencia, muchos museos han incrementado, voluntariamente o por necesidad, sus actividades generadoras de ingresos. Los Estados Miembros no deberían atribuir una gran prioridad a la generación de ingresos en detrimento de las funciones primordiales de los museos. Los Estados Miembros deberían reconocer que esas funciones primordiales, aunque son de extremada importancia para la sociedad, no pueden expresarse en términos puramente financieros.

#### La función social

**16.** Se alienta a los Estados Miembros a prestar apoyo a la función social de los museos, que se puso de relieve en la Declaración de Santiago de Chile de 1972. En todos los países se considera cada vez más que los museos desempeñan una función fundamental en la sociedad y son un factor de integración y cohesión social. Por este concepto, pueden ayudar a las comunidades a hacer frente a cambios profundos de la sociedad, incluidos los que dan lugar a un aumento de la desigualdad y a la rescisión de los vínculos sociales.

**17.** Los museos son espacios públicos vitales que deberían estar dirigidos a toda la sociedad y, en consecuencia, pueden desempeñar un papel importante en la creación de los



vínculos y la cohesión de la sociedad, la construcción de la ciudadanía y la reflexión sobre las identidades colectivas. Los museos son lugares que han de estar abiertos a todos y deberían garantizar el acceso físico y cultural de todos, incluidos los grupos desfavorecidos. Pueden ser espacios de reflexión y debate sobre cuestiones históricas, sociales, culturales y científicas. Además, los museos deberían promover el respeto de los derechos humanos y la igualdad de género. Los Estados Miembros deberían alentar a los museos a cumplir todas esas funciones.

**18.** Cuando en las colecciones museísticas esté representado el patrimonio cultural de pueblos indígenas, los Estados Miembros deberían adoptar las medidas apropiadas para alentar y facilitar el diálogo y la creación de relaciones constructivas entre esos museos y los pueblos indígenas respecto de la gestión de esas colecciones y, si procede, hacer devoluciones o restituciones a tenor de las leyes y políticas aplicables.

### **Los museos y las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC)**

**19.** Los cambios resultantes del auge de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) ofrecen oportunidades a los museos para la preservación, el estudio, la creación y la transmisión del patrimonio y los conocimientos conexos. Los Estados Miembros deberían apoyar a los museos para que intercambien y difundan los conocimientos y velar por que dispongan de medios de acceder a

esas tecnologías, cuando se consideren necesarias para mejorar sus funciones primordiales.

## **IV. POLÍTICAS**

### **Políticas generales**

**20.** Los instrumentos internacionales existentes relacionados con el patrimonio cultural y natural reconocen la importancia y la función social de los museos en su protección y promoción y la accesibilidad general del público a este patrimonio. A este respecto, los Estados Miembros deberían adoptar las disposiciones adecuadas para que los museos y colecciones de los territorios bajo su jurisdicción o control se beneficien de las medidas de protección y promoción previstas en estos instrumentos. Asimismo, los Estados Miembros deberían tomar las medidas apropiadas para reforzar la capacidad de los museos a fin de que estén protegidos en todas las circunstancias.

**21.** Los Estados Miembros deberían asegurarse de que los museos pongan en práctica los principios de los instrumentos internacionales aplicables. Los museos tienen que observar los principios de los instrumentos internacionales para la protección y promoción del patrimonio cultural y natural, tanto material como inmaterial. Además, los museos deberían respetar los principios de los instrumentos internacionales para la lucha contra el tráfico ilícito de bienes culturales y coordinar sus actividades al respecto. Los museos también deberían tener en cuenta las normas éticas y profesionales formuladas por la comunidad de profesionales de los museos. Los



Estados Miembros deberían velar por que los museos cumplan su función en la sociedad de conformidad con las normas jurídicas y profesionales en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción.

**22.** Los Estados Miembros deberían adoptar políticas y tomar las medidas pertinentes para garantizar la protección y promoción de los museos situados en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción o control, ayudando a estas instituciones y desarrollándolas en consonancia con sus funciones primordiales; a este respecto, los Estados Miembros deberían proveer los necesarios recursos humanos, físicos y financieros para que los museos puedan funcionar adecuadamente.

**23.** El valor principal de los museos reside en su diversidad y en el patrimonio que custodian. Se pide a los Estados Miembros que protejan y promuevan esta diversidad, al tiempo que alientan a los museos a atenerse a los criterios de alta calidad que las comunidades museísticas nacionales e internacionales definan y promuevan.

### **Políticas funcionales**

**24.** Se invita a los Estados Miembros a prestar apoyo a políticas activas de preservación, investigación, educación y comunicación, adaptadas a los contextos sociales y culturales locales, para que los museos puedan proteger y transmitir el patrimonio a las generaciones futuras. Desde esta perspectiva, hay que alentar decididamente las iniciativas de colaboración y participación entre los museos, las comunidades, la sociedad civil y el público.

**25.** Los Estados Miembros deberían adoptar las medidas adecuadas para que los museos establecidos en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción atribuyan prioridad a la compilación de inventarios basados en las normas internacionales. La digitalización de las colecciones museísticas es muy importante a este respecto, pero no debe verse como un sustituto de la conservación de las colecciones.

**26.** Las redes museísticas nacionales e internacionales han reconocido una serie de buenas prácticas para el funcionamiento, protección y protección de los museos, su diversidad y su función en la sociedad. Estas buenas prácticas se actualizan constantemente para tener en cuenta las innovaciones en esta esfera. A este respecto, el Código de deontología para los museos aprobado por el Consejo Internacional de Museos (ICOM), constituye la referencia más ampliamente compartida. Se alienta a los Estados Miembros a promover la adopción y difusión de estos y otros códigos de ética y buenas prácticas y a utilizarlos cuando elaboren las normas, las políticas museísticas y la legislación nacional.

**27.** Los Estados Miembros deberían tomar las medidas apropiadas para facilitar el empleo de personal cualificado, con los conocimientos requeridos, en los museos de los territorios bajo su jurisdicción. Deberían preverse oportunidades adecuadas de educación permanente y desarrollo profesional de todo el personal de los museos, a fin de mantener plantillas eficaces.

**28.** El funcionamiento efectivo de los museos depende directamente de la financiación pública y privada y de la idoneidad de los asociados. Los Estados Miembros han de procurar que los museos dispongan de una visión clara, una planificación y financiación adecuadas y un equilibrio armonioso entre los diferentes mecanismos de financiación a fin de que puedan llevar a cabo su misión en beneficio de la sociedad, con pleno respeto de sus funciones primordiales.

**29.** Las funciones de los museos también están influenciadas por las nuevas tecnologías y su papel cada vez más importante en la vida cotidiana. Estas tecnologías encierran grandes posibilidades de promoción de los museos en todo el mundo, pero también representan barreras potenciales para las personas y los museos que no tienen acceso a ellas o no poseen las capacidades y conocimientos necesarios para utilizarlas con eficacia. Los Estados Miembros deberían tratar de facilitar el acceso a esas tecnologías de los museos situados en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción o control.

**30.** La función social de los museos, junto con la preservación del patrimonio, es su objetivo fundamental. El espíritu que animaba la Recomendación sobre los Medios más Eficaces para Hacer los Museos Accesibles a Todos, de 1960, sigue siendo importante para que los museos ocupen un lugar perdurable en la sociedad. Los Estados Miembros deberían tratar de incluir esos principios en las leyes relativas a los museos establecidos en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción.

**31.** La cooperación con el sector de los museos y las instituciones encargadas de la cultura, el patrimonio y la educación es uno de los medios más eficaces y sostenibles de proteger y promover los museos, su diversidad y su función en la sociedad. Por lo tanto, los Estados Miembros deberían promover la cooperación y las asociaciones entre los museos y las instituciones culturales y científicas a todos los niveles, en particular su participación en redes y asociaciones profesionales que fomenten esa cooperación, las exposiciones y los intercambios internacionales y la movilidad de las colecciones.

**32.** Las colecciones definidas en el párrafo 5, cuando se encuentren en instituciones que no sean museos, deberán protegerse y promoverse para preservar la coherencia y representar mejor la diversidad cultural del patrimonio de esos países. Se invita a los Estados Miembros a cooperar en la protección, investigación y promoción de estas colecciones, así como en el fomento del acceso a las mismas.

**33.** Los Estados Miembros deberían adoptar las medidas legislativas, técnicas y financieras adecuadas para elaborar planes y políticas públicas que permitan formular y poner en práctica esas recomendaciones en los museos situados en los territorios bajo su jurisdicción.

**34.** Con objeto de contribuir a la mejora de las actividades y los servicios museísticos, se alienta a los Estados Miembros a prestar apoyo a la adopción de políticas inclusivas para aumentar el número de visitantes.





**35.** Los Estados Miembros deberían promover la cooperación internacional para la creación de capacidad y la formación profesional mediante mecanismos bilaterales o multilaterales, incluida la UNESCO, a fin de aplicar mejor estas recomendaciones, especialmente en beneficio de los museos y colecciones de los países en desarrollo.



**III.** International Meeting on Museums, Anthropology and Dialogue among Cultures, in the essence of the Humboldt Forum

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**III.** Reunión Internacional sobre museos, antropología y diálogo entre culturas, a propósito del Humboldt Forum



An introduction to  
the Humboldt Forum

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Una introducción  
al Foro Humboldt

# THE HUMBOLDT FORUM: AN INTRODUCTION

## Tarek Ibrahim

Founding Director of Humboldt Forum

In the heart of Berlin, a new cultural district is being created, a unique synthesis of exhibition and performance spaces, educational facilities, restaurants and shops: the Humboldt Forum. As of 2019, the institution seeks to bring together diverse cultures and perspectives along with new insights into relevant contemporary issues including migration, religion and globalization. The Humboldt Forum is an institution that aims to be more than a museum; it is a place for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of new perspectives.



*Medallion seen from the balcony of the Humboldt-Box.  
© Frank Burchert*

The Forum is composed of the following key institutions: the: Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), the Berlin Exhibition (Kulturprojekte Berlin and Stadtmuseum Berlin), and the Humboldt Labor (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin). In addition, the Humboldt Forum has its own exhibition spaces that explore the history of the site (Museum des Ortes). In combination with the collections located in the museums on the northern end of the Museum Island, the exhibits on display in the Humboldt Forum will form a singularly unique concentration of objects and artworks from antiquity to the present. In addition to its permanent galleries, the Humboldt Forum aims to establish a global network of partners



with the goal of presenting exceptional temporary exhibitions. The material nature of the individual objects will be supplemented with performances of dance, film, readings, music and theatre; in this respect the Humboldt Forum will be truly different from other museums.

The Humboldt Forum derives its vision in part from the Berlin *Kunstammer* that had its genesis on the site, a place of inquiry where art and science creatively intertwined. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *Kunstammer*, or 'cabinet of art and marvels' was a new phenomenon that arose in many European royal courts. These exhibition spaces aimed to unite all elements in the world in the microcosm of a collection. Objects from both local and foreign cultures were divided into the categories of nature (*naturalia*), science (*scientifica*), and art (*artificialia*), but were also sometimes arranged and handled more freely. The *Kunstammer* in the Berlin Palace was no exception to this development; artefacts of both local and non-European origin were placed on display in an area covering several rooms. It was hoped that visitors to the royal cabinet of art would gain a deeper understanding of the world *as a whole* by being able to view, arrange, and handle the various objects gathered there. Much like the modern Humboldt Forum, the collection was simultaneously an archive and a space for ideas. Crucial to this philosophy was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's idea of a 'theatre of knowledge', which he devised with an eye to the *Kunstammer* in the Berlin Palace. For Leibniz, the cabinet of art, laboratory-like in character, offered new possibilities to generate and disseminate knowledge. These rooms became the seed for Berlin's later collections. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cabinets of art were handed over to public use, and became the core of the city's museum and university study collections. In that sense, the bringing together of such varied collections represents a kind of "coming home" or return of an idea, albeit on a much larger scale.



Growing from its Renaissance core, the original palace was transformed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Andrea Schlüter into the most important secular baroque building north of the Alps. The palace was the site of dramatic and pivotal events in Germany history: first the seat of the Prussian Kings, it later became the primary residence of the German Emperors. It was here in 1914 that Kaiser Wilhelm declared Germany's entry in the First World War. Four years later, in the wake of the cataclysmic conflict, it was from the palace that Emperor's abdication was announced and Germany declared a republic. Badly damaged in the Second World War, the building was demolished by the Soviet-controlled East German government as a symbolic gesture to mark the end of "German militarism". In the 1970s, the East German government erected their parliament, the "Palace of the Republic, on the eastern end of the former palace site.

In the summer of 2002 the German Bundestag passed a resolution to partially reconstruct the Berlin Palace as the Humboldt Forum. A large cross-party majority followed the recommendation of the international commission of experts known as "Historic Centre of Berlin", which advocated a museum, knowledge and meeting center in the footprint and with the baroque facades of the Berlin Palace. Beyond the façade, visitors step "through the looking glass" into a high-tech modern building designed by the Italian architect Franco Stella. The building's footprint, more than three football



*Some decorative elements in the Schlüterhof Court that are about to be integrated into the façade. © Frank Burchert*

fields in area, is punctuated by two large open courtyards, the “Passage” and the “Schlüter Courtyard”. Like its historical predecessor, the Palace is a transparent building: four of its six portals will be open 24 hours a day.

Upon entering the site, visitors to the Forum will be directed to Humboldt Foyer, the great entry hall of the building. This enormous enclosed space, measuring 40 x 40 meters, presents visitors with a dramatic architectural contrast between the reconstructed baroque portal of Johann Friedrich Eosander von Göthe and the restrained and elegant galleries of Stella. Visitors will be able to learn about the Humboldt Forum’s exhibits, events, and offerings through a three-story media tower. To the south of the Foyer are the special exhibition rooms, covering approximately 1500 square meters. To the north are the two main event spaces of the Humboldt Forum: a classic auditorium, as well as a multifunctional space with a modular floor that can be configured to accommodate a wide spectrum of performances. The northern half of the Schlüter Courtyard is bound by several gastronomic venues, offering visitors the chance to relax, recharge and enjoy the atmosphere of the building.

The upper floors of the building are primarily devoted to exhibition space for the key institutions of the Humboldt Forum. In addition, the southwest corner of the building is the hub and main space of the Humboldt Akademie, which aims to make the vision and collections of the Humboldt Forum accessible to a diverse spectrum of groups and all walks of life.



The project is spearheaded by the Executive Board of the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss: Johannes Wien, Executive Board Spokesman, Lavinia Frey, Chief Cultural Officer, and Hans-Dieter Hegner, Chief Technology Officer. Mr. Wien has extensive experience in financial and organizational project management as well as in developing and implementing communications plans. After studying history and theatre in London and Zurich, Ms. Frey worked as a director and choreographer at various institutions in Germany and Switzerland. She was also managing director of a company specializing in cultural planning. Mr. Hegner was appointed chief technology officer for the foundation at the start of 2016. With his background as a civil engineer, he previously headed a division at the Federal Ministry of Building focusing on civil engineering, sustainable construction, construction research, and various other construction-related matters.

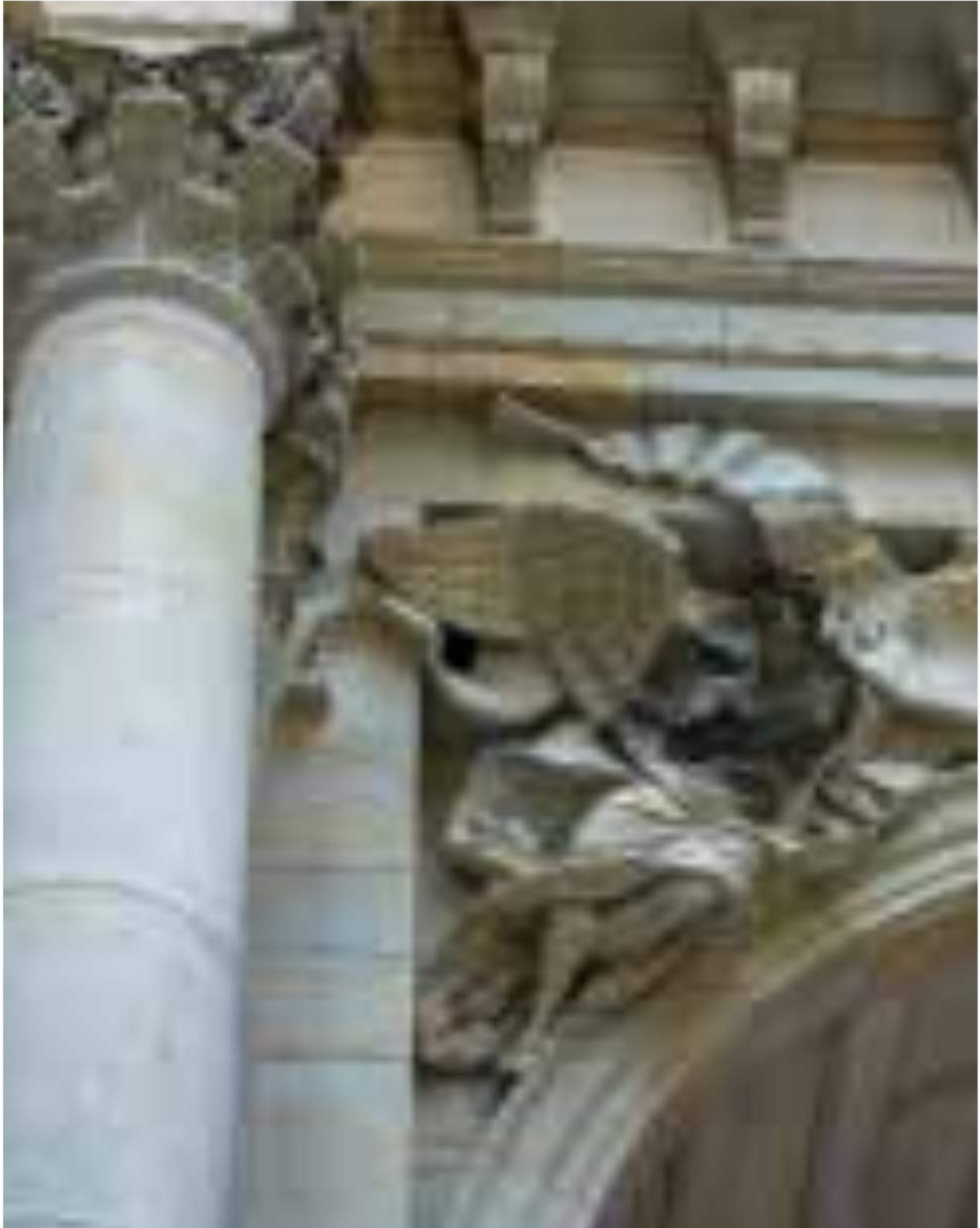
In preparation for cultural activities, the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF) founded the Humboldt Forum Kultur GmbH in January of 2016. Together with the founding directors who hold overall curatorial responsibility, the company is establishing the cultural activities of the Humboldt Forum for the SHF and offering cultural events prior to the building's opening. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Minister of State Monika Grütters, is the company's chairperson. Furthermore, Florian Pronold, Parliamentary Secretary in the BMUB, Michael Meister, Parliamentary State Secretary in the BMF, Walter Lindner, Undersecretary at the Federal Foreign Office, and Torsten Wöhlert, Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs of Berlin play an integral role.

Neil MacGregor, Horst Bredekamp and Hermann Parzinger, the founding directors of the Humboldt Forum, are charged with the task of developing concepts for the contents of the Humboldt Forum on the basis of existing plans, while also determining the thematic emphases for the programme of exhibitions and events both in the lead-up to the museum's opening and afterwards. A further goal is to intensify, develop and encourage thematic networking in the Humboldt Forum's interaction with its three main actors.

In order to provide further expert advising of the company, alongside the founding directors, an advisory board of academics, cultural and museum experts has been formed. An international network of experts will support the founding directors and may later form an academic advisory board for the Humboldt Forum. Working closely with all actors in the Humboldt Forum, the orientation and the interaction of the collections and ideas, as well as structural aspects has thus been bundled and further promoted.

### **The International Team of Experts**

Neil MacGregor studied philosophy, law and art history in Paris, Edinburgh, London and Oxford. He taught art history and architecture at the University of Reading and was the publisher of the Burlington Magazine in London until 1987. Subsequently, he served



*A spolia in the internal Portal III. The original piece was found in a Berlin garden and later reintegrated in the building during the reconstruction. © Frank Burchert*



as director of the National Gallery in London. In 2002, he presided over the British Museum in London in the role of director. There he presented among other things the series, "A History of the World in 100 Objects", accompanied by a corresponding exhibition and publication. In 2014, he curated the exhibition, "Germany – Memories of a Nation". In 2015, he was appointed head of the management committee of the future Humboldt Forum.

Hermann Parzinger, studied pre- and early history, medieval history and Roman provincial archaeology in Munich, Saarbrücken and Ljubljana. In 1991, he was qualified as a professor in Munich and appointed as a lecturer. Since 1992, he has directed numerous excavations and discovered among other things important evidence of Scythian culture. From 2003 to 2008, Parzinger was president of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) and has been president of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz since 2008. He has received numerous awards, including the 1998 Leibniz Prize, and was admitted to the Order Pour le Mérite in 2012.

Horst Bredekamp earned a doctorate in art history in 1974 after studying in Kiel, Munich, Berlin and Marburg. Following a traineeship at Liebieghaus in Frankfurt, he worked as a research assistant and then began his professorship in art history at the University of Hamburg. A professor of art history at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin since 1993, he was also a permanent fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin from 2003 to 2013. Since 2013, he has been a spokesman for the "Bild Wissen Gestaltung" cluster of excellence, which recently presented the exhibition, "+ultra" in the Martin-Gropius-Bau as a test run for the Humboldt Forum. He has received numerous awards, including admission into the Order Pour le Mérite, and has been appointed to four academies, most recently the American Academy for Arts and Sciences (2016).





*The statue of Antinus was temporarily located at The Schlüterhof Court for the visitor's weekend. © Frank Burchert*



# NEW NEIGHBORS. THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF BERLIN ON THEIR WAY TO THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

## Dorothee Wagner

Scientific Coordinator to the Commissioner  
of the Founding Directorate  
for the Humboldt Forum

At the beginning of 2017, the exhibition spaces of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum for Asian Art) and the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) closed to the public. The closure of the museums marked the last big go-ahead for our curators, conservationists and collection managers to the moving of around 24.000 objects. Whereas most of these objects will disappear from the public during the transition process, some of them start their relocation earlier, with the special exhibition “New Neighbors”, celebrating the future Neighbors, Museum Island and Humboldt Forum.



*“Umzugsvorbereitende Maßnahmen” – Waiting for preparation:  
Objects at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst.  
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Dorothee Wagner*

One of the first and main ideas about why we started to plan this special exhibition project, was to give a glimpse of those objects that will be put on display in the Humboldt Forum, but also to present the future neighbors and the connections between them. The future neighbor of the Museum Island, the Humboldt Forum, introduces himself to the audience of the museum island. These objects from South and Central Asia take over the role of ambassadors for the Humboldt Forum: they present a prospect of the cultural histories that will be portrayed in the exhibition.

The “New Neighbors” aim to highlight new perspectives emerging from the neighborhood between Museum Island and the Humboldt Forum: by examples from different contexts, disciplines and historical background the exhibition challenges the connections and differences between the collections. In this sense, the guests from the Museum for Asian Art and from the

Ethnological Museum can be understood as heralds for the synergies arising from the interaction of different museum collections spanning continents and epochs.

Together with colleagues from different departments and disciplines, we developed a series of 25 objects that made a guest appearance on the Museum Island during the summer of 2017: Pieces originating from South and East Asia, Mesoamerica and Africa are integrated within the permanent exhibition. Throughout the preparation of this exhibition, many discussions led to very different modes of putting objects into dialogue, mainly due to the often different methods of display and interrogation connected to each of the seven participating museums. Besides the two Museums on their way to the Humboldt Forum, we worked together with the Altes Museum (Old Museum), the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection), the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte (Museum for Pre- and Early History), the Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery) and the Bode-Museum.



*The Hindu God Vishnu. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*

With one first intervention in the middle of its famous rotunda designed by Friedrich Schinkel, the Old Museum became the starting point for our pathway across the Museum Island, vis-à-vis the historical city palace. The Old Museum houses important works of art and artefacts from the Greco-Roman Mediterranean basin from approximately 1000 BCE through to Roman late antiquity. At eleven points in their permanent exhibition, these objects are joined by “New Neighbors” from India and adjacent regions, mostly objects from the Museum for Asian Art. Examples from Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim cultures are standing sometimes in connection with, sometimes in difference from, or in contrast to the examples of Roman and Greek antiquities.

In this first intervention, the visitor is facing this Vishnu statue, from the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century AD in the centre of the Olympian gods. By juxtaposing sculptures from Classical Antiquity with a sculpture of the Hindu god Vishnu, we interrogated the different meanings for culture history and religious practices up to the present day. The divine appearance of Vishnu, with his four arms and characteristic attributes, became a starting point of discussion about the relevance of religious objects, in relation to those who are no longer worshipped. Another example for similar, and at the same time completely different divine figures, was the juxtaposition of the two sun gods, Surya and Helios. Both have attributes (like the horse-drawn chariots) and ideas (like that of the sun-power) in common. In contrast to the collections of Antiquities, the gods Vishnu and Surya



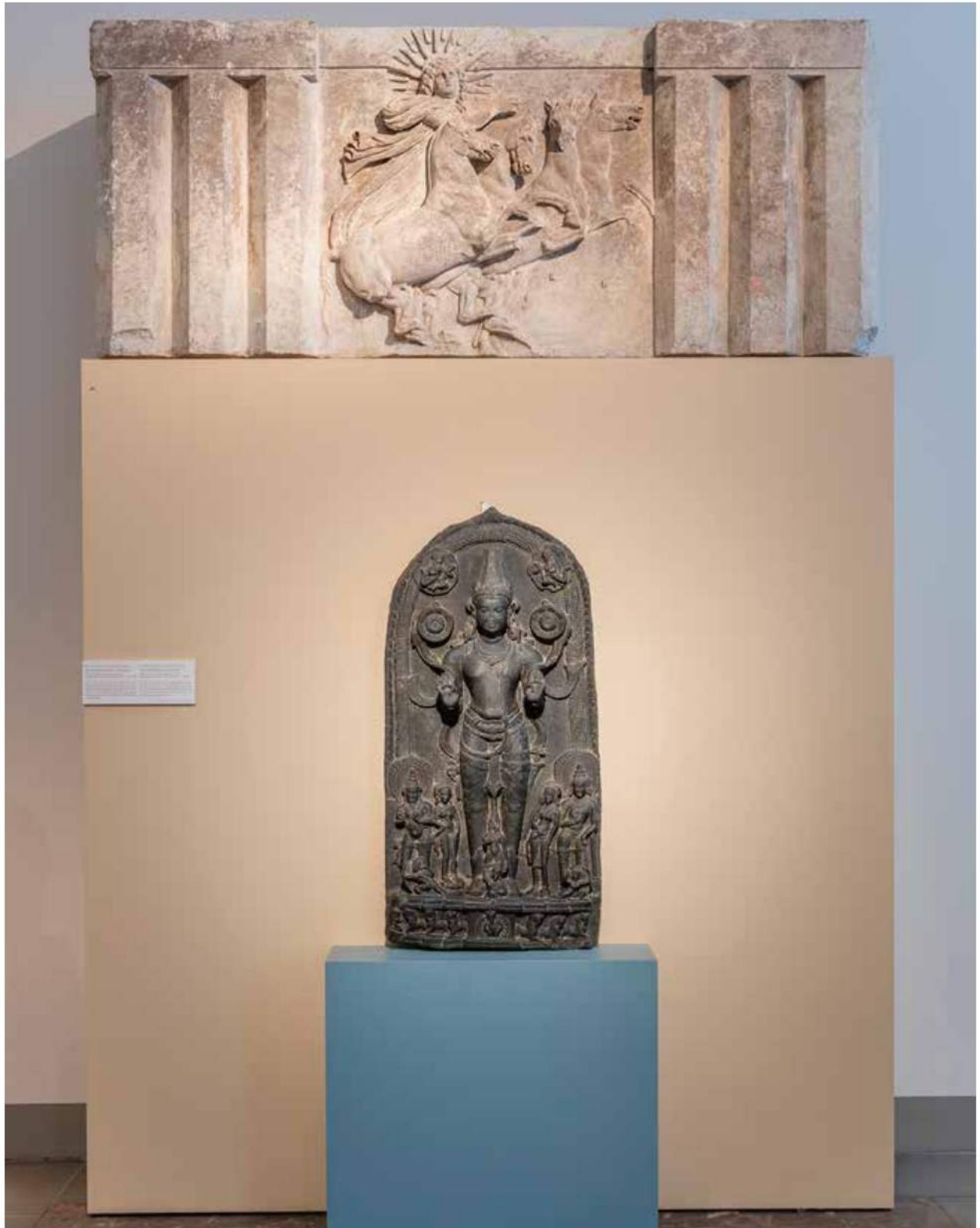


*The Hindu God Vishnu surrounded by the Twelve Olympians, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*

are still “alive” in contemporary religious practices. The religious dimension will play an important role in the future Humboldt Forum, respecting the spiritual meaning objects have for people in their source regions.

The dialogues between the neighbors create situations for comparison and contrast – regarding the specific dimensions of function, form and meaning – that needed to be discovered anew for each object. These dialogues are even more surprising for the visitors when linkages become visible between exhibits originating from completely different contexts that connect historical with contemporary traditions. One example for such an epoch-spanning relationship are two different groups of historical lamps, the one coming from Mediterranean antiquity, and the other as examples of nearly contemporary lamps from Kerala, South India. Whereas the first ones are archeological findings reaching back to a remote period, the second ones from India make visible the connection between antiquity and the present age: lamps of this shape are still manufactured today and ritually handed over at wedding ceremonies. Some forms of these lamps that are in use until nowadays date back into antiquity, when there was a bustling trade with the Roman Empire.

The second site where we celebrated the New Humboldt Forum was the New Museum, constructed as the second of the five museum buildings on the Museum Island: The visitors of the New Museum normally come upon the Egyptian collections as well as the collection of the



*The Greek sun god Helios (3rd cent. BC) and the Indian Sun God Surya (8th to 12th century AD). © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*





*Ritual Lamps from roman antiquity (3rd cent. AD) and from Kerala, India (19th cent. AD). © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*

Museum for Pre- and Early History. Together with our colleagues from the Ethnological and Archeological departments, we developed for this building a perspective on the neighborhood that was different from that in the Old Museum: Re-discovering respectively the collections of each colleague(s) taking part, we promptly faced the common aspects and traditions of our collections' histories. Whereas the Aztec eagle-serpent *cuauhcoatl* can hardly be compared with the Old Egyptian King Amenemhet III, the history behind these objects are certainly comparable. In both examples, the museological tradition of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is inscribed, as it also becomes vivid in the historical exhibition spaces of the New Museum themselves. Their historical galleries and murals, partly visible up to now thanks to the work of David Chipperfield, follow the idea of conveying the impressiveness of Ancient, so-called "High-Cultures". Learning through marveling and facing the spectacular achievements of these "High-Cultures" characterized the description of the Mexican Collection that in former times had already been put on display in the New Museum. Up to now, both epochs in the history of mankind are associated with their achievements in pyramidal architecture and their hieroglyph system. That both collection departments were presented in the same building shortly after its opening in



*Eagle Serpent cuauhcoatl meets King Amenemhet III. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*



1855, proves the linked museum traditions. It is also this historical framework, not least referring to the origins of the Prussian Art Chamber, that left an imprint on the objects' biographies.

Another inspiring exhibition in this field of collection histories will be the show "Uncomparable": From October onwards, sculptures from Africa and Europe will be presented together in order to address the questions that shaped both collections and remain relevant today: Which are the categories and questions addressed at objects, especially when they entered a collection in a historical moment? As a foretaste of this exhibition, a sculpture of a princess from the kingdom of Benin in modern Nigeria will sweep into the Bode-Museum this summer: She will find a Renaissance sculpture by Donatello: Both sculptures entered the National Museums of Berlin at the same time – yet they have been handled in very different ways: one as an ethnographic object, the other as an art historical object. The very different modes of categorization are clearly shown by the ways in which the inventory numbers are inscribed. Whereas the inventory number of an art piece was inscribed delicately on the underside of the sculpture, an ethnographic piece was inventoried by marking the numbers across the visible backside. Again, co-exhibiting objects from different collections reveals questions about the history of the Berlin collections, as well as the different approaches that marked the understanding of objects throughout the times.



*"New Neighbors" from Italy and from the former Benin Empire: A fore taste of the exhibition "Uncomparable" at the Bode-Museum. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*

A further encounter between "New Neighbors" is presented at the Old National Gallery which displays masterpieces of European art, mainly from the 19th century. The highlights of this museum include the paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. As part of the "New Neighbors" programme, his landscape views are confronted for the first time with large-scale Japanese landscapes from the 18th century: The folding screens of paper by Matsumura Goshun displayed here have more than a thousand years of tradition in East Asia, in which the landscape motif is a recurrent pictorial theme. Similar to the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, the landscape depicted is the subject and result of man's examination of nature. The dialogue between these two kinds of materiality inspires the view on each. It helps to discover many parallels between these two painting traditions, especially concerning the relationship between men and nature. However, questions about the construction and transmittance of an ideal landscape were also

important points for discussion: this became especially lively as the folding screen by Goshun depicted an idealized view of the Westlake in Hangzhou – an artistic strategy that is comparable to Caspar David Friedrich’s strategy as he also combined different landscapes in order to create an ideal one.

The “New Neighbors” wishes to enable encounters between objects, and through them, between their biographies, between colleagues from different departments and their collections, between audiences from different museums, and finally, between the future neighbors, Museum Island and Humboldt Forum. These first encounters only give a glimpse of the facets of exhibiting collections from different contexts. Creating situations of comparison and dialogue allows us to make visible both similarities and differences. By leaving behind object classifications and familiar ways of understanding, a dialogic display sometimes ends much more in a detour. The very different backgrounds of object biographies and collection histories make it difficult to always derive a connection between the two partner objects. Categories or classifications of objects cannot be applied in a usual way. It even can be frustrating for the audience, as the meaning of an object has to be learnt and transmitted in a totally new way. But, at the same time, the detour might be worth it, when single aspects can be discovered and highlighted in a new way. In the end, as the encounters in the context of “New Neighbors” show, the detour reveal new insights about both the specificity of one single object as well as the more general aspects, that in the end bring up connections between the histories of objects and the people behind them. Taking over another perspective, we might learn a lot more about a supposedly well-known object.







*Views on Landscape: A folding screen by Matsumura Goshun 松村 呉春 in dialogue with paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / David von Becker*

# IVORY - THE DNA OF THE ART WORLD

## A PROJECT OF THE MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART IN THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

**Raffael Dedo Gadebusch**

Coordinator of the Asian Art Collection; Humboldt Forum

### Introduction

When the Humboldt Forum is going to open its gates, an unrivaled cosmos of world culture, that exists in this concentration and diversity almost nowhere else, will arise in the historical Berlin Mitte district.

The comprehensive collections of the “Museum Island” — European art from antiquity to the 19th century, prehistory and protohistory, Egypt, the Middle East and the Islamic world — will be complemented by the significant and incredibly extensive collections of the Museum of Asian Art and the Ethnological Museum. This juxtaposition of art and culture in such extraordinary diversity offers entirely new opportunities for comparative vision.

However, in the public perception the Humboldt Forum will first and foremost be another prominent museum headquarters in the immediate vicinity of the Museum Island, which also showcases the collections of the City Museum of Berlin and Humboldt University. The two sites will ideally be perceived as a continuation of the dream of the Museum Island’s founding fathers.

The vision this venture of inimitable concentration of world art and culture intends to provide is one seeing the world as a whole. The fact that the Humboldt brothers gave this cosmos its name comes as no surprise, especially Alexander von Humboldt who, as a royal tutor, also intellectually inspired the Hohenzollern princes.

The explicitly declared vision of the Humboldt Forum to provide a place that embodies a unique outlook on the significant testimonies of material and immaterial by offering a singular and comprehensive overview of the world’s cultures rises high expectations. The Humboldt Forum will be much more than merely a showcase of the collections of



the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Humboldt University, and the City Museum of Berlin. It shall serve as a lively, public place that kindles curiosity– a curiosity of the world (!) – like no other; a centre for education in the tradition of the Enlightenment, meant for both citizens and visitors of the city; and also as a meeting place that invites for a stroll. The last two above-mentioned characteristics will not be difficult to implement, not least thanks to its clever architecture: located in the centre of the historical city palace it fits perfectly into the fabric of the city, and also unlocks the historical *Berlin Mitte* in a completely new way because of its openness to the urban space.

The Humboldt Forum can only credibly live up to the public's high expectations if it actually becomes a living space which, unlike a conglomeration of distinguished museums, serves as a place of meeting, a place of wonder, and a centre for learning for all layers of society.

The Museum of Asian Art, whose permanent exhibition will be located on the third floor of the Humboldt Forum, has therefore developed an entirely new concept. Where in the past the arts were heavily divided into categories, making it difficult for Asian Art to access the broader public, now their history is increasingly being told. Narratives play an essential role. Art no longer stands alone, but is also explained within its historical context. Many of those artifacts which are now considered works of art, previously held sacred functions or were part of structural ensembles. The new exhibits of the Museum of Asian Art acknowledge these facts.



Owing to the fragility of some of its works of art, the periodic exchange of its exhibits has always played an important role in the Museum of Asian Art. In the future it will be even more frequent to exchange pieces in order to keep the permanent exhibitions alive and thus encourage repeated visits.

Moreover, for the first time ever, highly concentrated presentations and walk-in storage spaces will provide an insight into the extraordinary diversity of the collections - storage contents and artifacts once inaccessible to the public are now staged in an aesthetic and informative way.

Contemporary relevance also plays a role in the curation of exhibits since cult and religion are still alive in Asia, and the works of art displayed are often alienated from their original "context" by their museumization. Through the purposeful, yet discreet use of media will describe the origins and functions of objects, without robbing them of their unique aura.

In reality however, the permanent exhibition will somewhat fall short of the expectations of new and critical ways of handling artwork, because the collections also seek to convey a representative cross-section of artistic creation and its historical developments.



*Small Jewelry Chest, Sri Lanka, Kotte, circa 1580, Inv.-Nr. I 9928. © Berlin State Museum, Museum of Asian Art*

The vitality and relevance of such exhibits are thus inherently limited. Special and temporary exhibits and their associated events are therefore all the more important, as they can directly relate to contemporary issues of humanity.

## The Project

A special exhibit designed by the Museum of Asian Art for the Humboldt Forum will showcase innovative approaches described below.

The Museum of Asian Art houses a considerable collection of South Asian ivory. Their temporal, stylistic and iconographic diversity inspires an exhibition that seeks to break with the traditional ivory exhibitions. Many of the precious objects tell more stories of early globalization, of colonial trade and cultural exchange than other objects in the collections.<sup>1</sup> Among the treasures of the Museum are ivory objects that belonged to the Prince Waldemar of Prussia. He acquired these during his two-year trip to India from 1844 to 1846<sup>2</sup>, which his mentor, Alexander von Humboldt, had inspired him to undertake. Other artifacts in the collection, such as a jewelry chest from Kotte,





*Venus of Hohle Fels.* © Thilo Parg / Wikimedia Commons

are already mentioned in the inventories of the *Churfürstlich Brandenburgische Kunstammer*, and are thus among the oldest non-European objects in the Berlin museums, and refer directly to the Berlin city palace.<sup>3</sup>



*This piano has a compass of nearly six octaves. The naturals are topped with two piece ivory veneers, with ebony for the sharps and flats. © P. G. Champion*

“Ivory - the DNA of Art” is the working title of the ambitious project, which is developed in close cooperation with Berlin’s Humboldt University and organized by the Culture GmbH in the Humboldt Forum. If this working title is going to be able to communicate a historical and simultaneously multi-perspective approach, then it might well become the project’s final title.

The goal is a global tale of ivory that starts with the origins of the precious materials use, highlights its importance in the arts throughout human history, describes its beauty, and finally, concludes with the most recent controversies on ivory, such as illegal trade and the protection of species.

For at least 40,000 years, objects have been carved from the smooth, organic material. Even the earliest known testimonials impress with their delicate craftsmanship and their artistic expressiveness. The oldest known figurative and anthropomorphic sculptures are made of mammoth ivory. Just in 2008 archaeologists found the oldest human representation, the “Venus of Hohle Fels”, during excavations in a cave on the Swabian Alp – a sensation in art history.

Barely seven years after this discovery of the century, more fragments of anthropomorphic figurines of mammoth ivory of similar age were found in the Swabian Alps, inspiring historians, art and visual scholars, and archaeologists alike.

With these significant findings from southern Germany, art and visual history must be rewritten, because their beginning is much older than previously thought. In fact, artists were already among the Paleolithic hunters and gatherers. Is art as old as humankind? Is humanity defined by artistic expression? These key questions are directly related to study of the oldest material of art. The caves of the Swabian Alp have now been included into the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Artifacts made of the tusks of large land and marine mammals are a global phenomenon. From the Arctic to Southeast Asia, the material has always held a peculiar fascination for humans. Interestingly, practices of attributing different degrees of





*Burning pile of 15 tonnes of Elephant tusks in Kenya. © Carl de Souza/Getty*

potency to the material also appears to be ubiquitous, whether in its cultic-religious use or as a symbol of power and domination.

Next to gold, ivory has until recently been one of the most valuable and sought-after raw materials for the production of art and other sophisticated objects. For millennia, ivory was considered the aristocratic material *par excellence*.

Tusks and the objects made of them were merchandise that was extremely sought-after. Since late antiquity, but especially since the early modern period, ivory works have been traded globally on a large scale. Moreover, ivory trade is deeply intertwined with colonial dominance. At least since the flourishing Arab trade in East Africa, the murderous slave and ivory trade are difficult to separate from each other. In the age of industrialization, the use of ivory reaches its peak, penetrating different spheres of life, and thereby almost reaching mass use. Whether billiard balls, anatomical models or piano keys; ivory can be found in virtually all aspects of life.

Additionally, the most different properties are attributed to tusks - from aphrodisiac to hypnotic ones - that they are among the most sought after raw materials of Asian, and especially Chinese medicine, which explains the greed that has surrounded the precious material from antiquity to the present.

The continuously high demand for tusks has a dramatic impact on the balance of our planet. African elephants are now threatened with extinction due to the insatiable

greed for ivory, while the Asian population is also dropping. However, despite an international ban, illegal ivory trade and the associated organized crime are flourishing. Dramatic images of mountains of burning tusks, helicopter hunts of heavily armed poachers, and pictures of entire elephant herds murdered with poison gas, reveal the current relevance and explosiveness of the subject.

Art and nature are contingent on each other when it comes to ivory. The richness of topics associated with the precious material is extraordinary, and yet most ivory exhibitions have only shown part of such an important and universally relevant topic. Almost all major temporary exhibitions focus merely on the craftsmanship and beauty of ivory objects, and at best incorporate some aspects on trade and colonialism.

The exhibition the Humboldt Forum is to conceive, aims to radically break with the tradition of past exhibition and instead to address the dealing with ivory as both age-old and global phenomenon. The bright appearance and refined beauty of the gleaming material shall be contrasted with its dark side, from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Presented under critical and contemporary light, the topic shall be made accessible for a wide audience. This is also how the feverish search for mammoth ivory is addressed, which has not yet been affected by the ivory spell and is increasingly coming to light through the global warming of melting ice layers in northern Siberia. Also very recent is the latest genetic research on mammoth DNA.

This is why institutions specialized in natural history and natural sciences are, in addition to archaeological, artistic and visual research institutions, obvious cooperation partners for the project.

Moreover, the exhibition shall and should be able to meet the demands of closer integrating countries of origin – in this case mostly African countries – as well as so-called source communities.

In addition to its timeliness, it is its wide-ranging and multidisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of ivory, that makes the theme ideal to be presented in the Humboldt Forum; the universal approach the exhibition pursues echoes the spirit of the Humboldts. Besides, the *Kunstkammer* in Berlin's city palace, located at the centre of the Prussian collection, plays an essential role – ivory is one of its main material. Lastly, Berlin has already been a European hub for art historical research on ivory as early as 1900, best represented by the Jewish scholar Adolph Goldschmidt, and Humboldt University, a further actor in the Humboldt Forum, has maintained this scientific tradition to this day.

The Humboldt Forum's opening will further concentrate Berlin's collection of ivory around the Museum Island, which favours the project in a special way. For the first time can the extremely diverse ivory collection of the Universalmuseum SMB and other Berlin institutions be displayed at a place of such special symbolic and historical relevance in one large exhibition.



Museums and cultural  
diversity. History  
and contemporaneity  
of the relationship

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Museos y diversidad  
cultural. Historia  
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de la relación

# MUSEUMS, ANTHROPOLOGY AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES: REFLECTIONS OF AN OBSERVER

**Robin Dennell**

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In his introductory remarks to the conference, Viktor Elbling, the German Ambassador to Mexico, asked the meeting to focus on three questions: i) how can cultural diversity be maintained?; ii) how much cultural diversity can be tolerated and valued?; and iii) what are the roles of museums in providing spaces for dialogue to promote social cohesion and sustainable development? Here, I will attempt to answer these questions from my own perspective, as an observer who is an academic, university-based, palaeoanthropologist, and as someone who is currently a British citizen of the EU, at least until 2019. In the museum world, I am thus a visitor, rather than a staff member, and a consumer of museum information, rather than a producer. As my interests in human evolution have taken me around several parts of the world, I have visited museums in every inhabited continent except South America, and my career in archaeology has also involved at various stages all periods from the late medieval to the early palaeolithic. I can thus claim a knowledge of museums that is broad, but inevitably shallow.

Before attempting to provide answers to Viktor Elbling's questions, it is useful to discuss briefly the social and political context in which museums world-wide operate as regards anthropology and prehistory. Museums in Europe, Southwest, South and Southeast Asia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and North Africa, China, Japan and Korea operate in totally different contexts from museums in the Americas, most of sub-Saharan Africa, Australasia, the Philippines and the Pacific. In the former group, prehistory ended a long time ago: 2000 years ago in northern Europe and China, 5000 years ago in Southwest Asia and Egypt, and somewhere in between for the rest. Consequently, there are long periods of historically-documented societies between the present and the prehistoric past. This means that individuals in these regions might claim descent from named historical periods or places, but they cannot credibly claim direct genealogical descent from a prehistoric culture. A few in Britain, for example, might trace their ancestors back to William the Conqueror, but even they cannot trace them back into the Iron Age. The





*Uncomfortable histories: the memorial of the 1st Opium War in Guangzhou (1939-42), which the British would prefer to forget. Museums have a role to play in contextualising these type of events. © Robin Dennell*

same does not apply to indigenous communities in regions where prehistory ended with European contact. This occurred post-Columbus and during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Caribbean, Central America, and parts of South America such as Peru and Chile, and also West Africa as the slave trade developed; the 17<sup>th</sup> century in eastern North America, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in most of sub-Saharan Africa, the rest of North America, Australasia and the Pacific, and as late as the 1930's in highland New Guinea. Its significance varied from region to region. In Mexico and Peru, for example, European contact via Cortes and Pissarro had catastrophic consequences for the indigenous populations within a generation through conquest and European diseases; much the same happened and at the same tempo in SE Australia, Tasmania, and also the American Plains with the development of railways. In contrast, colonial contact in many Pacific islands, was often very slight and limited to the occasional passing ship. Much depended upon whether a region was settled by European colonists. The likelihood of that occurring rested on either the ecological tolerances of wheat, sheep and cattle, as with Australia, much of North America, and Argentina, or on the suitability of land

for plantation crops that could not grow in Europe such as sugar, tea, coffee, cotton and rubber, as in the Caribbean, Brazil, India, Sri Lanka, and present-day Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. In those situations, colonisation was usually accompanied by dispossession, appropriation and loss of land rights.

Because of this dichotomy over when prehistory ended and written history began, the process of decolonisation is very different. In Europe, decolonisation is generally impersonal, and mainly an issue when an indigenous community outside Europe wants objects in a museum repatriated. (I leave aside here the more difficult and delicate issue concerning the repatriation of human remains). Nevertheless, decolonisation is still an important issue. It is often remarked that history is written by the victors. Academics and museum staff have a responsibility to “decolonise” text books and museum presentations on non-European societies. Examples from my own field of human evolution are the treatment of racial issues, and questioning Eurocentric views of the past. One clear example is the extent to which Africa’s place in narratives of early human evolution was marginalised by some eminent British palaeoanthropologists in the 1930’s for reasons that were little short of racist, on the grounds that black people could not be considered as ancestors of those who were white (see e.g. Dennell 2001). Some of my own writing, for example, has challenged assumptions from pre-WW2 writings on societies in East Asia being conservative, backward and primitive relative to western ones (see e.g. Dennell 1990, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). In contrast, in regions where prehistory ended with European contact, there are many living descendants of pre-colonial societies, and the processes of negotiation and decolonisation are much more important, personal and often painful.

It was pointed out during the meeting by a German colleague that the French and British might be less sentimental about their lost empire. There is some truth in the statement. However, speaking as one who grew up in Britain when it was shedding its empire in the 1960’s, I do not recall much sentiment about the loss of empire. There was certainly some sentiment when India and Pakistan became independent in 1947 – British India was undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, and the British (or some) retain a nostalgic view of India. I think the main sentiment over the loss of the rest of the British Empire was directed to the inevitable diminution of the Royal Navy as far fewer ships were needed (or affordable). Otherwise, the main impact of the loss of empire is that it coincided with a huge rise in immigration from former imperial possessions, starting with the West Indies, and then South Asia. Somewhat ironically, it was only when Britain shed its empire that became truly multi-cultural. There is truth in saying that former imperial powers could and should be more honest about aspects of their imperial past. In the British case, for example, we are too inclined to overlook the two opium wars in which the British government forced the Chinese to import enormous amounts of opium (see e.g. Lovell 2011 and Figures 1 and 2); and there is nothing to be proud of in the slave trade, or the later version of indentured labour which was often little different from slavery in colonial mines and plantations. There have been recent attempts to redress this imbalance: for example, in highlighting





*Uncomfortable histories: part of the Summer Palace, Beijing, which was burnt down by the British and French armies in 1860 in the 2nd Opium War (1856-1860) —another war that the British would prefer to forget. © Robin Dennell*



*The new museum in Yangyuan, North China, which houses the material from the Nihewan Basin, where the earliest archaeological evidence in China has been found, going back to ca. 1.7 million years. A total of 345 new museums opened in China in 2015; many like the one shown here are modern in design, and help symbolise the way that China has embraced modernity whilst celebrating its past. The tall column at the front of the main building shows the Chinese character “ren”, meaning humanity – a nice way of conveying the global significance of Nihewan. © Robin Dennell*

the contribution of black Africans and West Indians to the British armed forces in both world wars, or the 95,000 Chinese labourers on the western front during World War I in clearing unexploded ammunition, exhuming bodies, digging trenches, and transportation etc. – the “forgotten of the forgotten” (Fawcett 2000). Likewise, the French might be more open about the conduct of their Empire in Algeria and Indo-China, as might other European countries about their own empires: from the viewpoint of the ruled, it was often far less glorious than their rulers maintained. Museums could play an important part in showing Empires from the viewpoints of both the rulers and the ruled.



Before generalising about the role of museums in the context of dialogues between cultures, two further qualifications need to be made. The first is that there are museums that rightly see their role as repositories of the past, and not as instruments of social change. The second is that in many countries the smaller museums rarely have the budgets for changing displays or arranging new exhibitions. Unlike China, where a new museum opened almost every day in 2015 (see Figures 3 and 4), many museums in Britain are hard pressed to replace staff who retire or leave, and many face cuts to their operational budgets as the pressure increases on public finances from competing needs such as care homes for the elderly, an effective fire service, and well run schools. Museums and public parks are often near the bottom of funding priorities, and far less able to act than they would wish. The recommendations that I offer are aimed at a subset of museums that have the staff and resources to implement change, and the willingness to do so.

I will offer four recommendations:

## 1) Dialogue between cultures

For the EU and North America, migration is arguably the most important social and political issue that we face. The issue of migration (or rather, immigration) is immensely dangerous, destabilising and divisive. As examples, Mexico now has Donald Trump as a neighbour, with his threats and promises to build a wall along the US-Mexican border; migration was a major factor in Britain's decision to leave the EU (in my view, deeply regrettable and unwise); and anti-immigrant, right-wing parties have increased their support across the EU in recent years.

Museums can and should provide a space where (im)migration can be discussed in a calm and neutral manner. They can, for example, point out that the United States is the product of migration; that migration is a recurrent theme in European history for the last 2000 years of written history, and several thousands of years of prehistory. Migration – people moving from one region to another – has been happening for the last two million years (see e.g. Bellwood, 2013; Dennell 2015). Museums can show migration from the viewpoint of the immigrant, and can also show the benefits as well as the downside of migration. In addition, museums can explore terms such as migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, economic migrant – terms which describe different situations but which are often used inter-changeably, either unknowingly or deliberately.

Museums can also use their resources to help incorporate immigrant communities into the local region. Much more could be done here. For example, many British cities have large immigrant communities, both from within Europe (e.g. Poles [post-1945], Hungarians [post-1956]) or from outside Europe – Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Nigerian, Ugandan, West Indian etc.) – but a visit to the local city museum



*The new museum at Shuidonggou, North China: another example of the imaginative, futuristic design of many of their new museums. Shuidonggou was the first palaeolithic site investigated in China (in the 1920's), and as at Nihewan, the museum evokes the remote past as well as the present. © Robin Dennell*

rarely even hints at this local diversity. Museums are too often the preserve of the native white British population. As immigrants pay their share of the local taxes that support these museums, it does not seem unreasonable that their civic existence is recognised.

## **2) Cultural diversity and social cohesion**

*Diversity and cohesion: an on-going problem for the EU*

The EU, with its 27 member states, is now an incredibly diverse body but one that at the same time is dependent upon cohesion by its members. The “core” of the EU has been generally successful in raising social cohesion between French, German, Italian and the Benelux countries, but less so with those countries on the peripheries – Finland in the Far North to Greece, Spain and Portugal on the southern edge, and the post-2004 influx from eastern Europe. My impression is that most EU citizens in countries on its fringes have little understanding of each other: for example, Portugal and Poland, Denmark and



Bulgaria; Lithuania and Cyprus. In Britain, there is often great hostility towards some of the migrants from the Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria (who also pick most of their fruit and vegetables), yet most who count themselves as British are totally ignorant about the countries their migrant workforce come from. The EU needs to educate its own citizens about each other, and museums can play an important role in promoting dialogue between cultures via, for example, travelling exhibitions. Diversity is a wonderful property in all manner of ways, but needs underpinning with a strong sense of cohesion.

#### *European identity, museums, and the prehistoric past*

There have been attempts to create an EU sense of identity by reference to a shared prehistoric and early historic past. For example, the Celts were projected as an ethnicity that encompassed NW France, Ireland and western Britain; or the Bronze Age as an entity that showed a nascent European community. When Sweden joined the EU, I remember museum exhibitions portraying the Vikings as international traders than a source of terror among their neighbours. We need to be careful here in maintaining a balance in helping a worthwhile goal of strengthening the social cohesion of the EU on the one hand, and presenting a fictionalised view of the past on the other. Europeans do of course share an incredibly rich and diverse prehistoric past, but it is a past that has little respect for present-day borders and ethnicities. To misquote Cavour when Italy gained its independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “We have created Europe, now we must create Europeans”. Ethnic or national identities are always composite, derived from items as diverse as cooking, music, language, costume, architecture as well as their past, and we need to be wary of the dangers of creating a fictionalised prehistory as a political construct. “European prehistory” refers to an area of study and not an entity such as the Roman Empire, and the past should not be misused to satisfy a political agenda (see e.g. Dennell 1995, 1996).

Where the EU has been very successful is in facilitating networks and common standards amongst those who study the past. This has been done through partnership programmes that are encouraged by the EU through, for example, the ERC, and through student exchange programmes such as Marie Curie and Erasmus. These have been major success stories in training young researchers, in encouraging them to travel and study outside their home country, and to collaborate with colleagues from other EU countries. These types of international collaboration have not only benefitted research into the remote past in Europe, but has also helped to make its practitioners far more internationally-minded than a generation ago, and this is a powerful mechanism for promoting social cohesion.

### **3) Global: social cohesion and sustainable development.**

As Ciraj Rasool emphasised during the meeting, museums can and should provide spaces for those without a voice: the oppressed, for minorities, the marginalised: those with limited access to healthcare, higher education, and skilled employment. Social



cohesion and sustainable development are weakened if these people are excluded. An example during the meeting was that the museum provided a forum for Mexican indigenous minorities to meet to discuss their rights.

#### **4) Museums and ethnographic collections in relation to “dialogue between cultures” and sustainable development.**

In the British tradition, ethnography – the study of cultures from the viewpoint of the observed – was about societies outside Europe, and usually within the British Empire. As such, it was a global tradition, marked by major figures such as Spencer, who became a leading expert on indigenous Australians, Edward Tylor, who aimed at understanding human societies in general, but ethnography also had practical applications of helping colonial administrators understand better those whom they ruled. Many ethnographers also collected items of material culture and today these fill museums such as the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Haddon collection in Cambridge. Motives were mixed: in part to showcase the diversity of humankind, and in some cases, to preserve items that would otherwise have been destroyed (as was the case with A.C. Haddon’s collections from the Torres Strait where zealous missionaries might well have destroyed them as part of their Christianising mission). Ethnographic collections were also a way of showcasing the diversity of peoples ruled by Britain as part of the British Empire. As example, the 1924-1925 Wembley exhibition was held to demonstrate British power on the world stage by staging displays on virtually every colonial possession, but was also held to try to make the British public more interested in its empire than it was thought to be.

My objection to the term ethnography is that it is a colonial concept in that its usage by the general public was to highlight the diversity of the British Empire, and to persuade a reluctant public that the costs of defending and maintaining it were worthwhile to both the rulers and the ruled. It’s a debatable point whether ethnography emphasised the differences between the rulers and ruled, rather than the diversity of humankind. In the post-colonial age that we now inhabit, I would abandon the term “ethnographic” and replace it with “traditional material culture” as this would place ethnographic (no-European) museum collections on the same basis as collections of European traditional material culture.

##### *Repatriation of items in ethnographic collections*

European museums usually obtained items legally and with the consent of the indigenous community under study. There were exceptions of course of what can be described euphemistically as “inappropriate ownership”, in which a museum has an obligation to return items to their former owners or their descendants. As one example, the Royal Albert Museum in Exeter had a shell necklace and bracelet that belonged to a lady called Trugannini, who is better known as the last pure-blood Tasmanian aborigine. She had a terrible life: born around 1812, most of her relatives were murdered



by Europeans, and she was repeatedly raped. Eventually, she and a small group of 13 other Tasmanian aborigines were placed in a settlement, where she was the last one to die in 1876. Even after death, her skeleton was exhumed and displayed in Hobart museum; eventually in 1976, her wishes to have her remains cremated and scattered were at last satisfied. As part of this depressing story, the necklace and bracelet were returned to a Tasmanian community of indigenous descent (who most generously in the circumstances replaced them with replicas), and these are now on display with the “dark history” explained. In a way, this story exemplified what Alex Bunton described at the meeting as “white guilt”; the motives may not be entirely altruistic, but this type of restoration can provide a degree of closure.

### *Traditional material culture and minority languages*

Ethnographic collections of traditional material culture are invaluable as examples of traditions that are centuries and even thousands of years old, both in and outside Europe. The products of these traditional methods of making items provide some of the best insights into prehistory, and prehistory in turn can demonstrate the antiquity and development of these traditions. Because we live in a world of plastic and cheap mass production, most of these traditional crafts will disappear in the next 30 years. We are also living at a time when many indigenous languages are likely to become extinct when their last native speaker dies. It has been estimated that perhaps half the world’s languages will disappear by the end of this century. An additional cause of alarm is that half the world’s languages are concentrated in only eight countries - India, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, and Cameroon.

Museums can and should provide a space and opportunity to record these traditional skills and endangered languages with oral histories and video, as this will probably not be possible in 30 years’ time. This is a world-wide issue that affects Europe (for example, Cornish and Manx), China (with the minority groups in Yunnan Province), and many indigenous communities in parts Africa, Australia and the Americas.

## **Summary**

To summarise: for museums in the EU and USA, migration and immigration are key themes that museums can address as part of their in promoting dialogue between different cultures. For museums in the EU, museums can play an important part in educating EU citizens about each other as a way of increasing the social cohesion of the EU. Globally, museums have a role to play in providing a safe space for the marginalised as a way of promoting social cohesion and sustainable development. Finally, ethnographic collections of traditional material culture are invaluable in documenting skills that are likely to disappear in the next 30 years, often along with the languages of those who use them. Where appropriate, museums should therefore take steps to record with audio and video the skills and languages/dialects of those who still practice these traditions.



## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Nuria Sanz and Viktor Elbling for inviting me to participate in the meeting as an observer, and her support team for ensuring that it ran so smoothly. As stated at the beginning, the views I express here are entirely my own and should not be taken as representative of UNESCO or any other organisation.

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they stand at the end of an evolutionary scale that started millions of year ago with the dinosaurs, while “civilisation” begins outside the museum’s doors. This message has little to do with the supposed inherent nature of the objects on display, even if they are the most beautiful artefacts. Rather, the message conveyed is very much determined by its frame: by the institution of the natural history museum itself.

Yet these same objects can impart different lessons to the average visitor if their meta-contexts change. From the American Museum of Nature you only have to cross the Central Park and enter the Rockefeller wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When Melanesian ancestor figures or African masks are displayed next to masterpieces of Western art, you will admire them as tributes to aesthetic virtuosity. And you will also recognize how much modern 20th century art owes to this source of inspiration. To stay in New York: even in such a politically correct exhibition as that in the National Museum of the American Indian, founded in 1994 and financed partly by the state and partly by Native American organizations, the visitor is confronted with contextual contradictions. Before entering the museum’s building, the former New York Customs’ House, you are greeted by Daniel Chester French’s 1907 allegory of America: the monumental sculpture of a white queen seated on a throne embellished with Maya hieroglyphs, her right foot resting imperiously on the head of a satanic Aztec deity, behind her menacingly crouching a Sioux Indian. The allegory’s undeniable glorification of white conquest is a jarring contrast to the museum’s founding mission to rehabilitate the continent’s native cultures.

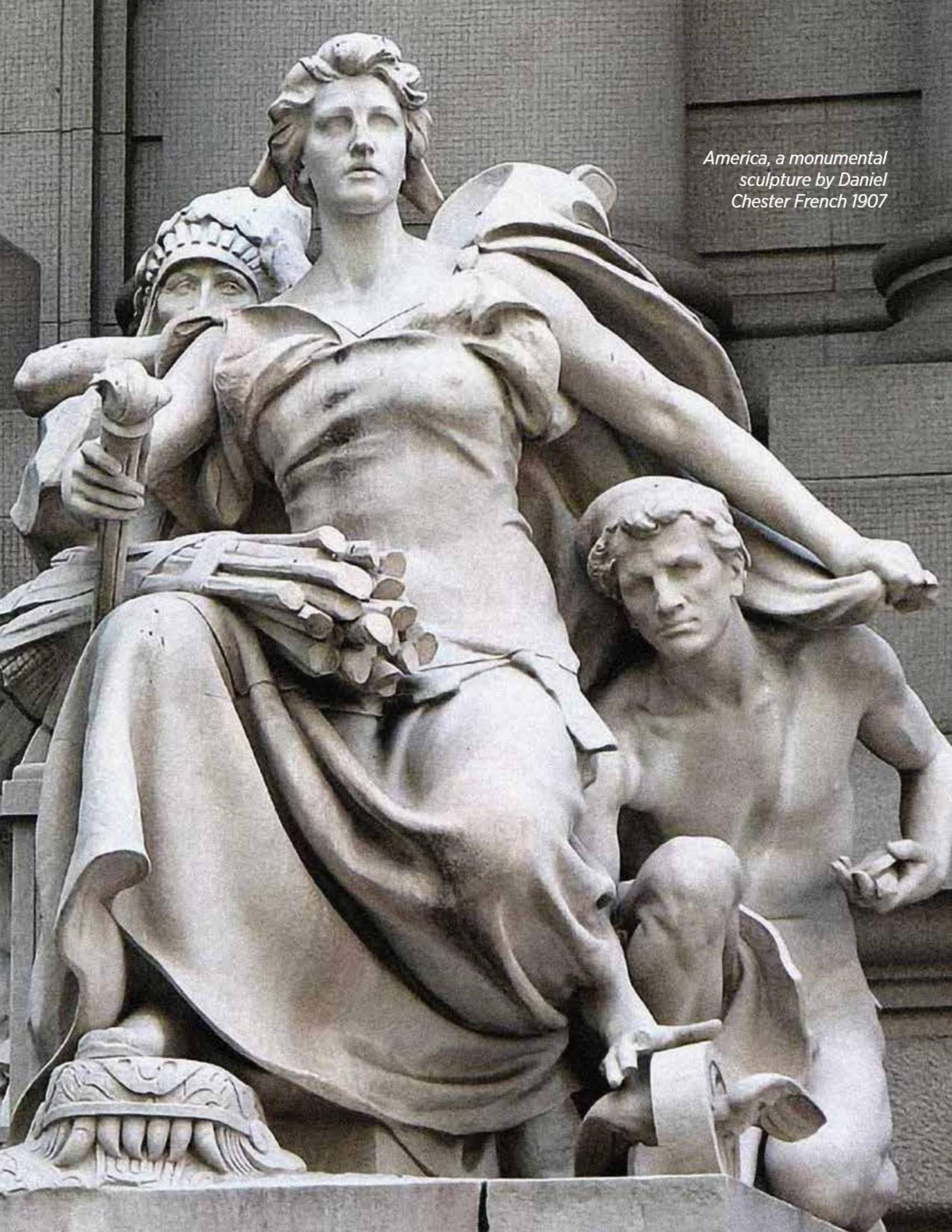


In Europe, ethnographic artefacts were originally collected and admired as curiosities, either in the rarity cabinets of scholars or in the collections of kings and princes, out of which in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century grew the various kinds of public museums. Some of these artefacts were transferred to the natural history museums, others to National collections such as the British Museum in London or the Louvre in Paris. But very soon, first in the Netherlands, in Denmark and in Germany, and later on in other countries, too, the ethnological museum became an institution in its own right. Nevertheless, also each of these ethnological museums conveyed a different message to the public, depending on the way ethnographic items were put into new and quite different orders of things.

Germany offers a good example, because it has, still today, a higher density of ethnological museums than any other European country, even though many of them were founded before the German Reich entered the area of colonial expansion in 1884. In major German urban commercial cities such as Leipzig, Hamburg or Bremen wealthy trading companies established ethnological museums to promote the colonial enterprise at a time when Germany was not yet involved in the on-going scramble for colonies.<sup>3</sup> To generate among the public a sense of adventure as well as desire and longing for far-away places, curators set about creating exotic environments out of tropical plants and animals, picturesque huts and wax figures of indigenous people. These people’s original weapons, tools and costumes provided the final authentic touch that brought such scenes to life and

<sup>3</sup> Penny, H. Glenn. 2002, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press.





*America, a monumental sculpture by Daniel Chester French 1907*



captivated visitors. Other museums regarded their mission to be more scientific in the contemporary Social-Darwinist sense of the term. In these anthropological museums, indigenous peoples represented “inferior races” and their poor technical equipment. Their tools, weapons and magical devices were placed beside skeletons, skulls and waxworks showing the particular physical features of Fuegians, African “Bushmen” or Australian Aborigines. Here too we see a type of contextualization, a rather different one that corresponds to the racist spirit of the age, in which “primitive man” served as a foil for the accomplishments of Western civilization. Yet other curators chose a more neutral mode of ordering by arranging their ethnographic items according to geographical provinces and culture areas. Their choice rested on the conviction that not evolutionism, but diffusionism was the true key to deciphering the early history of humankind.

Ethnographic objects are displaced objects. It does not matter whether they were pillaged, stolen or purchased in good faith from their creators or owners. As soon as they have found their way into European collections and been put into places where they do not belong, they convey new meanings. We can compare them to the metaphors of language. Metaphors are displaced words that enlarge their original meaning by being brought into new syntagmatic chains. What different syntagmatic chains are to words, museums, with their different orders of things and modes of displays, are to ethnographic objects.

This is also true for the newest and, without any doubt, most important ethnological museum in Europe, the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, which opened in 2006 after a preparation period of more than one decade. As its two predecessors in Paris, the Musée de l'Homme at the Trocadéro, in which items of material culture were displayed as scientific specimens to prove that anthropology is the natural science of human kind, and the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie at the Porte Dorée, a charming art deco building erected for the Colonial Exposition of 1931, the original intention of which was to glorify the achievements of French colonialism,<sup>4</sup> the Musée du quai Branly also appropriates its objects only to stage its own vision of Non-European cultures. While Françoise Choay dismissed the museum as a new and superfluous “Luna Park”<sup>5</sup>, James Clifford's more measured critique termed the Branly as a monument of neo-primitivism<sup>6</sup>. This begins with architect Jean Nouvel's idea of creating alongside the River Seine a kind of tropical jungle, and continues with the drab earthen-tone colours of the museum's dark, perfectly styled interior that shrouds the objects in mystery. I think one can fully agree with the museum's founders' decision not to call it a museum of “arts premiers” as originally planned, not only because the term is euphemistic of an expression that simply replaces the older and rather biased-term “primitive art” as many French anthropologists had argued,<sup>7</sup> but also because it is not an art museum in the strict sense of the term. It is true that the artefacts in the Branly are of highest aesthetic quality, but the masterpieces, diligently selected from the two older Paris collections, are primarily used to create an exotic environment into which the visitor can plunge, like an explorer, to make his own

**4** De l'Estoile, Benoît. 2007. *Le Gout des Autres. De l'Exposition coloniale aux Arts premiers*. Paris, Flammarion.

**5** Choay, Françoise. 2007/5. Un nouveau Luna Park était-il nécessaire?. *Le Débat*, Vol. 143, pp. 54-67.

**6** Clifford, James 2007. Quai Branly in Process. *October* Vol. 120, pp. 3-23.

**7** Sally Price. 2007. *Paris Primitive. Jacques Chiracs Museum on the Quai Branly*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

discoveries in the small dark boxes marking his way. The number of museum visitors, which in the first two years after its opening had reached almost three million, is the best proof of the popularity of this new concept. But is it really in keeping with the times? The plans for the Musée du quai Branly were drawn up in the nineties, when ecological sensibilities had reached their peak in Central and Western Europe. Maybe thirty years from now, when all the trees and plants around the building will finally have matured to achieve Nouvel's idea of a harmonic ensemble of nature and culture, this concept will be regarded as out-dated, the product of the spirit of a past age like its predecessors the old Colonial Museum at the Porte Dorée or the Musée de l'Homme: a symbol of the late-20th century's romantic neo-Rousseauism.

What conclusions can we draw from these examples? Of course, the masterpieces of Western art that we find in classical Western art museums are also displaced objects. They too were taken out of their original context, be it from the churches where they once had been objects of religious worship, be it from the collections of kings and princes where they augmented their owners' prestige, or be it from the living rooms of wealthy art sponsors who had commissioned them. As well as the original meaning of ethnographic items, their original meaning is also not immediately accessible to everybody. You may take as an example the numerous allegories in paintings of Renaissance artists such as Fra Angelico, Sandro Botticelli or Hieronymus Bosch. To decipher and translating them to modern contemporary audiences you need art historians and other experts. Nevertheless, the masterpieces of classical Western art are not surrounded by explanatory texts nor put into any artificially reconstructed historical environments. Museum curators trust in the ability of the visitors to recognize spontaneously the aesthetic value of works of art, and none of them would ever dare to misuse them as playthings or set pieces in ideologically tainted narratives. But precisely this is the usual way ethnographic artefacts have been treated in many ethnological exhibitions till today. Instead of this, we should respect them as materialized expressions of the spirit of the cultures they come from and free them from the misleading contexts in which they are usually presented. Only under this condition they can become true mediators between the cultures.

I know how difficult it is to put such a demand into practice. But first attempts have already been made, such as applying the white cube principle to masterpieces of Mesoamerican, African or Melanesian art, or their juxtaposition with classical Western artwork such as in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and in the Paris Louvre. By highlighting the equivalency of Western and Non-Western aesthetics, these attempts are important steps forward, but not fully satisfying because they are still too much obligated to the traditional Eurocentric conception of art. Yet as Western art concepts are challenged in the present age of globalization, the older forms of museum presentation, too, are rapidly changing. Therefore we can only hope that in the near future, through close cooperation between source communities, anthropologists and curators new forms of museum displays will be developed to overcome the apparent contradictions and show that ethnographic objects, too, have a dignity of their own.



# MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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## Introduction

One of the aims of this first session was to question the relationships between museums and cultural diversity, thus I would like to point out three aspects in order to open up the debate:

- 1)** the distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference
- 2)** the value of diversity and diversity as a value
- 3)** the dialogue between cultures and/or the dialogue between people

**1)** As institutions primarily dedicated to the display of cultures, ethnographic museums are confronted with the issue of cultural diversity and of cultural difference. But are the notions of cultural difference and cultural diversity cultures equivalent, or do they presuppose distinct conceptions of Otherness? My argument is that far from being equivalent, cultural diversity and cultural difference are quite distinct and have specific contents according to different national traditions (Dias 2008). This is not a minor semantic quarrel; cultural diversity and cultural difference refer, according to the national contexts, to distinct ways of conceiving alterity and its place within the nation.

As Daniel J. Sherman (2008) noted, 'as public institutions assigned both to safeguard and to define culture, museums have always been sites for the negotiation of difference'. According to this author, museums are constituted by, and themselves constitute, difference. In other words, social, cultural and gender difference are at the core of the museums in general and of ethnographic museums in particular. As Sharon MacDonald (2016) has pointed out, cultural difference can be produced, 'unintentionally, for example through the effects of relative location, as well as

intentionally, as in the explicit depictions of “other cultures” in ethnographic museums’. The place accorded to ‘Asian’ societies in museums, mostly in art museums, reveals the ways in which these societies are perceived as different from those of Africa or Oceania exhibited mostly in ethnographic museums. Thus, one of the most important tasks resides in understanding the mutual constitution of museums and of categories of difference as a complex historical process (Dias 2008; Sherman 2008).

The French case may help to illustrate the distinction between cultural difference and cultural diversity. Dedicated to the study of humankind as a whole, the Musée de l’Homme (founded in 1937) aimed at combining physical anthropology, ethnology, and prehistoric archaeology. Moral and intellectual differences between peoples were not regarded as indicators of inherited cultural capacity, but rather as the result of diverse cultural experiences. French ethnologists during the 1930s argued for the diversity of non-Western societies; the latter were not simpler, just different. Thus, the notion of difference connoted not inferiority but rather complexity. By refusing to use terms such as ‘inferior’ and ‘uncivilized’, French ethnologists aimed at stressing the dignity of all human societies and peoples. Their insistence on fundamental respect for cultural difference among human societies was based on what we might call cultural relativism. Although French ethnologists provided an essentialising vision of culture, it was with the intention of defending a diversity of human value orientations. Far from advocating the equivalence of cultures, French ethnologists in the 1930s were instead concerned with the dignity of human beings and societies, which is quite a distinct concern.

With the creation in 2006 of the Musée du quai Branly (Paris), there is a shift from cultural difference to cultural diversity. This museum is primarily dedicated to the display of cultural diversity; it explicitly aimed to be distinctive from an ethnographic museum - thus its name, reflecting its own geographical location and not any specific ethnographical focus - as well as from the embracing view of the study of man - incorporating physical anthropology, ethnology, and prehistoric archaeology - pioneered by the Musée de l’Homme.

Far from being a neutral term, cultural diversity is embedded in theoretical and political presuppositions. Two points are worth making; first, the distinction between cultures and civilizations, a distinction institutionalized with the creation in France both of an ‘exotic’ museum dedicated to cultural diversity and of a non-exotic museum, the MuCEM, at Marseille in 2013 devoted to European and Mediterranean civilizations. Why is diversity essentially linked to cultures and not to civilizations? Second, the concern for human diversity and diversity of cultures echoes a wider concern about ‘ecological’ issues - climatic diversity, bio-geographical diversity, and biodiversity. The presupposition that cultural and biological diversity are not merely similar, but are actually manifestations of the same phenomenon, can be seen in the emergence of a new term - ‘biocultural diversity’.





As for cultural diversity, it has acquired global prominence and has become an issue of concern to social movements, international organisations and states. In other words, cultural diversity seems to be a recent notion based upon quite a modern value, the value of diversity. But what kind of value is diversity, and what kind of duty is its protection? And for whom is diversity a value?

## 2) The Value of Diversity and Diversity as a Value

In contrast to its synonym *variety*, *diversity* has ceased to be a descriptive term; it has become the name of a supreme late-modern value. The concept's extension grew to encompass both nature and culture; the very term biodiversity encompasses both biological and cultural diversity and it has contributed to a larger discourse about the value of diversity. Biodiversity, in other words, helped make diversity a normative value. As Vidal and Dias noted (2016), it is only in a more recent context that concerns about the consequences of the loss of biological and cultural diversity came to prominence, and that biodiversity became established as a central cultural value. Western societies fundamentally value diversity – as an inherent normative good – in a way that previous Western societies did not. Thus, diversity is seen as valuable through the lens of its being at risk. In this perspective, difference is downplayed to the advantage of diversity, and diversity is given intrinsic value. The notions of loss, risk and danger shape museums' practices in terms of protection and preservation of cultural diversity. The development of the sense that diversity itself is a value to be protected and celebrated in Western societies is a recent form of sensibility, an 'endangered sensibility' (Vidal and Dias 2016). Within this new form of sensibility, diversity acquired the status of an inherently endangered attribute, a threatened value that needs to be protected and preserved. Consequently, extinction either of species or of cultural heritage is envisioned as an anti-value per excellence.

We need to question the notion of preservation itself. Preservation of what, by whom, and for whom? As the French anthropologist, Philippe Descola wrote (2008) 'there are no absolute, scientifically founded criteria on which to justify universally recognized values concerning the preservation of natural and cultural assets'. UNESCO's conventions, namely the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* have come to imply that all natural and cultural entities deserve in principle to be preserved and their defense is somehow a moral imperative. According to Wiktor Stoczkowski (2009), 'UNESCO's doctrine of diversity' functions as a cosmopolitan and secular soteriology, as a vision of redemption and salvation that receives meaning and legitimacy from crisis narratives and a 'doomsday' perspective.

### 3) Dialogue between cultures and /or dialogue between people?

In my previous research dealing with the Musée du quai Branly, I pointed out the ways in which French debates on cultural diversity were shaped by concerns about the 'equivalence of cultures'. What is at stake in this notion is the assumption that all cultures can be put on an equal footing through the choice, made by Western connoisseurs, of their masterpieces and of their most representative objects. In other words, equivalence of cultures presumes that art is the best way of approaching cultural diversity. At the Musée du quai Branly, there is close relationship between cultural diversity and the stress put on art, as a common denominator across cultures. Far from accepting the possibility of alternative cultural expressions, the Musée du quai Branly tends somehow to limit the field of cultural diversity to one supposed universal form, the artistic one. The Musée du quai Branly was founded on the assumption of the equal worth of the world's cultures and on the equal dignity of the world's cultures. This institution maintains that it is the equality of creations, and especially of artistic creations, that paves the way for the equality of peoples and societies. In other words, through art all societies have equal status because art, being as a common denominator, can transcend cultural barriers and establish a 'dialogue between cultures'.

Can equality, particularly equality of cultures, be made compatible with the acknowledgment of cultural differences? But as we know, equity in the artistic sphere can be paralleled with inequity on the social ground. Thus the role ascribed to museums: to exonerate society for its failure to deal with peoples and cultures whose objects are in museums devoted to the diversity of cultures.

Though ethnographic museums in Europe have increasingly sought to address contemporary culturally diverse societies, there is therefore an underlying difficulty – to display cultural diversity as a national possession. As Tony Bennett (2006) pointed out, we 'need to go beyond diversity as a possession to its conception as an ongoing process of intercultural dialogue'.

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# ETHNOGRAPHIC ABSENCES AND EMERGENCES: TOWARDS A MUSEOLOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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The argument that I uphold here is relatively simple: I propose that museums based on ethnographic collections are particularly well positioned to intervene in the contemporary world, as long as they explore critically their collections to address cultural forms that have been either absent from dominant public debates, or are emerging as relevant voices in the public sphere. To explain this proposal, I will step aside and suggest that we understand the present moment – the historical context that we have been fabricating and in which we live now – as a context that we urgently need to transform, given the growing inequality in the distribution of wealth that structures it. In conveying this proposal, my effort is three-fold: on the one hand, I will try to provide a general characterization of the context; on the other I will try to elucidate a model for its understanding, including its relationships with ethnographic collections that may not, initially, be obvious. Finally, I will use the model to reason about the possible roles of ethnographic collections nowadays.

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## 1. Context

On January 18, 2016, OXFAM issued a report entitled *An Economy for the 1%*, illuminating updated levels of global inequality in the world's wealth distribution. According to 2015's figures, the report concludes that 1% of individuals had more wealth than "the rest of the world combined". In 2015, 62 individuals had as much wealth as the 3.6 billion people who are the poorest among the world population. To give an idea of how these figures have evolved, in 2010 these already few individuals were still over six times more numerous: no fewer than 388. These numbers are shocking, and also a clear indication that we are heading towards an even worse, unprecedented, scenario. According to the World Economic Forum, in 2015 nearly 70% of the world's population shared a meagre 3% of the world's wealth, while 0.7% of the population shared 41% of the global wealth among themselves. At one of the sides that causes this abyssal asymmetry – and is one of the main causes for this state of affairs – lies the devaluation of work in favour of the rise of capital shares, combined with massive tax evasion within legal limits, and forms of exclusionary economies that contribute to maintain the majority of the world's population on the brink of





*Amazonia: The Rights of Nature.* © Nuno Porto

poverty, and 700 million living in extreme poverty (less than \$1.9 USD/daily). To these factors, we should add classic economic activities that tend to have predatory effects upon the populations where they occur. According to the Oxfam report these are related to extractive industries (mining and oil drilling in particular) that tend to leave behind a depleted environment that impedes the ability of local populations to resume life in their traditional lands. More often than not, these are indigenous populations whose material culture has been accumulated elsewhere in the form of ethnographic collections. As such, it is possible that in extreme cases material culture has survived the descendants of its producers and constitutes, today, the sole witness to other forms of living and its inherent aesthetics, modes of belief and forms of knowledge.

The consequences of the concurrent processes that have led to the present state of affairs involve both environmental concerns and social unrest. Whilst not claiming that inequality of wealth distribution is the sole cause of global warming, climate change or of mass migrations – which, in turn, are related to each other – wealth inequality does have to be factored as one of their main causes. In its history, the inequality of global wealth distribution merges with colonialism and the age of empires, both of which have also been responsible for boosting museum collections.



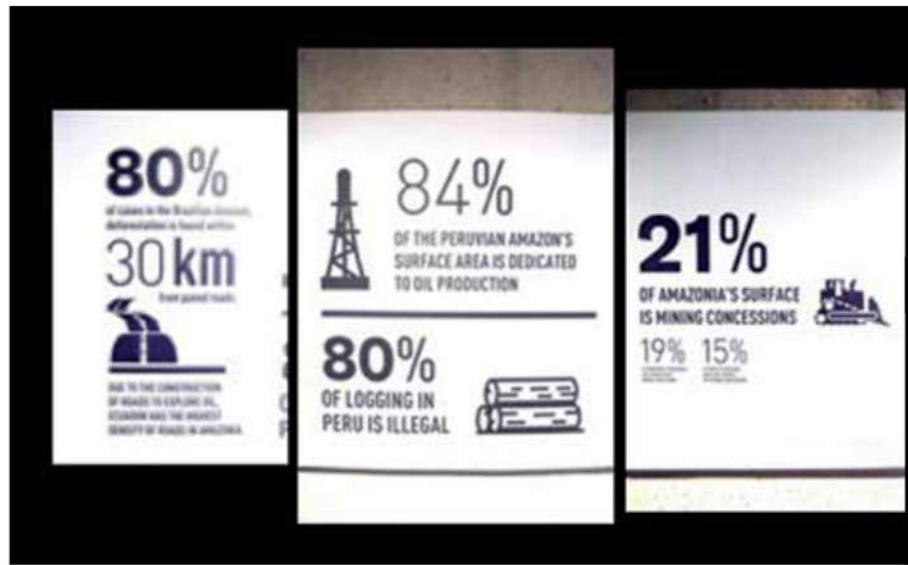
*Mari Luz Canaquiri Murayari, President of the Federation of Kukama Women from Peru, commenting the displays and the social situation in Peru, October 12, 2017, UBC Museum of Anthropology. © Nuno Porto*

## **2. Understanding this context and its relationships with ethnographic collections**

Museums, and those based in ethnographic collections as much as any others, have participated – and many still do today – in diverse histories of dispossession and in colonial forms of accumulation in which ownership takes precedence over information or knowledge and hence, according to reasonable estimates, there are millions of ethnographic objects stored in western museums of which we know very little, as they became silent vis-a-vis their initial producers. Forms of life that were alien to the bourgeois West were dissected and classified by using culturally insensitive grids of universalistic ambition that were used to juxtapose the sense of (colonial) mission with a western centred view of the world. Ethnographic collections indexed peripheral roles, subjugated and destined to extinction forms of knowledge, as well as distinct grades of irrational beliefs towards other groups represented in collections, be those colonial



subjects abroad or peasants at home. It was within this framework that discourse and information about the objects has reached us in the present, sometimes able, but not most of the times, to disclose or initiate a relationship between the places where those collections are held today, and the peoples with which the contemporary descendants of their producers identify. Museums were, in other words, very much part of a number of practices of dispossession by creating narratives that have legitimised them, when not, directly, praising them.



I will briefly draw on the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos to further characterize this context. According to him, the context of global inequality is made largely invisible by modern western thought that creates an abyss between two diametrically-opposed views of the world. In his argument, at the core of this abyssal thinking lies the impossibility of both co-existing (Sousa Santos 2011, p. 71). Modern western knowledge and law constitute, for him, the quintessential forms of abyssal thinking in that they both render invisible – that is, they both actively produce the invisibility of – forms of knowledge and law that do not conform to their own tradition and precepts. Ergo: popular forms of knowledge and of law – either of peasant or indigenous creation – are made to disappear from the social landscape in that both are simply equated with forms of ignorance that are bound to be replaced by true knowledge and true law. Hence the colonial situation as the zero degree from which modern conceptions of law and knowledge are built. The hegemonic side of the line thus declares as non-existent the other side of the line as it tends to become conceptualized as the past of this side's present, and, therefore, without a present, a history, or any form of autonomous agency. In this perspective, on this side of the line there is true knowledge, there is law, and there is democracy, but on the other side, there is only ignorance and tutelage. Thus, the individual, law and democracy are made universal on this side, because on the other side the past is progressively being aligned with the present on this side, and is therefore permanently 'in-progress'.

My argument is that inasmuch as ethnographic museums have participated in these discourses and engaged in shady collection processes, they have contributed to render invisible, coeval non-western cultures. Salvage ethnography for instance, the notion that some objects or specific sets of practices were contemporary 'vestiges' or the last remaining expressions of extinct, or shortly to become extinct, groups, is anything else but this kind of exercise, which, in turn, extends a genealogy of exclusion that we can locate back, at least, to evolutionist displays and its many variations across distinct colonial projects, both of domestic and imperial colonialism.



*Infographics by graphic designer Cody Rocko, accounting for the forms of physical violence associated with deforestation, March 9, 2017 – February 15, 2018, UBC Museum of Anthropology. © Nuno Porto*

Stated otherwise, ethnographic museums have been active participants in extending the abyssal divide to the realm of material culture and associated discursive universes, from indigenous knowledge to the arts.

But ethnographic museums have as well – and there is no paradox involved in this process – taken the lead in performing the critique of their past practices, of their

heritage, and of the legacy of colonial abysses, in order to put the collections at the service of public understanding of recent histories, namely by means of processes of repatriation of artefacts to their original communities, by means of opening spaces for classifications, descriptions and display based in the knowledge of the cultural originators of artefacts, by sustaining the adoption of non-western cultural protocols and, in sum, by de-centering the museum work from an authoritative mode towards more dialogical, conversational and participated modes of relations with cultural stake holders. In a way, it is the unprecedented cultural critique and practice led by professionals in ethnographic museums and some of its critical off-springs – such as community based museums, event-based ephemeral museums, or equally elaborated and progressive schools of thought and practice such as sociomuseology (cf. Buntix and Karp, 2006; Chagas, 2010) – that has placed ethnographic modalities of knowledge relations at the forefront of museology, as Kavita Singh or Nicholas Thomas have recently celebrated and emphasized. For Thomas, in fact, the centrality of museums – given the centrality that culture has come to occupy in contemporary societies worldwide – is due to the fact that they became a central ‘space of participation in public life’ (Thomas, 2106, p. 143).

### 3. The potential roles of ethnographic collections nowadays.

The ever-demonstrated vitality of ethnographic methods seems to have been celebrated mainly in instances when they have overflowed anthropology’s borders to be adopted and normalised in other disciplines, namely in market research and in the fields of the arts. While it goes without saying that both these fields of knowledge and practice created their own versions of what ethnographic methods look like, anthropology and ethnographic museums have been able to renew themselves partly by critically updating and adapting ethical and philosophical principles upon which the methods are founded, namely a principle of fragmented de-centrality according to which we inhabit many coexisting worlds (that ethnographic collections may help us to





*The display of the constitutional laws of the nine countries that have jurisdiction over the Amazonia rainforest, March 9, 2017 – February 15, 2018, UBC Museum of Anthropology. © Nuno Porto*

mediate), and a relational epistemology that puts us, our worlds and our views of ourselves and others, inevitably, as part and parcel of our relations with others. Thus, as long as ethnographic collections may be revisited not as the accumulated material culture of others, but, rather, as material expressions of contemporary relations between social groups, the possibility of working towards the recognition of alternatives to the world we live in – and which is contemporary for all of us – is an interesting prospect for museums based ethnographic collections. Such a prospect – unlike most of the manifestos about the future of the ethnographic museums – is likely to be extended to the institution as whole, covering its front of the house activities – public programs, exhibitions, teaching, education, etc. – as well as the minute daily, permanent, backstage activities such as classification and conservation. Indeed, museums classification against epistemicide imply research procedures that may establish cultural value from contemporary perspectives, leading to the creation of new social relations based upon the reassignment of meaning, narratives and histories to the previously existing collections and to the incorporation of these relations in acquisitions policies.

Two interrelated methodological moves within museum work are implicit in this shift. On the one hand museums must begin to be clearly addressed as processes, rather than as a terminated collection of objects. The museum as process, secondly, includes the multiple agencies of objects in its collections, and their potential to transform existing relationships and create new ones as they are made significant by other, non-artefactual agents in the relational network of which the museum is part (Byrne et al., 2012). A second methodological principle is, therefore, that the museum-as-process is not a place but a node in ever changing and shifting networks, animated by dissociated, and sometimes conflicting, histories, presents and projects of future. Both these principals are core to experiments with more participated frameworks that extend the notion of inclusion from the relations of the museum with its public, to all levels of museum work. Finally, to establish such participated framework towards an ethnography of absences and an ethnography of emergences is to infuse the ethnographic with a dimension of social justice and, quite literally, to contribute to reflect on the world we live in, and transform it in the world we want to live in. That, I think, would be a good beginning. Again.

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# LE CINEMA DANS LES MUSEES

**Jean-Pierre Bekolo**

Cinéaste

Quand bien même les musées utilisent de plus en plus des vidéos, il n'en demeure pas moins que ceux-ci n'ont pas apprivoisé le médium qu'est le cinéma dans le sens où il permettrait une redefinition même de ce que c'est le musée.

Si les points de départ du musée et du cinéma sont différents, il n'en demeure pas moins que la finalité est la même; celle de raconter une histoire.

La question que je pose aux musées est celle de savoir pourquoi partir de l'objet quand on pourrait partir de l'histoire elle-même?

Mieux, pourquoi ne pas emprunter au cinéma ses outils depuis le récit jusqu'aux décors à reconstitués afin de fournir au public une expérience la plus complète possible?

On imaginerait alors un musée non plus avec des objets mais plutôt avec histoires racontées sur un support cinématographique.

Si aujourd'hui la présence physique des objets dans les musées pose problème à cause des conditions de leur appropriation dont la violence, il est indispensable de remettre en cause toute la conception même du musée.

Et le cinéma semble nous apporter une double solution, la première étant celle du film qui nous permet de remplacer l'objet et de n'en garder que son histoire, la deuxième étant le décor dans lequel le film serait projeté permettant de disposer d'éléments physiques qui conceptualisent l'histoire. Le cinéma nous permet de passer du musée-objet au musée-histoire raconté avec des images et du son dans un décor.

Nous ne devons pas perdre de vue que l'objet que nous regardons dans un musée est pour celui qui le regarde un signe, au sens sémiologique du terme, et nous voulons nous

remplacer cet objet par un autre signe qui est ici le film qui serait à la fois un signifiant et un signifié. Le film devient donc un signe au même titre que le mot, le geste, le son, l'objet et l'image. Et il est en mesure quand on l'étudie car nous sommes en sémiologie de nous dire comme l'objet voire plus la vie sociale des Hommes et nous fournir comme le dit Foucault la sémantique du texte posée par Dieu sur la surface de la terre.

Quelle est la spécificité du cinéma en tant que signe? Et qu'est-ce qui laisserait penser que le signe-cinéma pourrait prendre la place du signe-objet dans un musée?

Aristote définit toute œuvre artistique comme une "imitation de la réalité sensible dont elle saisit la forme". Godard apparente l'art du film à la création d'une image comme en radiologie. Le cinéaste russe Tarkovsky lui définit le cinéma comme "le seul art où l'auteur peut créer une réalité absolue". Donc son expérience est transmise au public de façon réelle et directe, avec une précision photographique, si bien que les émotions du secteur s'apparentent à celles du témoin, sinon à celles de l'auteur. Il s'agit donc d'un art qui opère avec la réalité. L'objectif du réalisateur est de recréer la vie: son mouvement, ses contradictions, ses tendances, ses conflits. La réalité qu'on voit n'est plus qu'un leurre, ce que Metz appelle le "semble-reel". C'est donc dans sa vraisemblance avec le réel - semblable au vrai - que le film en tant que signe est en mesure de prendre la place de l'objet ethnographique car à la fois signifiant et signifié. Car cet objet qu'on regarde dans le musée représente une culture voire une civilisation, il est l'idée qu'on se fait de celle-ci. Il est un signe puisqu'il est une idée qui remplace une autre; l'idée signifiante se dédouble et superpose l'idée de son pouvoir représentatif. On a alors l'idée signifiée, l'idée signifiante et à l'intérieur de celle-ci, l'idée de son rôle de représentation. En fait, le signifiant n'a pour tout contenu, toute fonction et toute détermination que ce qu'il représente. La sculpture n'a pour contenu que ce qu'elle représente et pourtant ce contenu n'apparaît que par une représentation. Pourquoi avons-nous encore besoin de la sculpture si l'exemple premier d'un signe est sa représentation spatiale et graphique. Car la dimension spatiale et graphique d'un film qui véhicule aussi une idée est structuraliste. Un film qui est un signe d'une autre idée qu'il établit un lien de représentation, à la fois indication et apparaît. Le film de musée devient donc cette liaison d'un signifiant et d'un signifié le rapport ne peut être établi que dans l'élément général de la représentation que dans la mesure où l'un et l'autre sont représentés.

En mettant le film au musée, nous mettons non seulement le musée mais le film lui-même au cœur du processus éducatif de l'homme grâce à un modèle cinématographique d'acquisition des connaissances. Car avant tout il s'agit d'un dispositif nous permettant d'apprendre à comprendre l'Autre qui n'est pas moi, sans être obligé d'aller chez lui. Donc de "versehen", voir près et loin à la fois.

Le mouvement qui fait la spécificité du cinéma nous met du côté des objets certes mais surtout du côté dynamique de l'activité, de l'action, il ne nous permet pas seulement de montrer les choses et d'en parler mais surtout d'aller au-delà.





L'assemblage ou le montage cinématographique permet ici d'ordonner l'univers, en résoudre les aspects, les contradictions et recréer des mondes.

Le visiteur du musée devenu spectateur regarde l'Autre tout en revivant sous forme d'émotion la culture de l'Autre ou plutôt il oscille entre son vécu à lui et le vécu de l'Autre.

L'image cinématographique se situe aujourd'hui au coeur du projet éducatif de l'Homme, sa perfectibilité, son rapport au savoir et à la culture. Lorsque Kant dit que *ce n'est pas la peine d'aller au pôle nord pour savoir qu'il n'y aura pas de citronnier là-bas*, il reconnaît qu'au coeur même du processus éducatif, il y a des dispositifs qui nous permettent d'apprendre les choses sans nous obliger à aller sur place pour les découvrir. Le cinéma pour remplir sa mission éducative doit en plus de fournir la connaissance, donner le jugement. Peut-on séparer le cinéma de l'éthique? Dans le texte "Qu'est-ce que les lumières?" Kant surmonte tout ce que l'on faisait jusque là dans le domaine de l'acquisition de l'humanité. Pour lui la connaissance, c'est notre humanité. Kant appelle ça la culture, la culture qui nous humanise. Les humanités auxquelles appartiennent l'anthropologie et les musées font partie de cette culture humanisante. Toutes ces connaissances acquises des objets et des peuples doivent être conçues comme une connaissance qui nous humanise un peu davantage, qui nous introduit dans ce que Humboldt appelle la culture universelle. Toujours pour Kant, au-delà des connaissances accumulées en regardant par exemple un nombre important d'objets dans les musées, on peut rester sot. Il dit que ce qui nous rends intelligent c'est le jugement. En bon piétiste, Kant met l'accent sur l'expérience venue, c'est à dire sur l'authenticité de ce que l'on expérimente. Pour donc remplir cette mission éducative, l'expérience du musée doit en plus de fournir la connaissance, donner le jugement. Ce qui voudrait dire que cette activité humanisante qu'elle soit muséographique ou cinématographique ne peut s'envisager sans son corollaire qui est l'enseignement. Une éducation entièrement tournée vers l'individu. Le cinéma envisagé dans ce cadre ne peut se concevoir qu'au service d'une idée, il n'est pas nécessairement pas une idée, il ne peut pas être au service du concept, cela veut dire une idée arrêtée.

La grande question qui se pose est la suivante, quels genre d'individus voulons-nous produire à la fin? Des individus qui sont tous pareils au départ et qui sont en mesure chacun d'opérer une transgression individuelle? Ou bien des individus comme Kant l'imagine qui doivent trouver le lien social qui va les unir dans un rapport de reconnaissance réciproque qui va peu à peu contribuer à réaliser ce grand ensemble qu'est l'humanité? Art ou science? Ce qui est sûr c'est que le film qui se substitue à l'objet du musée doit rester un art tout comme l'interprétation d'une oeuvre, d'un texte est un art et non pas une science car la science relève de la critique de la raison pure, c'est à dire la recherche d'une causalité sans faille. Pourtant il y a toujours un principe d'incertitude qui fait que c'est un art qui doit doter les individus de la faculté de se revendiquer eux-mêmes, de s'approprier des connaissances pour que ça devienne leur affaire, et ensuite ce qu'ils vont en faire est d'un autre ordre et qui ne peut pas scientifiquement prédéterminé.

The anthropologies of  
the world. The role of  
anthropological disciplines  
in the conceptualization  
of contemporary dialogue  
between cultures

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Las antropologías del  
mundo. El papel de las  
disciplinas antropológicas  
en la conceptualización  
del diálogo contemporáneo  
entre culturas



# WORLD ANTHROPOLOGIES AND MUSEUMS. RE-PRESENTATIONS, CONVERSATIONS AND DIVERSITY

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Anthropologies and museums had a historical and constitutive relationship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historians even coined the expression “museum period” to describe this primordial association in the first moments of the discipline (Stocking 1985: 3). Though quite common, such relationship happened in different ways in diverse countries. Anthropological research carried out in museums clearly lost ground after World War Two with the increased lack of interest in material culture and museum collections by anthropologists (not by archaeologists). This trend had started some years before when a “more behaviorally oriented anthropology” (idem: 8) started to flourish. On top of that, postcolonial developments impacted museums and anthropology and new post-war modernization processes demanded for the expansion of the university system on a global scale. In consequence, anthropology departments and postgraduate programs multiplied within the university environment in many countries. Research started to be done in a more generalized fashion and combined with academic training especially on the postgraduate level.

In the past 50 years, anthropology grew and globalized itself at the same time that the number of museums increased. So, in spite of the end of the early virtuous circle, it is possible to say that for anthropologies and museums the last century has been a period of expansion. But anthropologies and museums share more than just a genealogical relationship. Both have



*Canadian museum of history, Ottawa.  
© Gustavo Lins Ribeiro*



*El Gran Museo del Mundo Maya de Mérida. © Gustavo Lins Ribeiro*

historically depended on uneven power relations with “Others.” Museums, as Stocking (1985: 5) put it, rest on the expropriation (not only in an etymological abstract sense, but sometimes in the dirty sense of theft or pillage) of objects from actors in a particular context of space, time and meaning and their appropriation (or making one’s own) by observers in another.

The same can be said of anthropologies, they have largely depended on ideopiracy, a term I coined to designate the longstanding robbery of ideas and knowledge from native colonized peoples (Ribeiro 2016: 628). But it should be clear that, as Ghassan Hage says, “‘anthropology is a white colonialist project,’ can’t be the end of the conversation” (2017), for anthropology is “infused with the desire to experience, labor on, and develop knowledge of modes of being other than our own” (idem). This awareness implies the need to disentangle the white colonialist heritage from the anthropological/universal discourse (ibidem) in order to liberate the potential of anthropology as “a compendium of alternative dreams” (Visvanathan 2006: 240). Indeed, anthropologies and museums’ interest in otherness, in alterity, changed in response to wider sociocultural, economic and political changes, and moved from exoticism to a respect for other people’s positionalities. Therefore, in spite of their original sins, anthropologies and museums





Museo Memoria y Tolerancia, Ciudad de México. © Gustavo Lins Ribeiro

also are grounded in unique collections and interpretations of diversity. They have played an important role in the circulation of difference in the world.

The fact that both anthropologies and museum are western modes of re-presentation should not necessarily mean they are not endeavors worth to pursue. The real issue at stake is what kinds of re-presentations need to exist in order to enhance the contemporary dialogues amongst cultures and the respect for difference. While I will not be able to tackle with all the difficulties involved in this question here, I am convinced that both diversity and pluralism are key notions to deal with this issue's inherent political conundrums.

### **Re-presentation: changing the terms of the conversation**

Museums are related to western re-presentation practices and their associated policies and ideologies that change according to the scale where a specific museum is located. I separate the prefix re from the noun presentation to indicate that in any re-presentation something is presented again by someone who almost always is not the subject directly involved in the creation of what is being re-presented. Thus, the question is: who speaks for whom and why? That is: whether the subalterns can speak for themselves and be in charge of a grammar of re-presentation that more often than not sublimates or fetishizes their real agency.

In this perspective, museums and anthropology clearly appear as communication, pedagogic, ideological, utopian and identity construction devices. At the same time, in museums and in anthropology the tensions between claims to universalism and particularism are commonly present.

The fastest way to grasp this tension is to think of how it expresses itself in the uses of the notions of culture (in the singular, i.e. humankind's universals) and cultures (in the plural, i.e. the set of particular experiences developed by concrete people). Museums and anthropology are discourses that re-present (a) unique ways of being in the world, (b) universal human characteristics or (c) "a" and "b" all together.

There are several re-presentation problems in museum that are more clearly seen in global and national museums, although local museums are not exempt from them either. The most evident problems are related to imperial and colonial pillage (involving piracy, biopiracy and ideopiracy). The nationalist and imperialist integration of ethnic segments into larger imagined communities – by way of discourses that disregard difference and agency – is also another common problem. Given its eminent reflexive character and, compared to museums, lighter institutional frameworks, anthropology has faced these issues in a more comprehensive manner. In fact, there are several decades of debate on decolonization within the discipline (see Gough 1968, Asad 1973, Copans 1975, Faye 1991, for instance). In the social sciences as a whole, cognitive justice and epistemicide (the destruction of other peoples knowledge and interpretive perspectives) have also been the focus of postcolonial, decolonial and other debates (see, for instance, Mignolo 2007, Quijano 1993, Smith 1999, Sousa Santos 2011).







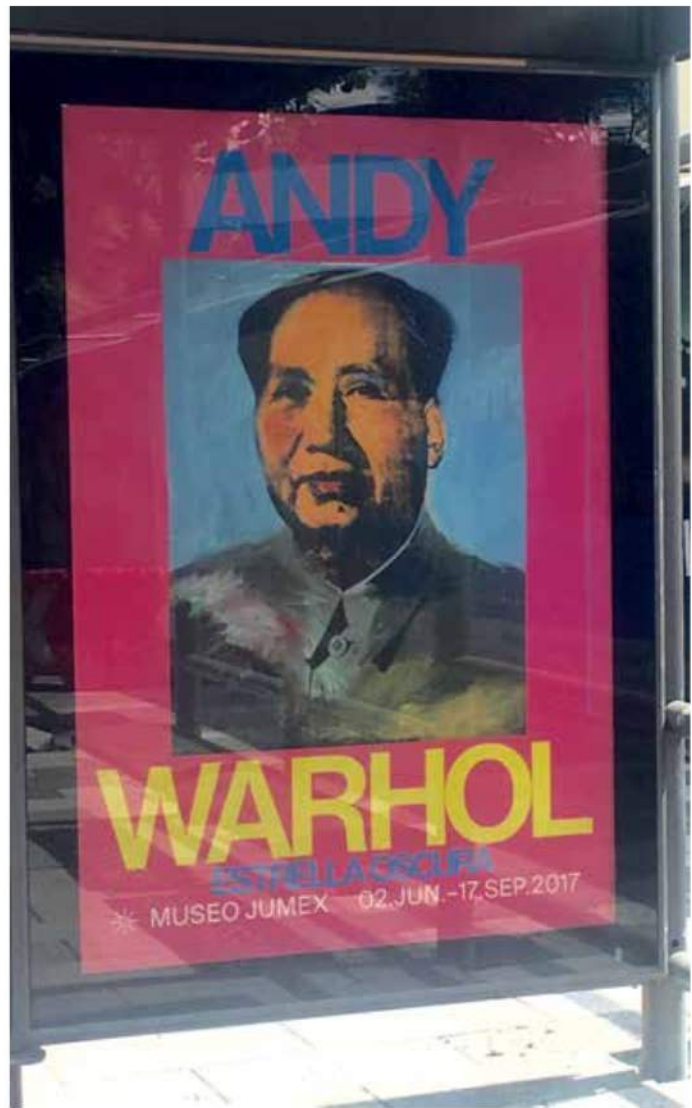
*Museu Nacional Honestino Guimarães, Brasília. © Gustavo Lins Ribeiro*

In view of these and other debates, anthropologists have proposed new modes of doing anthropology to face the changing geopolitics of knowledge made possible both by the decolonizing critiques and the discipline's diversity created by its own globalization. Two proposals illustrate this movement: anthropology of the South (Krotz 1997) and the world anthropologies project (Ribeiro 2014). I will focus on the latter since it is more organic to my arguments in this text.

### **World anthropologies**

The world anthropologies project (WAN) is based on the notion that it is time to take advantage of the discipline's own global diversity in order to enhance cross-fertilization and to create more horizontal exchanges, new conditions of conversability among different anthropological communities, bypassing the hegemony of Anglo-American anthropological discourses. The dissemination of anthropology on a global scale has generated a different international status quo, a richness of experiences and interpretations that allows us to posit there is more anthropological imagination in the set of non-hegemonic anthropologies than in the classic

centers of the discipline. The problem thus is to avoid the “gravitational power of hegemonic internationalization” (De L’Estoile 2008) that overvalues the production of the Anglo-American hegemonic centers and to develop new channels of communication and exchange. The WAN is based on pluriversal and intercultural theoretical perspectives. The goal is not to exclude the contributions of American or British anthropologists but to include a multiplicity of other voices in a new kind of horizontal global and heteroglossic conversation in a search for new politics of visibility. The main question is how to bring into play the globalized anthropological imagination and enjoy our discipline’s own international diversity?



*On the streets.* © Gustavo Lins Ribeiro

These issues require a double effort. First, there was and there still is a need for a theoretical critique that opens the way for other sensibilities and epistemologies. The WAN has generated or inspired different international dialogues well illustrated by books such as those published by Ribeiro and Escobar (2006), Boskovic (2008), Ribeiro (2011) or the thematic dossier published by Focaal in 2012 (see, for instance, the articles by Buchowski 2012, and by Hanks 2012) and by the Journal of the World Anthropologies Network from 2005 through 2012). The World Anthropologies Section of the American Anthropologist, the flagship journal of the American Anthropological Association, is also a result of the theoretical and political debates triggered by the WAN and a platform where several related international issues are discussed.

Secondly, there was and there still is a need for practical initiatives to make scholarly global communication more equitable and heteroglossic. The founding in 2004, during a meeting of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology, in Recife, Brazil, of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) was a major step in that direction. It meant the possibility of horizontal





Osaka Castle Museum. © Gustavo Lins Ribeiro

dialogues among national and international associations, of building global anthropological policies and creating heterodox channels of communication among different anthropological communities. From the 14 associations present in the World Council's foundation the WCAA became, in 2017, a network of 52 institutions that allows to reach by email and other media a great amount of anthropologists all over the world. Recognizing that publishing patterns and language are other major issues in international communication, visibility and equity, the World Council of Anthropological Association started, in 2103, *déjà-lu*, an on-line journal that "aims at pluralizing the dissemination of anthropological knowledge on a global level" (<https://www.wcaanet.org/dejalu/index.shtml>, access on 10.12.17). *Déjà Lu* republishes "articles selected by the journals of the associations members of the WCAA (and other relevant journals in the field) and gives them global visibility" by means of its international networks. Its 2017 issue republished 42 articles from all over the globe in several languages. The new International Encyclopedia of Anthropology, to be published in 2018 by Wiley-Blackwell, is another example. It is the first encyclopedia to include almost 100 entries on national anthropologies from all continents, on some of their major authors and scientific associations.

## Final comments

The experiences mentioned above show how the building of horizontal and cosmopolitan spaces of political interaction may result in innovative exchanges of information and experiences, helping to promote richer and more complex relationships between epistemic and professional communities located in different parts of the world. The awareness of a more diverse global anthropology and the establishment of new heterodox exchanges that avoid replicating the models and communication channels of hegemonic internationalization, can be a source of inspiration for the museum communities. It may mean the possibility of interacting and benefitting from diversity in a non-hierarchical environment where every voice is heard and every re-presentative is a vote.

In a postcolonial globalized world, in which subjects' differentiated positions are politically important, anthropologies and museums, as discourses and institutions that showcase humankind's different livelihoods and cosmopolitics, have a strategic role to promote the awareness that human richness and creative capacities rely on diversity. The WAN may be a source of inspiration for museologists. It shows that taking advantage of the internal global diversity of a field of knowledge and practices opens several windows prompted by cross-cultural fertilizations that may cause new and stimulating opportunities for creative engagements.

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# MUSEOS Y LA POLÍTICA DEL RECONOCIMIENTO

**Antonio Motta**

Antropólogo

No son pocas las controversias sobre los museos y sus formas de representación, pero si hay algún consenso en este campo, puede ser descrito del siguiente modo: para que sobrevivan, los museos han de adaptarse a cambios políticos y socioculturales más amplios, lo que exige la redefinición de su rol en el mundo contemporáneo.



*Museo de Favela en Río. © Charles Martins*

Este cambio conceptual en la narrativa museográfica tuvo inicio con el proceso de descolonización, cuando la antropología se vio forzada a repensar su propio objeto de investigación, históricamente orientado hacia las alteridades exóticas en el mundo colonial. En consecuencia, los museos también tuvieron que replantearse sus colecciones y políticas de acervo. De acuerdo con el nuevo corolario poscolonial, los “otros” que integraban metonímicamente las colecciones ya no deberían visualizarse como objetos exóticos y pasivos, sino como sujetos e interlocutores activos, necesariamente implicados en los procesos de negociación, mediación, decisión y representación de los que formaban parte.

Por eso algunos museos pasaron a incluir procesos sociales dinámicos que, en última instancia, pudieran dar nuevos sentidos a sus prácticas de coleccionismo. Desde esa perspectiva, los museos se erigen como “zonas de contacto” (Clifford), es decir, como espacios que, por un lado, contienen las narrativas pasadas —que habían eclipsado





la condición coetánea de los “otros” (Fabian)—, y por otro lado reflejan y discuten las relaciones asimétricas de poder y dominación construidas por los museos y por la antropología a lo largo de los siglos. Si se tiene en cuenta tal premisa, los museos ya no pueden hablar en nombre de los “otros” ni tampoco representar a esos “otros” sin consultar previamente lo que “ellos” piensan y cómo “ellos” se ven y desean ser representados en los espacios museales.

Para que eso ocurra, se hace necesario establecer y renegociar nuevas relaciones éticas y morales entre los verdaderos poseedores de las colecciones (pueblos originarios) y los administradores y curadores de los museos que se ocupan de la salvaguardia y conservación de las mismas. Otro aspecto importante por tomar en cuenta es la redefinición de las políticas y la legislación de acervos, hoy más preocupadas por el descarte o la repatriación de objetos que por nuevas adquisiciones. En algunos casos, las repatriaciones han movilizad a pueblos indígenas que reivindican la propiedad de objetos hasta entonces musealizados. De la misma manera, hay una preocupación por incluir a los curadores nativos en exposiciones temporales, dedicadas a temas específicos relacionados con el acervo de los museos, y también por establecer nuevas interconexiones temporales entre las antiguas colecciones y las demandas

contemporáneas, incluyendo temas como, por ejemplo, reconocimiento y derecho a la diferencia, dialogando con un mundo cada vez más globalizado y transnacional.

En el ámbito de la teoría de los objetos, los museos también han buscado nuevas formas de entendimiento e interpretación, entre las que destaca la comprensión de que los objetos pueden tener agencia, ya que en cierto sentido equivalen a los humanos (Gell). Esta idea implica que los objetos constituyen sistemas propios de acción, lo que ayuda a entender por qué ciertos objetos etnográficos musealizados consiguieron resistir a las representaciones atemporales que los museos coloniales les impusieron. De este modo, algunos museos pasaron a considerar sus objetos y colecciones como mediadores de relaciones sociales, aptos para promover el diálogo crítico con diferentes grupos étnicos y minorías sociales, invitados a intervenir en los museos y a verse en ellos representados.

Tradicionalmente identificados con proyectos de construcción de nacionalidades, los museos ganaron, en el presente, nuevos sentidos y significados políticos. Ya no constituyen espacios de producción de memorias nacionales hegemónicas o de consagración de la unidad de naciones. Lo que parece importar ahora es la creciente fragmentación de las grandes narrativas museográficas y expográficas que generalmente urden discursos generalistas, para que en su lugar emerjan micro narrativas autorales, siempre en primera persona, teniendo como protagonistas los actores sociales de la diversidad (grupos étnicos, comunidades rurales y urbanas, minorías sociales, etc.). Se trata de crear nuevas modalidades de museos: museos indígenas, museos comunitarios, museos territoriales, ecomuseos, museos itinerantes, museos digitales, contando con la participación de diferentes grupos socioculturales en la definición y gestión de prácticas museológicas, comprometidos con el reconocimiento de la diversidad cultural como valor ético y político fundamental. Hoy en día, los museos no sólo se ven obligados a redefinir sus prioridades y sus repertorios temáticos, sino también a emprender un diálogo cada vez más simétrico y equitativo entre culturas.

## **Luchas por el reconocimiento**

En Brasil, en el periodo entre 2003 y 2016, los usos de la cultura en la esfera pública se asociaron a procesos de construcción democrática. Éste fue el sentido político manifiestamente atribuido al término, no sólo en ciertas agendas de acciones del Estado y del gobierno federal, sino también por parte de grupos populares y étnico-raciales que se apropiaron de las nuevas políticas culturales para la reivindicación de reconocimientos y derechos específicos.

El tema de la diversidad se planteó en la agenda pública del Estado y de las luchas sociales de diferentes grupos que reivindicaron reconocimientos, derechos y políticas durante el periodo de relativa estabilidad democrática del Estado brasileño. Tales



Museo de Favela en Río.  
© Charles Martins







*Museo de Favela en Río. © Charles Martins*

transformaciones pueden ser asociadas al movimiento de cambios semánticos y políticos que incorporaron el concepto de cultura (en su sentido antropológico) al campo de las políticas públicas. Se pasó a incluir de modo progresivo demandas de reconocimiento social y de desarrollo económico por parte de grupos que buscaban, en el espacio público, el ejercicio de una mayor autonomía o autodeterminación. De hecho, esta ampliación de sentidos y de usos de la noción de “cultura” también está inscrita en el ámbito de un nuevo orden discursivo internacional sobre derechos humanos y sus derivaciones en los derechos culturales. Con ello, nuevas demandas políticas y nuevas maneras de imaginarse las relaciones entre Estado y grupos étnicos comenzaban a apoyarse en la nueva discursividad sobre los derechos culturales que pasa a informar, de manera privilegiada, las políticas sociales de los pueblos indígenas, afrodescendientes, quilombolas y demás actores sociales de la sociedad. Cuando se convierte en idioma principal de tales luchas, el derecho a la diferencia se desdobra en un potencial conjunto de garantías sociales o conquistas políticas.

Con las crecientes movilizaciones políticas de los diversos grupos sociales y étnicos también ocurre la creación de una variedad de museos, como los comunitarios, ecomuseos, itinerantes, entre otras modalidades. Es en este mismo momento que los pueblos indígenas, por ejemplo, pasan a crear sus museos, reivindican el reconocimiento de sus costumbres, tradiciones, lenguas y conocimientos tradicionales como patrimonio inmaterial.

Hay varios ejemplos de esta articulación entre la creación de museos y formas de movilización política o de resistencia étnica, como la demostrada por el pionero museo Magüta de los Ticuna en Benjamin Constant, Alto Solimões, Amazonas, cerca de la frontera de Brasil con Perú y Colombia. Creado a mediados de la década de 1980, este museo ha desempeñado un importante papel político en la trayectoria de lucha del pueblo Ticuna. En los últimos años se han ido formando redes de museos indígenas, articulando decenas de experiencias museales diferentes, cuyo denominador común



es la transformación de las prácticas de coleccionismo en recurso a favor de las luchas políticas de los pueblos indígenas, además de la interfaz entre los museos y las escuelas indígenas.

Al margen de las experiencias museales de carácter étnico, como la de los museos indígenas, otras experiencias comunitarias son igualmente reivindicadas en las periferias de ciudades brasileñas. Los casos del Museo de Favela y del Museo de la Maré en Río de Janeiro, inaugurados en 2006, son ejemplos de experiencias que empiezan a dar mayor visibilidad pública al tema, tratando el problema de las diferencias y desigualdades sociales en los centros urbanos. Es importante destacar que la organización de éstas y de otras experiencias museales comunitarias se funden con un nuevo momento de movilización política de los movimientos sociales y de las luchas de las comunidades periféricas.

El Museo de Favela (MUF) es un museo territorial, ubicado en el complejo de favelas Cantagalo y Pavão-Pavãozinho, entre los barrios de Ipanema y Copacabana, donde se concentra el principal polo hotelero de la ciudad de Río de Janeiro. Este museo desea metaforizar el mundo de las favelas cariocas como símbolo de resistencia y de ciudadanía. La reivindicación de los derechos culturales forma parte de la agenda de los que voluntariamente abrazaron el proyecto del Museo de Favela. En este sentido, el museo se ha convertido en poderosa herramienta de denuncia, fundamentando una especie de “gramática de la diversidad” y de derechos culturales para sus habitantes que luchan por el reconocimiento ante situaciones de falta de respeto social, degradación, violación o privación de sus derechos. Así, se puede entender la concepción del museo como locus para nuevas formas de producción de memorias, de recomposición de identidades colectivas y de demandas por reconocimiento.<sup>1</sup>

El atractivo principal de este museo son las casas. Las fachadas de las casas se pintan con motivos diversos, siempre relacionados con la historia de la comunidad en general, o en particular, las trayectorias de sus respectivos habitantes. Ciertamente en ellas reside su mayor originalidad, pues rompen con la idea de acervos en forma de colecciones guardadas y conservadas en espacios cerrados. Al mismo tiempo que cumplen la función de uso, es decir, de viviendas, las “casas” con sus fachadas pintadas sirven también para enmarcar historias y memorias de la comunidad, retratadas a través de grafitos o de otras técnicas por jóvenes de la comunidad o favela.

Así, en lugar de la colecta tradicional de objetos (como utensilios, fotos, documentos) a los cuales se atribuye un valor histórico, la propuesta de este museo es movilizar los recursos del presente, motivando a la comunidad a intervenir, interactuar y verse representada en acciones culturales, como talleres de música, de pintura, de gastronomía, de artesanía, entre otras.



<sup>1</sup> Para una comprensión de la organización del Museo de Favela ver el video realizado por Antonio Motta en la comunidad de Pavão-pavãozinho, disponible en el link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gvnrQMg\\_K8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gvnrQMg_K8)

Estos ejemplos dan muestra de cómo, en la actualidad, el espacio museal surge como lugar de expresión de diferentes experiencias de identidad y de un consecuente ejercicio de protagonismo. Se destacan ahí las estrategias de creación, manipulación y negociación de símbolos identitarios por medio de los cuales los individuos se reconocen colectivamente, y los modos en que buscan representar públicamente sus pertenencias o identidades colectivas. En otras palabras, las narrativas museográficas, en cuanto actos performativos y de sociedad ritualizados en las exposiciones, colecciones y acervos, sirven a los propósitos políticos de construcción y afirmación de símbolos identitarios, resignificando estigmas y prejuicios y actuando como ejemplos de agencias colectivas.

Los museos aquí mencionados se han mostrado no sólo “buenos para pensar”, sino, cada vez más, “buenos para actuar” sobre las contradicciones estructurales de las sociedades y grupos sociales, principalmente a partir de la llamada Museología Social.

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# ANTHROPOLOGY, MUSEUMS, DIVERSITY, AND DIALOGUE

## Christian Feest

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The following comments will briefly address some of the central issues raised in this meeting, specifically keeping in mind the enormous challenges facing the Humboldt Forum in its goal to deal with issues of cultural diversity and to create a forum for a dialogue between “cultures” under the unenviable condition of a difficult dialogue between art and anthropology. My necessarily cursory remarks are based on the combination of practical experience (as a former curator of a museum of anthropology), theoretical considerations (as a professor of anthropology, who established a museum studies program), and more practice (as director of an anthropology museum under the wing of an art museum, who attempted to apply the theoretical insights to contribute to the adjustment of anthropology museums to the needs of the twenty-first century).<sup>1</sup>

In the present context, “anthropology” specifically refers to “cultural anthropology” as a discipline devoted to the description and explanation of the range of human articulations through actions, speech acts, and material products. It began as a project of the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century, and although it was partly shaped by the experience of Western colonialism, its potential for subversion was from the beginning based upon its insistence on the relativity of cultures and the equality of their value, contrary to the universal claim of ethnocentric (and specifically of Eurocentric) superiority. As Gustavo Lins Ribeiro has pointed out in his contribution to this meeting, the basic idea of cultural anthropology has developed into a plurality of anthropologies, not only in terms of competing theories, but especially under the influence of different social and political conditions as well as cultural and philosophical traditions in the nation states where anthropology is practiced.

<sup>1</sup> For a longer exposition of these ideas, see Christian Feest, “The Future of Ethnological Museums.” In: Manuela Fischer, Peter Bolz, and Susan Kamel (eds.), *Adolf Bastian and the “Universal Archive of Humanity”: The Origins of German Anthropology* (Hildesheim 2007: Olms), 259–266 ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258994363\\_The\\_Future\\_of\\_Ethnological\\_Museums](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258994363_The_Future_of_Ethnological_Museums)).



*Indigenous peoples and the nation state. While museums are necessarily historical in nature, they can and should also address contemporary issues such as the relationship between indigenous peoples and the nation state. From the exhibition "Indianer. Ureinwohner Nordamerikas," curated by the author at the exhibition center Schallaburg, Lower Austria, 2008.*

As repositories for the material forms of cultural expression, museums were the first professional institutions of anthropology, and initially also contributed to anthropological theory on the basis of their work with collections of artifacts. With the rise of anthropology as an academic discipline and its insistence on ethnological fieldwork as the only proper epistemic foundation of theory, museums gradually lost their significance for the discipline and to some extent degenerated into institutions of public education and entertainment. Fieldwork promoted a distinctively presentist orientation, while museums necessarily were dealing with historical documents. Especially under the influence of the school of social anthropology, which regarded "culture" as hardly more than a curiosity next to the dominant forces of social structure, academic anthropology largely lost its interest in material culture, and when this interest was revived in the late twentieth century, it was focused on commodities and their role in social relations, rather than on historically collected artifacts in museums. Museum anthropology not only failed to make new contributions to anthropological





*Globalization. A house from West Greenland from the 1950s, complete with all its furnishings, collected in the 1980s by a Danish anthropologist for the Weltmuseum Wien, is a document of traditional culture affected by globalization. From the exhibition "Indianer. Ureinwohner Nordamerikas" at the exhibition center Schallaburg, Lower Austria, 2008.*

theory, it also lost touch with the theoretical developments in academic anthropology. Although museum anthropology may be regarded as a branch of ethnohistory in the widest sense, it generally failed to address issues of the historicity of cultures and their products and in its exhibition practices was (and to some extent still is) representing other cultures outside of their historical context, notably including that of colonialism. In part, this is due to the fact that collecting was limited to the cultures of the colonized, whose products as a result had to be shown as if they were living in happy isolation from the rest of the world.

Like cultural anthropology in general, museum anthropology is today characterized by many different and distinctive traditions. While most anthropology museums in Europe and North America have always endeavored to collect and represent cultures from all over the world (almost always, however, with the exception of Western cultural traditions at home and abroad), elsewhere (especially in Brazil, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) comparable museums began in the first half of the nineteenth century to assemble global collections, but later almost exclusively limited themselves to the documentation of

cultural diversity within the respective nation state. As a result, their focus shifted to issues of diversity within the context of national identity, whereas the global collecting tradition continued to favor the representation of cultural alterity in exhibitions arranged in an encyclopedic manner by continent and “culture areas.”

I personally grew up in this tradition as a regionally specialized museum curator and did not seriously question it, until the following experience during a collecting trip, when I was taken to the local Indian bar in Tama, Iowa, by a Mesquakie friend. The other Mesquakies were curious, who this stranger was, the only non-Indian in the bar, and after they had been told that I was working for a museum of anthropology, one of them asked me, whether I intended to tell the folks back home about the Mesquakies. When I answered in the affirmative, he said: “Well, if you go back home, tell your people that the Mesquakies have mothers, and that they love their mothers.” This request, simple and even trivial as it may sound, struck me as an eloquent plea to look not only at difference, but also at equivalence in the representation of cultures and not to forget about the universality of certain human needs only satisfied in different manners. Clearly, the focus on the difference of otherness tends to exoticize it and separate it from what in our own society is regarded as proper.

In museum anthropology, the explanation of the specific and the focus on culturally attributed meanings has long established itself as the leading paradigm at the expense of the other tradition of anthropological discourse, which, based upon comparison, attempts to explain what we share as humans. Indeed, the comparative tradition of cultural anthropology appears to provide a better way to understand and represent diversity, because it primarily speaks to phenomena familiar to us and recognizable in their importance, such as motherhood. In fact, the most successful exhibitions in German anthropology museums in the late twentieth century dealt with marriage,



*Identity. The “small difference” between gods and humans, humans and apes, women and men, or between ethnic groups are part of the universal need to define identity. Wooden relief showing men and women, Nagaland, India, 20th century. Weltmuseum Wien.*



gender, and death—all exceptions from the usual shows on some people on a remote island living in (or in the tradition of) the Stone Age. Obviously, in a capitalist society an exhibition on gift and exchange and their comparison with market and money economies would be more enlightening than yet another show perpetuating stereotypes about headhunters of the Amazon or the dwarves of the Congo rainforest.

Given the abandonment of theory in museums of anthropology, it is not really surprising that the basic concept of identity, which is based on the universal need to mark the difference between individuals and groups, has never been the subject of an exhibition. When, about ten years ago, we were preparing the new installation of the exhibition halls of the Museum of Ethnology Vienna (now: Weltmuseum Wien), I developed a plan for an exhibition on this subject, which, like the whole new installation, was ultimately never realized. It was to begin with a discussion of twins (by itself an attractive topic for an anthropological exhibition) in order to show that there is a tendency to make a dramatic distinction even between two individuals with identical looks and genetic makeup: in some cultural traditions, it is twins who represent the opposition between good and evil. The point is that there is little need to distinguish what is different, such as a mouse and an elephant, but what is similar. The same is true of the difference between humans and gods, each one of them created according to the image of the other, between humans and great apes with whom we share up to 99 percent of the genes, between men and women who are genetically almost as close to one another as humans and chimpanzees, and between neighboring societies who often lead very similar lifestyles. While collection policies of the past were primarily focused on the development of regional representation, any decent collection of an anthropology museum will also make it possible to enter into the field of comparative exhibitions.

The experience of rampant globalization has made the understanding of the importance of cultural diversity an issue of central social importance. Many politicians, on whose interest and good-will the future of public museums depends, have recognized the fact that it is an immensely political issue, which may influence the outcome of elections. Even if anthropology museums may not single-handedly be able to overcome all misperceptions in this regard, political support for this effort could be seen as recognition of the relevance of anthropology museums in our day and age. Cultural anthropology (inside and outside of the museum) should play an important role in internalizing in the general population the fact that for the survival of the world cultural diversity is as important as biological diversity.

Anthropology museums would be well advised to abandon the traditional encyclopedic approach—who wants to read an encyclopedia from page one to the end, anyway. They should rather strive in their exhibitions for a diversity commensurate with the diversity of cultures and anthropologies. There are, of course, also legitimate non-anthropological approaches to the subject, based, for example, on artistic or literary means, but at least in my experience attempts to incorporate them into the repertoire of anthropology



*Dialogue. Anthropology has always been dialogical. Anthropologists are representing others and are also represented by them. Mask representing the Dutch anthropologist Gerti Nooter by a Man from Ammassalik, Greenland, 1970s. From the exhibition "Greenland. Ammassalik. Contact" at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, 2005.*

museum have so far been unsuccessful, as would be the integration of anthropological approaches into the performance of a concert of classical music.

In recent years, the notion of "dialogue" has become fashionable in dealing with matters of cultural diversity (and this obviously also is true of the Humboldt Forum).



Anthropologists hardly need to be told about the importance of dialogue, because it is the basis of ethnographic practice. But dialogue is only possible when communication can be established, and for this reason anthropologists are encouraged to learn at least rudiments of the language spoken in the locality of their fieldwork, so that even if they have to work with interpreters, they will be able to retain some control over the quality of the translation. Translating cultural content across cultural and language boundaries is one of the major, and certainly one of the most difficult tasks of an anthropologist. Looking at the dismal results of the translation of some of my German and English writings into other related languages, such as English, German, French, Spanish, or Portuguese, I sometimes wonder how close we as anthropologists can get to the original in our interpretations of widely different cultures. Thus, the idea of a spontaneous “dialogue” by an untrained public with “other cultures” seems outright preposterous.

**Kuratoren / Curators:** Nadja Haumberger, Christian Schicklgruber  
**Organisation:** Ulrike Becker  
**Gestaltung / Design:** Georg Schrom, Nikolay Ivanov  
**Graphik / Graphics:** Nina Fuchs  
**Restaurierung, Konservierung / Restoration, Conservation:** Florian Rainer & Team  
**Kommunikation & Marketing / Communications & Marketing:** Esned Nezic  
**Aufbau / Assembling:** hs art service austria  
**Beleuchtung / Light:** Maximilian Pavlovics, Gustavo Bernasconi

*Authorship. Exhibitions are not the work of an anonymous authority, but the collaborative effort of curators, conservators, and designers.  
Credit line for a new installation at the Weltmuseum Wien, 2016.*

Moreover, we need to ask who is speaking to whom in exhibitions of an anthropology museum or of the Humboldt Museum (which is not, and does not want to be, a museum). Contrary to a metaphorical expression that in the more popular museological literature is promoted as an indubitable fact, objects do not speak. (For this reason, there can also no “dialogue” with the mute and deaf objects.) If there is a “language of things,” it is encoded in objects by their users, and one needs to know the code to understand the message they were made to convey, apart from the fact that “language of things” is also only a metaphor, because not every system of signs is a language. If viewers when looking at unfamiliar objects get the impression that something is communicated to them, it is nothing but their own inner voice of self-reflection that has come into action—“interior monologue.” But even looking at an object in order to grasp its physical qualities is something that needs to be learned. To be able to read a book, it is useful to be literate, but many visitors to a museum lack the basics of “object literacy,” somethings museums should more systematically promote as part of their activities in the field of museum education.

If the objects do not speak, who does? In an exhibition, it is always the curator speaking to the public, acting as a mediator and by providing it with an explanatory model of cultural difference that will necessarily always differ from the live experience, which in

the case of cultures of the past is no longer possible. Source communities have often complained that museums in their representations have relegated them to the past, as if denying them their continued presence, when in fact museums as archives of historical material documents necessarily have to deal with the past. In addition, the past as described by Western historiography may differ significantly from the past as embodied in the living traditions of communities, because one serves to explain what was, while the other primarily legitimates the present. Thus, museums in their “dialogues” with the public and with source communities find themselves charged with the difficult challenge not only of bridging the gap between cultures, but also of reconciling the present with the past and different views of the past with one another.

On another level, anthropology museums as repositories of much of the material residues of societies around the world, which are increasingly claimed by them (and often also by the nation states in which they now happen to live) as their cultural heritage, should ideally seek contact and collaboration with those communities in order to share with them access to and the interpretation of those historically collected objects for the benefit of both sides. The problem here is the sheer number of collaborations that would need to be established with every community, whose objects are included in the collections. In larger museums this would involve hundreds, if not thousands, of communities, far exceeding the possible financial and personnel resources of any institution, and it involves dealing with competing claims of communities and nation states. Despite these problems, such collaborations and important and necessary even if they may have to be limited to a select number of cases of special historical or symbolic significance.

Another dialogue that increasingly underlies the representation of cultural diversity is the one between various disciplines, especially between anthropology and art. This is particularly true in the case of the Humboldt Forum, but also in museums of anthropology, which since the decline of their importance both within the discipline of anthropology and within society have often attempted (mostly with only modest success) to regain social status by reinventing themselves as museums of non-Western art. By emulating some of the basic tenets of art history, such as the universality of art in a Western sense, the autonomy of works of art, and the focus on the exceptional, anthropology museums have silently abandoned the anthropological perspective based on the relativity of cultural productions, their contextual boundedness, and the focus on the typical. The approach inspired by art history thus tends to assimilate non-Western forms of visual expression to Western assumptions and to deny the coexistence of different “art worlds” of which the Western art world is only one. Given the preferential social status enjoyed by art in Western societies, the interdisciplinary dialogue between art and anthropology is rarely carried out on eye level, in addition to being fraught with the basic impediment of such dialogues—the use of the same words for different conceptions.

Under the regime of globalization, a diversity of perspectives is the rule. This is also true



of our own pluralistic society as well of indigenous peoples, who no longer live in closed societies, but have become pluralistic themselves. This multivocality is something that should be reflected in the practice of anthropology museums and institutions like the Humboldt Forum, as long as it does not result in a cacophonous melee. The voices heard in this juxtaposition of different points of view must indeed remain clearly identifiable. In the past, museums operated by the public sector produced often hegemonic knowledge seemingly endorsed by the anonymous authority of the government. Today, it is essential that such authority is replaced by authorship, which means the explicit recognition of who is addressing the public, because it is the speaker who must take responsibility and get credit for what is being said.

Credibility and cultural  
appropriation.

New anthropologies  
for old collections

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Credibilidad y  
apropiación cultural.

Nuevas antropologías  
para antiguas  
colecciones



# THE HUMBOLDT FORUM. NEW ANTHROPOLOGIES FOR OLD COLLECTIONS

## Anthony Alan Shelton

Director Museum of Anthropology  
University of British Columbia

Next year will mark the completion of the largest and most ambitious cultural project in Europe, the Humboldt Forum located not only in Mitte, the heart of Berlin, but also in the centre of Europe. Because of its location, this new cultural complex exhales outstanding symbolic value not only for Germany but also, through the expression of contemporary, relevant and enlightened aspirations and values, for a Europe whose ideals are currently under attack from populism. Describing the cultural mission of the three partner institutions – the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentral- und Landesbibliothek and the Humboldt-Universität, Martin Heller noted: “The new institution seeks to turn mere cohabitation into coexistence by establishing shared binding objectives for all participants as well as framework for action in which individual strengths can be brought to bear as a coherent overall profile.” It was said in 2013, at a time when the project itself was hotly under debate, that Angela Merkel wanted only for the new building to be bigger than the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. At the same time, some art historians claimed that the project would revitalize Enlightenment ideals and values closely associated with Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, - a situation which if true might be widely contested by many Indigenous people. The curators of the Forum’s forerunner, the Museum Für Völkerkunde, which despite its massive building and extensive collections was hidden away in the suburb of Dahlem, on the other hand,



*MOA Exterior 1 Bill McLennan*  
*Exterior of the UBC Museum of Anthropology.*  
© Bill McLennan



*MOA Great Hall. © UBC Museum of Anthropology*

worried about the size and dimensions of their new apartments and whether they would prove sufficient to contain one of the largest ethnographic and Asian collections in the world. Between national pride, intellectual nostalgia and curatorial logistics, popular debate in Germany focused on the symbolic meaning of reconstructing the Baroque Prussian Royal Palace; a building intimately connected with Prussian militarism that had been heavily bombed in the Second World War before being demolished in 1950 and replaced by the modernist glazed facade of the Palast der Republik, the East German Parliament. The idea to rebuild the Prussian Royal Palace and reconstitute it as the Humboldt Forum divided modernists from historicists, reopened old ideological





divisions and fractured the sometime-uneasy relationship between former West and East Germany, without considering the intellectual and museological merits of the proposed project. Clearly, the rebuilding of the Palace fulfilled the project to reconstruct the monumental centre of Berlin after the massive destruction of World War II, but the political and historical debates long eclipsed discussion on the purpose the reconstructed palace would serve.

The construction of a new home to reunite the ethnographic and Asian collections previously displayed in Dahlem, with the rest of the Prussian State Collections situated on Spree Island, will also bring the museum into intimate relationship with the state library and the Humboldt University, thus creating an unparalleled institution. The position of these collections in the centre of Berlin importantly asserts the equality

of world cultures and their centrality to a multicultural European Union while acknowledging difference as a source of creative growth and the aspiration towards reconciliation, tolerance and understanding between the world's diverse peoples. Effectively, the Forum will constitute a portal to the world's diverse cultures that will benefit both German and European political bodies. While it goes without saying that a portal is a connecting device, in this case between the German state and



*UBC Museum of Anthropology Multiversity Gallery.*  
© Stantec

European Union with cultures across the globe, it needs be borne in mind that the ensuing programs of mediation between the points it connects may be inflected by the historical circumstances of the Forum's inception, which hide as many conceits and tensions as they do promises of a new and distinguishing political culture and cultural politics. I will briefly discuss just some of these major institutional fault-lines which, given the focus of preliminary debates, may not have been given the importance they deserve in considering the fulfillment of the huge potential contained in such a unique organization of this type.

The purpose of a portal “a door, gate, doorway, or gateway of stately or elaborate construction” (1979, Vol II, The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, p. 2244) is to provide an interchange between those within and outside an institution, nation or social and cultural groups through a convergence of different and sometimes contradictory and even oppositional networks. A portal is not therefore unlike a hub, hive or locus as, in the case of cultural, artistic and intellectual institutions, which promote the flow of ideas and expressions as they are networked within and between different communities. Networks have very different constitutions and serve varied purposes, even when closely related. They may serve overlapping global, national, or local organizations and communities, but similarities of purpose should not lead to the assumption of uniformity in their reach or adoption. All museums are the locus of a wide range of professional curatorial, conservation, educational and administrative networks. In addition, they share academic and research networks and are part of larger organizational structures, which, in the case of Germany include a state integrated museum network such as, in the case of the Humboldt Forum, the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Many of these different types of networks are conservative and are enabling rather than changative structures, but contradictory and alternative networked





*Kesu Victor Munhoz*  
*Exhibit: KESU' The Art and Life of Doug Cranmer.*  
© Victor Munhoz

institutions and communities should be embraced instead of being rejected or perceived as dysfunctional, and re-interpreted as creative agencies and challenges, which add to an institution's contemporaneity and relevance. After all, with digital media it is impossible to insulate a portal from conflictual networks and those acting within organizations now freely draw from a wide range of digitally connected networks which always limits the effective hegemonic functionality of old established institutions.

One such largely digitally based network is that developed by the Ugandan scholar Paul Wangoola and his Goan colleague, Claudio Alvares. Despite the common claim that museums have undergone or are undergoing a process of decolonization, Wangoola and Alvares argue that such claims are premature as long as institutions operate according to Western knowledge paradigms and ingrained epistemologies. Colonization was not only a political, economic and physical historical process, but an epistemological project which rejected, demeaned and replaced local knowledge systems geared to a distinct geographical, biological, and spiritual ecology, with Western universalized epistemologies and their associated knowledges. Colonization exists at an international level, but as Gonzalez Cassanova recognises, pluricultural nation-states continue to exert strong exploitative bonds between ethnicities and classes. This internal colonization continues to be strongly felt especially in Portuguese, Spanish and British settler states and similarly imposes its own epistemology and systems of classification and knowledge on those it afflicts. In calling for a decolonization of knowledge, Wangoola and Alvares advocate the development of a "reverse anthropology" capable of relativizing, situating and revealing the positionality and limitations of Western Knowledge and therefore changing the exhibition paradigms at play in museums and galleries.

There are inequalities between portals and nowhere are these more apparent than between national or regional state funded museums and their provincial, local, community and university based equivalent which, if harboring smaller collections, nevertheless carry out a similar purpose of incubating creativity, curiosity and expressing relations between individuals and communities with the world. The German federal system has notable advantages over, for example, the Canadian system which with its largest collections concentrated in an additional level of national museums actively discriminates against the wider sharing of art and culture. Canadian national



*Exhibit: (IN)VISIBLE The Spiritual World of Taiwan Through Contemporary Art.*  
© Allison Kuhl

museums receive separate and exclusive federal funding and until recently operated as relatively autonomous institutions independent of community mandates. They compete with provincial, local and other museums for regional acquisitions, offer limited partnership agreements, and operate no satellite institutions through which to share their collections over Canada's 9,984,670 km. These elite intuitions, five out of seven of which are in the national capital, form a consortium, which mainly attempts to create a highly concentrated national museum network along a ceremonial procession-way comparable to the Smithsonian Institution and Mall in Washington D.C.

The German museum system is more dispersed with major collections located in every state capital and major city. Germany provides a culturally integrated model of a nation state that equitably distributes access to arts and cultures. Nevertheless, the Humboldt Forum raises new responsibilities and obligations regarding its relationship to outside Indigenous cultures. In Canada, there is a disjuncture between museum collections, which are mainly concentrated in cities within a hundred kilometres of the US border and Indigenous sources of expertise, which are often isolated in the far north. Nevertheless, the distance between Berlin and Damascus, Istanbul, or Ranua (Finland) are not so different as those between Vancouver and Haida Gwaii, Kodiak, or Cape





*Exhibit: The Marvellous Real: Art from Mexico, 1926 - 2011. © Randall Platt*

Dorset, making differences in the perceived relative isolation between metropolitan cities and museums with Indigenous peoples largely illusory.

Moreover, the internet and digital media has made geographic distance inconsequential and the rights and obligations that Indigenous peoples are asking of metropolitan Canada are similar to those they will ask of Germany and the European community. One of the most urgent necessities and ethical obligations museums have therefore, is to circulate collections more widely and increase our capacity to enable much greater Indigenous curation of both domestic and foreign exhibitions. By acknowledging Indigenous knowledge systems and their right to self-representation and by bringing together Indigenous knowledge holders and institutional collections, museums can transform themselves into more open institutions. Much of the above is implicit in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), signed the same year by Germany and by Canada in 2016. The instrument confers obligations on its signatories to undertake ample consultation on all issues that impact Indigenous people. It acknowledges the value and integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems and returns the control of Indigenous heritage and its interpretation back to the communities of origin. It is no longer enough therefore, to work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples over one specific project or exhibition, but to return the responsibility for collections back to the groups from which they derive. UNDRIP represents the minimum acceptable conditions required for the restoration of the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples and will probably require in some cases to be supplemented by customary law. This should not be a cause for consternation in the museum community, but instead an opportunity to reform the wider relations between peoples, collections and institutions.

There is wide acceptance in Canada among museum directors that not enough has been done to train Indigenous peoples for senior museum management positions. Moreover, the Alberta Museums Association and the British Columbia Museums Association have recognized that ownership rights of Indigenous collections reside with the communities of origin. In both provinces museums, source communities and traditional knowledge holders are increasingly working together in ways that suggest provincial and local museums, collections and stakeholders are re-articulating the relationship between their different constituencies. Taken together, the necessity to build capacity, employ greater numbers of Indigenous staff and empower them over the care, management and mobilization of collections provides a form of restorative justice, which can transform networks and their implicit power relations and radically transform the nature of portals like the Humboldt Forum and museums elsewhere.

The internationalisation of staff, which is a fundamental requirement of reconfiguring museums, can be accomplished through succession planning and revisions to job descriptions, which at the Museum of Anthropology MOA, Vancouver, for Asian curators and programmers now include language competencies. Criteria might also include community or academic certification of traditional knowledge holders, and skill holders,







*Exhibit: Safar/Voyage: Contemporary Works by Arab, Iranian and Turkish Artists. © Blaine Campbell*

all of whom need training in established museum methods and critical museology to help them establish new and transformative practices. The repatriated museum is a museum of many knowledges and ways of seeing, and of representing the world. It is a museum that seeds and cultivates relationships between different types of museums and institutions, it is critical and relevant and values the ethnic heterogeneity and cultural diversity of its staff and governance body and acknowledges that diverse linguistic communication strategies are fundamental to fulfilling a multi-cultural or pluri-cultural mandate.

Museum portals exchange large amounts of diverse information and opinions concerning repatriation. It is clear that objects can be used for establishing or negating relationships, making digital and physical portals key to encouraging positive new relationships. Partnership and the ability to create and sustain close and honest relations that value common humanity over cultural or historical specificity is fundamental to repatriation. There are at least three well documented repatriation processes that have been initiated from British Columbia that if better known, might weaken established dispositions against the process: the repatriation of T'xwelâtse, a transformation stone from the Burke Museum, Seattle to its home community of Stó:lō in the Frazer Valley of British Columbia; the repatriation of the G'psgolox pole from the National Museum of Ethnology in Stockholm to the Haisla Nation, Kitamaat, British Columbia and the return of human remains from museums around the world to Skidegate and Old Massett in Haida Gwaii. The strategies and history of the return were very different in all three cases, but the



*Exhibit: Traces of Words: Art and Calligraphy from Asia. © Kyla Bailey*



moral arguments, relationships, and the mutual benefits deriving from the conversion of tangible into intangible cultural heritage, in every case, were remarkably similar. All cases were conducted over large time-spans, allowing for the creation of new relationships and changes in attitudes. The repatriation of 600 Haida ancestors housed in disrespectful and culturally inappropriate museum storage units, resulted in a community healing process which through their transfer into cedar boxes to be brought home, funeral services, feeding, and burial in special sections of the cemeteries in Skidegate and Old Massett, reconnected them to land and families; the return of the G'psgolox pole performed a similar function, returning authority over cultural artifacts to the Haisla and rescoring family ownership rights over stories. In the short term, the repatriation brought a new copy of the repatriated pole, carved by master carver Henry Robinson, to the Museum and opened networks connecting schools in Stockholm with that in Kitamaat. The return of T'xwelátse resulted in an exhibition, *Man Turned to Stone*, curated between Stó:lō traditional knowledge holders and Scott Marsden, the curator of the Reach Gallery, in the nearby community of Abbotsford, and a tour of T'xwelátse to other museums. All cases lead to a generous and free sharing of knowledge and better understanding of Indigenous epistemologies that link land, knowledge and peoples and contextualize repatriation as a process of healing and refortification of communities. Western museums sometimes make the error of approaching repatriation as divorced from other processes and relationships between them and communities and individuals. This results in fears of one way outward flow of tangible heritage but as the three cases above demonstrate, repatriation involves exchanges in which tangible is exchanged for beneficial intangible heritage. In some cases building this level of confidence results in two way flows of tangible heritage such as, has been experienced at MOA which in recent years has been the beneficiary of two major NWC) collections given by First Nations families. Moreover,



relations established through repatriation and other engagements have led to loans such as the mountain goat moon chest from the American Museum of Natural History to the Haida Nation: the exchange of exhibitions on the potlatch collection and European porcelain between Alert Bay U'mista Cultural Centre and the Saxon State Museums, and the loan of masks to participate in potlatch ceremonies from MOA to Alert Bay and elsewhere. Repatriation and the host of relations they engender between communities and museums is an important and central process mediated always in different ways but with a common propensity to establish new working relationships, expand knowledge and intercultural understanding and rebalance former asymmetrical relationships that still stand at the centre of European and Canadian human rights policies. While most communities do not want the complete return of all collections once belonging to them, museums should be proactive in working for repatriation of specific categories of objects as determined through mutual negotiations. Building new relations through repatriation and related processes may even be the only ethical way Indigenous collections will be kept by museums.

Opening museums to new sources of knowledge inevitably raises questions of the adequacy of Western 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century disciplinary based knowledge systems for a planetary community. The 'reverse anthropology' that Wangoola and Alvares and others have advocated has already begun to have been developed through critical theory, ethnographies, and critical histories of Western institutions, fieldwork and travel writing and ethnographic description. Most Institutions with the exception of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, the House der Kulturen de Welt, Berlin, Documenta, and biennales, uphold established disciplinary based knowledge institutions. However, pockets of resistance have sparked and continue to emerge from new versions of the traditional ethnographic museums. When University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (UBC MOA) was founded in 1949, anthropology still held a monopoly over the study of culture. By the time, the museum moved from the cluttered basement of the University Library, anthropology was beginning to lose this monopoly. The new art history, critical theory, cultural studies, cultural geography, history of science, intellectual history and more recently Queer and gender studies, Indigenous studies and post-colonialism have grown to contest anthropology's monopoly over the study of culture while at the same time critiquing basic presuppositions, its limited criticality, epistemology and its relation to its subject. Anthropology has reacted through fragmenting itself and in the US and Anglo-Canada through doubting the credibility of an epistemologically dis-unified four-field approach. Elsewhere where anthropology was always limited to cultural or social anthropology, the discipline has divided along critical and empiricist orientations. Museums holding ethnographic collections must now choose between following an established disciplinary based anthropology or moving its area of operations, to a broader raft of mainly emergent disciplines, including critical anthropology, which I have elsewhere identified with what I call the "anthropological imagination". This will be a hard decisions for new institutions with old collections, but one which will help decide their contemporary intellectual and ethical relevance; their ability to establish new and transformative relationships with originating communities, and in the long run the very acceptability and prudence and moral bearing of Europe as a political-ethical construction.

# CREDIBILITY AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATION. NEW ANTHROPOLOGIES FOR OLD COLLECTIONS MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

**Alexis Celeste Buntin**

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Cultural appropriation can be defined as, “the unauthorized taking of another culture’s tangible and intangible culture, especially by those who represent a group in a more powerful position.” Examples of cultural appropriation include Native American-themed mascots, such as the Washington Redskins football team, dressing up as a stereotype of another, less-societally powerful culture at a party, and wearing an indigenous headdress at a festival. Some of these may be harmless but others can be insensitive and offensive. According to this definition, many museums --particularly those that collect and display objects from traditional, folk or indigenous societies-- have inherited a legacy of cultural appropriation. The ethnographic collections of many of the world’s greatest museums were gathered under what would be considered unethical means by today’s standards.

Many world-renowned collections of cultural objects were established during the “golden age of discovery” as the imperial powers of the west vied to “discover” new sources of natural resources and trade goods. As part of this, scientific societies and wealthy individuals and companies in European countries financed expeditions accompanied by scientists under enlightenment era thinking to discover and catalogue the entire world’s geography, plants, animals, and peoples. Ship captains, traders, and scientists obtained millions of artifacts --from sacred objects to everyday items, from monumental architecture to the smallest tools--that would become the foundation of museum collections throughout the world today.

After the 19<sup>th</sup> century establishment of the discipline of anthropology to catalogue and describe the cultural diversity of predominantly non-Western peoples, collectors scrambled across all four corners of the earth to buy, trade and steal Indigenous Peoples’ tangible cultural property.



They operated under a “cultural salvage” mentality, or the idea that traditional cultures and peoples were rapidly disappearing under the “progress” brought by colonization and industrial modernization. Their goal was to safeguard the incredible diversity of the human experience before the forces of cultural homogenization under increasing global capitalism would wipe it away forever.

This legacy is controversial today. On one hand, the descendants of Indigenous (and other traditional or folk) Peoples whose heritage is represented among museum collections appreciate that museums steward their few remaining artifacts made before Western or colonial influence. To this end, museums often host Indigenous artists, elders and culture bearers to visit with and study objects of their own cultural heritage. On the other hand, these present day visitors, themselves living relatives to objects

made by ancestors generations ago, feel a deep ambivalence about the museum’s role. Present-day community members often feel emotional and even physical pain when confronting objects in collections that have been separated from their communities of origin, knowing that the objects are not being stewarded according to their traditions. In many traditional cultures, sacred objects are regarded as living or having elements of “being alive” that need to be cared for, via regular water, food, prayer, etc. that is not carried out in a contemporary museum setting (and is even seen as detrimental to the object according to this viewpoint.)

It could be argued that museums showcasing collections of non-Western objects exemplify cultural appropriation, defined earlier as “the unauthorized taking of another culture’s tangible and intangible culture especially by those who represent a group in a more powerful position.”

Many national and state museums —such as the British Museum, Musée du Quai Branly, Smithsonian Institution, Kunstkamera Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (St. Petersburg)— obtained some collections through “unauthorized taking.” In most cases, cultural objects were begotten through means that took advantage of “unequal power relations” between museum representatives and members of a local culture. But, even in cases where objects were “more fairly” sold to collectors, the local seller often did not have the right under customary law to engage in such negotiations on behalf of their community.



*Franz Boas was perhaps one of the most famous of the salvage ethnographers, posing. © Wikimedia Commons.*





*Author's personal photo "visiting" objects made by members of her tribe at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Conventional museum storage of "tourist arts" like these models of bidarkis are less controversial than ceremonial or other kinds of objects viewed as living and requiring regular care. © Alexis Celeste Buntin*



The separation and alienation of the object from its source culture to a museum environment can lead to further cultural appropriation. After the point of sale or collection, museums have continued to appropriate through their methods of registration, preservation, curation and display, all of which might go against the values, beliefs and practices of a collection's source culture. For example, registration might include particular information designated private by the source culture. Preservation methods might introduce chemicals, and other storage methods that might prevent the object from being treated appropriately according to cultural protocols. For example, a cultural protocol might call for a mask to be regularly danced in ceremony, which does not likely happen in the museum environment. Likewise, museum curation and display of cultural objects might place these objects in what would be considered compromising and inappropriate situations according to the beliefs of the source culture. For example, the helm masks made by the Mambila people of Western Africa are only meant to be seen by men. Putting them on museum display violates this cultural law by default.

Fashion legal scholar, Susan Scafidi (2005), introduced the concept of “the three S’s” as a heuristic device to determine whether an object has been appropriated within a contemporary economic context. These “three S’s” can be usefully applied when thinking about cultural appropriation in a museum context. The 3 S’s stand for “sacredness,” “source,” and “similarity.”

- “Sacredness” refers to the elements of a culture that are often meant for the people of a culture in a particular spiritual context. For example, Katsinam (wooden effigies of benevolent spirit beings) of the Hopi of Arizona are sacred items only to be seen and used in Hopi ceremony. Due to this sacred nature, they are not to be sold, kept, photographed, or put on display to those outside of the Hopi ceremonial complex. Viewed in this light, a museum that has a katsina in its collections might be seen as culturally appropriating it.
- “Source” considers whether the object’s community of origin intended it to be sold or used in a particular way outside of its original context. For example, a shaman’s necklace obtained via grave robbing would be considered misappropriated from its source culture. Similar to the Katsina example, this necklace is intended only to be used in specific contexts within the source culture. Viewed in this light, a museum that has a shaman’s necklace in its collection, or one that puts the necklace on display, or reproduces it for gift shop sale would be considered as acts of cultural appropriation.
- “Similarity” refers to how closely secondary reproductions or contemporary objects that are inspired by an object in a museum collection resemble the original object. For example, if a museum visitor who is not an authorized member of a source culture makes an exact or close copy of an aboriginal painting, he/she is culturally appropriating it. However, an artist from an outside (and more powerful) culture who simply takes inspiration might not be culturally appropriating, such as Pablo Picasso’s famous, “Les Demoiselles D’Avignon,” which was a seminal work in the development of modern European art.

The three S's can provide a general guideline for thinking about the ways that museum collections can cross the line of cultural appropriation. And, while many museums with collections of objects and human remains from indigenous communities have taken proactive steps to begin to make amends and even repatriate objects back to their source communities, countless thousands of objects will remain in collections, be conserved, curated and put on display following more mainstream practices regarded as inappropriate by traditional culture keepers of source communities. To add a deeper layer of complexity to the picture, many members of source communities, including culture keepers, are grateful for museums having preserved old and ancestral objects, and regard museums as good repositories for stewarding them to the future.

Today, a new and culturally-hybrid set of practices is developing between museums and source cultures to navigate this intercultural terrain that can expropriate these objects from a legacy of cultural appropriation to one more in line with cultural appreciation and respectful exchange. The next section of this article outlines these “good practices” for a new kind of emerging, more globally equitable museology.

### **Towards a More Inclusive and Indigenous Museum Praxis**

While museum staff, past and present, believe that museums serve all of humanity, they have tended to privilege Western and imperialist modes of collecting and curating non-Western objects (indeed, some might argue that the collecting and curating is inherently imperialist by nature). However, a diverse group of museum professionals have begun to work with objects and descendants from source communities in a more reciprocal, and cross-culturally respectful manner. These people tend to represent museums located in or very near source communities whose collections also represent those communities, such as Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand, and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. These, and other museums like them, have begun to adopt a set of practices that redress the inherent cultural appropriation in mainstream museum collection, storage, conservation and display. Examples include allowing descendants of source communities to perform prayer and ceremonial acts with objects; storing and displaying objects in a way that better fits source community protocols; loaning objects to source communities; and, conducting reciprocal and collaborative research (that, in some cases, may require stopping certain kinds of research seen as destructive to the source community).

These practices have been developed through relationship-building over time, and often in response to specific needs and requests made by source communities, incorporating an indigenous museum praxis. An indigenous museum praxis is guided by a set of three basic principles, or values, “life force,” “collective authority,” and “reciprocity.” If objects are thought of as part of a categorical continuum, from profane to sacred, the principles apply to objects with any sort of “sacredness,” which may range from a monumental statuary used in ritual, to an everyday tool imbued with cultural symbolism. Respect for the advice of knowledge-keepers (usually elders or religious leaders) around how to interact with the object is a given in following all three of the guiding principles.



- “Life force,” indexes the social life of the object. Many traditional cultures see an object as possessing a kind of force, represented by a metaphor of a life, which must be stewarded by living humans. The object is seen as having a social history reflected in stories around its origins, what the object has “witnessed,” and done (such as participated in ceremonies). According to traditional protocols, humans are responsible for making sure the object is brought into the world, “lives” or is curated, and “dies” or is disposed of properly.
- “Collective authority” refers to the intellectual property surrounding objects from indigenous or more traditional societies. In many, but not all cases, the object cannot be “owned” by a single individual, but is rather cared for, by a person or groups of people at different times during the object’s “lifetime.” Because the object is regarded as its own being, and because the object is part of a larger culture, individual people don’t have the right to alienate the object from its larger community obligations.
- “Reciprocity” is the idea that objects play a role in reciprocal obligations that people from source communities have to each other, the object, and elements of nature. In this perspective, when an object is removed from its cultural context, it can literally disrupt a balance maintained in the world.

Incorporating these principles into a more equitable museum practice is not easy for museum staff who are not members of collections’ source communities, and often takes years of patience and humility. It requires “unlearning” the dominant society’s ideologies of mainstream museum practice, while building up a new, more inclusive museology. Museum staff representing the dominating societies can begin to take these steps by first recognizing the inherent cultural appropriation in museums, followed by addressing the ways that their museum has and still reproduces structures of inequality through historical collecting, and ongoing modes of storage, curation, research and display.

Ultimately, museum staff must recognize that museums are not a “value-neutral” space and that all forms of curation are inherently political, with implications for upholding or impeding human rights. Museums can only begin to incorporate more a more indigenized approach after they are able to transmute the understanding of objects from a materialist, scarcity-based model of value (e.g. “it’s valuable because its rare,” or “it’s valuable because the culture no longer exists as it once was”) to a relation-based understanding of value (e.g. “the object cannot be separated from its life history, connections to people, and role in maintaining balance in the world.”)



## Practical Actions to Move Museums from Cultural Appropriation to Reciprocal Cultural Exchange

As challenging as this may seem, Museums can incorporate the following set of practical recommendations to actively move from cultural appropriation to cultural appreciation and reciprocity. In doing so, museums and their diverse audiences will benefit enormously from more inclusive, equitable, and intercultural museum experience.

- **Learn UNDRIP.** Learn the 46 articles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP, and develop a task force to examine the ways that museum practice can uphold Indigenous rights to self-determination, cultural identity, religious freedom, free prior and informed consent, protection from discrimination, and education.
- **Incorporate Source Communities.** Incorporate recommendations of members of collections' source communities through consultation, free prior and informed consent, and putting them on staff.
- **Practice Truth and Reconciliation.** Discover and acknowledge the real histories of object collections to their living source communities. Admit wrongdoings of the past, and work with source communities to rebuild a more equitable relationship.
- **Learn Protocols.** Make an effort to understand the cultural protocols of collections' source communities as they apply to registration, storage, conservation, curation and display, and incorporate them when possible.
- **Respect Cultural Values.** Respect the cultural values of source communities when engaging in object research. Understand that, according to some traditional protocols, some things about objects should not be studied, and also that paying attention to traditional knowledge can yield unexpected findings that can enhance what can be understood about an object.
- **Reach Out.** When possible, provide collaborative educational opportunities to source communities through outreach. These materials should be developed in consultation with and collaboratively with source communities.

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Anthropologies of the  
ways of perception  
and art appropriation

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Antropologías de las  
formas de percepción  
y apropiación del arte

# MUSEO ESTATAL DE ARTE POPULAR "OAXACA"

**Carlomagno Pedro Martínez**  
Museo Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca"

Soy originario de la comunidad San Bartolo Coyotepec, centro Oaxaca, un pueblo perteneciente a la etnia zapoteca de los Valles centrales de Oaxaca. Comparto la experiencia de un pueblo indígena que afianza y crea un museo propio; así como las motivaciones que originaron la realización de este espacio cultural. El pueblo de San Bartolo Coyotepec orgullosamente es de origen zapoteca y es lo que tengo muy recurrente en mi memoria. Tengo 51 años, nací en el año de 1965; a los 6 años tuve una experiencia muy poderosa en relación con el acercamiento a un museo.

En una charla con el director de la escuela primaria "Constancia y Progreso", el profesor José Román Guzmán, llamó mi atención la ideología arraigada que él tenía de José Vasconcelos; de los profesores que llegaban a las comunidades, se hacían parte de la comunidad y trataban de rescatar algunas cosas que se estaban perdiendo. Por



*Muestras de trabajos en barro negro en el Museo de Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca". © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*



*Muestras de trabajos en barro negro en el Museo de Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca". © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*





*Anastasia Galán y Rosendo. Ceramistas de Coyotepec. © Omar Alonso*

ejemplo, la motivación de este profesor fue porque a finales de los sesenta, principios de los setenta, había un 2% de hablantes de la lengua zapoteca. Y lo curioso es que tenía todo el interés de desenvolverse de un pueblo indígena. Él, al igual que el presidente municipal de aquellos tiempos de 1971, de nombre Mario Andrés de la Rosa, quien actualmente cuenta con 92 años de edad, convocó a toda la escuela primaria, a los seis grados; nos dijeron que todas las “piecitas” (piezas pequeñas), los “idolitos” como les llamábamos, se concentraran en dicha escuela y que luego se trasladarían a la Presidencia Municipal, ya que haríamos un lugar donde la comunidad pudiera admirar la importancia que ha tenido nuestro pueblo desde la antigüedad y que esas piezas se remontan a nuestros antiguos dioses. Detrás del palacio municipal estaba la casa ejidal y



*Figurillas de barro negro. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*



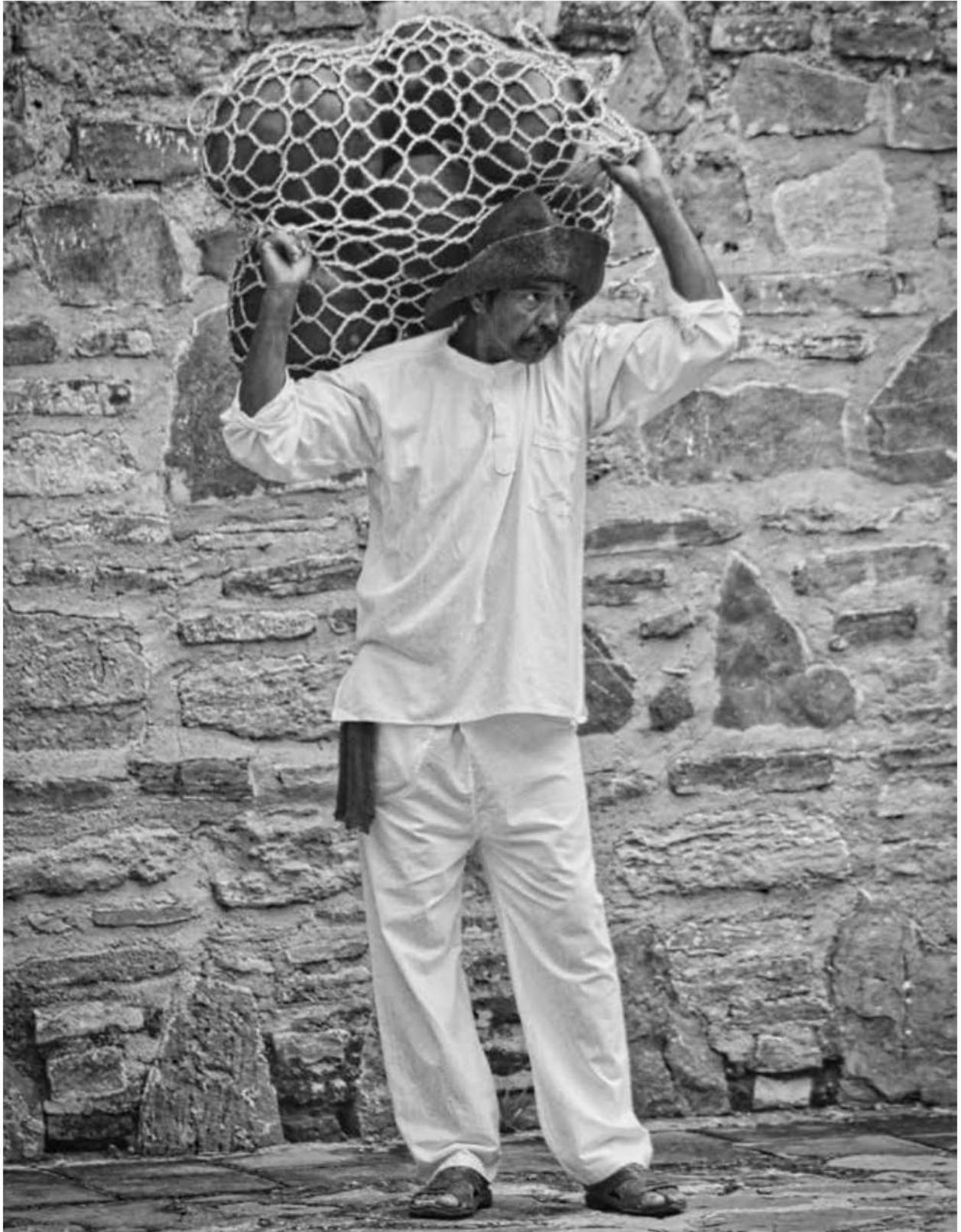
*Dolores Pedro, ceramista de Coyotepec. © Omar Alonso*

comunal de nuestro pueblo, y ahí se acondicionó, para mí desde mi concepción, el primer pequeño museo comunitario de San Bartolo Coyotepec. Recuerdo que nos llevaban los profesores por grupos, para ver “figurillas” que estaban acomodadas en pequeñas mesas que repararon en la misma escuela y en mesas que llevaron algunos de los señores del pueblo para que se mostraran las piezas. Era tan interesante porque veíamos esos objetos, esas piezas que eran de barro, propias de nosotros, y que eran abundantes en cierta manera.



*Glafira Martinez y Eleazar Pedro exhibiendo su trabajo en barro negro. © Omar Alonso*





*Hombre cargando cántaros. © Omar Alonso*



*Mujer transportando un cántaro de Coyotepec. © Omar Alonso*





Con el paso del tiempo, esa “casita” y esas piezas desaparecieron; pero en sí, en la comunidad de San Bartolo Coyotepec, que es un pueblo ceramista, actualmente hay más de 800 talleres familiares; tenemos una población de aproximadamente 5 mil habitantes. Seguimos trabajando el barro. Mi abuelo, mi bisabuelo y mi tatarabuelo fueron alfareros; mi papá, que afortunadamente todavía vive y que también lo es de cierta manera, en la herencia oral que llevamos, nos hablaba de las glorias pasadas de los antiguos zapotecas que poblaron Coyotepec. Ellos refieren que *Coyotepec*, en lengua náhuatl, es “cerro del coyote”, y en zapoteco, *Zaapeche*, es “cerro de la nube donde se esconde el jaguar”, o como se decía en las clases antiguas mexicanas, que el jaguar sin mancha era el alfarero, era el ceramista.

En 1989 tuve la suerte de tener una beca para viajar a los Estados Unidos para visitar especialmente museos y galerías de arte. Recuerdo mi primer paso en la oportunidad del acercamiento que tuve en el Museo de Bellas Artes Mexicanas de Chicago, que comandaban profesores mexicanos y algunos norteamericanos, que procuraban la conservación del arte mexicano. A mí me fascinó la idea porque en cierta manera ya se parecía a la lucha que teníamos en los pueblos indígenas por mantener presente la memoria de nuestros pueblos y hacer un lugar especial de esto. Yo recuerdo que en 1989 llegué a Chicago, y ahí estaba recién fundado este museo que era una especie de bodega de esos supermercados grandes, que eran como en círculos; ahí estaban dándose las primeras exposiciones. Yo era invitado para llevar mis piezas creativas; ahí empecé a platicar acerca de preservar nuestra identidad cultural a través de un museo con Carlos Tortolero, con René Arceo Frutos, y supe de Amalia Mesa Bains y de otros chicanos. En fin, regresé muy contento, y en ese inter del 89, me tocó ir a Nueva York. Ahí conocí el Museo del Barrio, y vi que era de una comunidad de origen puertorriqueño y que trataba sobre los mismos caracteres que yo quiero rescatar, este espacio cultural que me remonta a mi niñez, a los seis años, cuando surgió mi interés de proyectar el arte de nuestros pueblos originarios, en el sentido que realizara mi pueblo. Después, viajé a San Francisco California y me encontré en la Galería de la Raza, otro colectivo de chicanos; en aquel entonces su director era Enrique Chagoya.

Yo llegué a Oaxaca, a San Bartolo Coyotepec, totalmente entusiasmado por fundar el Museo del Barro Negro de San Bartolo Coyotepec, puesto que ya tenía formación. En los años treinta, Alfonso Caso y Paul Van de Velde llegaron a mi pueblo atraídos precisamente por la técnica del barro negro y su origen prehispánico; incluso, hay una zona arqueológica de donde sacaron unas urnas que en el carbono 14 dieron más de 2,500 años de antigüedad. El mascarón de la tumba 107 de Monte Albán tiene la misma técnica que seguimos usando en el pueblo actualmente. Empecé a hablar con las autoridades municipales en el año de 1990; me tocó hablar con el presidente municipal, don Erasmo Calderón Celaya, a quien le interesó la idea de fundar este museo. Comentaba: “Bueno, tenemos la escuelita que está ahí, es un predio que nos dona en 1905 don Manuel Guzmán”. Manuel Guzmán era un filántropo que apoyaba mucho al pueblo, era de oficio carnicero; se vino de México e hizo una fortuna. El solar



*Mujeres con cántaros afuera de la iglesia de Coyotepec. © Omar Alonso*

en donde vivía se lo dejó a la comunidad para que hiciera un espacio donde se le brindara un espacio a la educación y a la cultura del pueblo. Este personaje otorgó la primera biblioteca, misma que logró hacer con sus propios medios. Finalmente, en 1907, queda definido el lugar donde establecería el centro cultural del pueblo, que inició con la primera biblioteca municipal. Los libros aún se conservan en el Ayuntamiento de San Bartolo Coyotepec. En 1907, se establece en este predio la escuela primaria “Constancia y Progreso”; a partir de 1987 y hasta el año de 1992, queda ese espacio destinado para que fuera la escuela primaria y, posteriormente, la cambian de lugar porque ya había crecido la comunidad y era insuficiente. Entre el año de 1992 y 1994, se empieza la gestión, pasando por la asamblea general del pueblo, ya que en las comunidades indígenas siempre el pueblo reunido en total da la aprobación para un proyecto, si se autoriza o no. Me interrogaron, preguntando cuál era el proyecto que propongo, a lo cual referí que éramos un grupo de muchachos, un músico, un pintor y un joven taquero de la comunidad, quienes teníamos el sueño de hacer un museo donde proyectáramos la grandiosidad de nuestro barro negro y, sobre todo, nuestro origen prehispánico. Le gustó mucho a la comunidad; recuerdo a un abuelito de nombre Facundo León Pérez, quien se levantó y dijo: “Yo creo que los muchachos quieren trabajar, yo entiendo, a mis años que tengo, que la cultura y el arte nunca le hacen daño a una comunidad, al contrario, la engrandece, señores”, se quitó su sombrero y la gente empezó a aplaudir; todos al aplaudir aprueban el proyecto, y arrancamos en 1994 con este hermoso sueño.

En el año de 1996 abre sus puertas el primer Museo Municipal de San Bartolo Coyotepec; pero en ese año, dadas las circunstancias, se dan cuenta en el pueblo de que no hay un museo que proyecte el arte popular, las artesanías de los demás pueblos de valles centrales, y los integrantes de la Asamblea General argumentan que debía





*Museo de Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca", espacios de exposición. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*



*Museo de Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca", espacios de exposición. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*

realizarse un museo de arte popular, dándole la oportunidad a otros pueblos para que concentraran sus trabajos artísticos. Entonces, consultamos con otros pueblos el hecho de que nos apoyaran con piezas para poder darle más grandiosidad al museo y, finalmente, en 1996, lo inauguramos como el Museo Comunitario de Arte Popular de San Bartolo Coyotepec. Trabajamos alrededor de cuatro años, hasta el año 2000, de una manera muy austera, ya que es muy difícil mantener, promover y difundir las exposiciones con el mínimo presupuesto municipal. Llegamos a un acuerdo con el Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca en gestiones de la autoridad municipal de nuestro pueblo en el año de 1989. Acudieron con el gobernador del estado de Oaxaca y llegaron a un convenio en el que el espacio sería donado en comodato para que el gobierno estatal llegara a hacerse cargo de los gastos que surgirían de este proyecto, pagando la nómina de los empleados; pero remarcando que en dicho convenio la comunidad tendría siempre el mando sobre el terreno y el edificio, que las personas debían ser originarias del pueblo para que así se mantuviera el control sobre nuestro museo. Sería con carácter estatal pero el pueblo tendría el control de este museo y la proyección del mismo. Con una aceptación total se empieza a dar la difusión, siendo que el museo se encuentra muy cerca del palacio municipal.

El pueblo de San Bartolo está trazado de la misma forma que la Ciudad de México. El arquitecto Alonso García Bravo, quien traza la Ciudad de México, es el mismo que traza la ciudad de Oaxaca y de la misma forma el pueblo de San Bartolo Coyotepec; así como está ubicado aquí el Palacio Nacional está el palacio municipal y a un costado está el museo. Para buena fortuna, el 2 de octubre del año 2004, se inaugura un edificio ex profeso, con medidas y estándares de los museos de carácter internacional, en el sitio que anteriormente fungía como escuela, la cual fue derruida porque todos esos salones ya estaban seriamente afectados por los temblores. Ya Oaxaca es una zona sísmica. El edificio era de los años cincuenta y se demolió para que se levantara sobre ese espacio un nuevo museo, actualmente remodelado, este recinto cultural abierto al público con el nombre de Museo Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca".



*Máscaras de diablo y de carnaval.*  
© Abdiel Cardozo Calderón



*Textiles del Museo de Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca".*  
© Abdiel Cardozo Calderón

Es importante enfatizar que este museo tiene cuatro exposiciones al año; el 20 de marzo se reinaugaron sus nuevas salas de exposición con una nueva museografía. Actualmente remodelado, es muy diferente de como estaba en un inicio.

Es importante ver que los 15 pueblos que están en el valle central de Oaxaca llegan con sus autoridades municipales. Actualmente, con las cuestiones de los plagios de las creaciones de los pueblos indígenas, sobre todo en la técnica textil y la técnica de la talla de madera, es una preocupación real de las autoridades hacer este tipo de exposiciones para que la gente tenga la conciencia de lo importante que es conservar y preservar la identidad de nuestros pueblos a través de estas artes heredadas de nuestros antepasados.



*Fusión, ejemplo del trabajo de talla de madera.*  
© Abdiel Cardozo Calderón

Contamos con la exposición de barro negro, del pueblo anfitrión que es San Bartolo Coyotepec, en la cual hay piezas de carácter prehispánico que la propia gente del pueblo nos donan. En estos montajes museográficos, las exposiciones convergen con el arte del barro negro de carácter ceremonial y utilitario, destacando las nuevas creaciones contemporáneas que refieren a la evolución de la técnica.

Es importante ver que muchas de las piezas que están aquí son obras que integran la curaduría de inicios de este museo en el año 2004, de 50 familias, de las más importantes que están produciendo obras creativas y artísticas en barro negro.





*En esta imagen puede verse lo que ahora llaman “joyería del oro negro de Coyotepec”, que luego empezó a ser reemplazada por piezas de plástico y de latón que no se rompían. Aquí está presente la forma tradicional prehispánica de cómo se hornean las piezas de barro negro, a las que se les hace la reducción de oxígeno. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*

Destaca también una exposición con la temática de la virgen de Guadalupe y la Matlacihua (diosa del Mictlán, la diosa de la muerte), que muestra el respeto que se tiene tanto de las creadoras de los pueblos originarios como de las pintoras locales de Oaxaca, lo que permite notar una convergencia especial entre el que es llamado “arte popular” y el “arte contemporáneo” de mujeres de la ciudad de Oaxaca y la Ciudad de México que mostraron su trabajo artístico, a la par de las comunidades artesanales de Oaxaca. Cabe resaltar que en 2011 se le otorgó a la comunidad de San Bartolo Coyotepec el Premio Nacional de Ciencias y Artes 2011, por mantener su técnica milenaria.

De los maestros del arte popular oaxaqueño resalta Crispina Navarro Gómez de Santo Tomás Jalieza; ella ha difundido su talento en diversos lugares, por ejemplo, el Museo del Textil de Toronto. El maestro Flavio Gallardo realiza las figuritas de palma en miniatura, y don Félix Martínez de San Mateo del Mar, trabajos artesanales de los huaves, y aún trabaja los instrumentos prehispánicos tradicionales. Están también los maestros que trabajan la técnica del barro negro; también la maestra Elvira Ortiz de Santa Ana del Valle; los señores de Alvarradas, que trabajan los petates; mi padre, don



*Trabajos contemporáneos de artistas oaxaqueños. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón*

Antonio Pedro Carreño, tiene 88 años y sigue trabajando el barro negro. Tenemos al señor Daniel Sánchez, que hace reproducciones de las aves del paraíso; don Manuel Jiménez, creador de las tallas de madera tan famosas de Arrazola, y sus hijos, sus nietos, y Jorge Valencia, de San Antonino Castillo Velazco.

He de mencionar que entre los vínculos que hacemos como museo para poder sobrevivir, poder permanecer en este contexto de motivar a los creadores del arte popular, sobre todo a la juventud que regularmente emigra a Estados Unidos en busca de mejores situaciones económicas, hemos tenido el acercamiento con la fundación Amigos del Arte Popular de Oaxaca, presidido por la Dra. en Psicología Arden Rothstein, quien fundó en Nueva York la asociación Friends of Oaxacan Folk Art. Ella venía en los años sesenta a la ciudad de Oaxaca cuando un servidor era adolescente y quedó impactada con la cultura oaxaqueña; ahora integra una asociación de psicólogas que gestionan aproximadamente 20 mil dólares cada año para ayudarnos a hacer catálogos y premios para los jóvenes de los 15 pueblos trabajadores del arte popular. Estamos abarcando las ocho regiones de Oaxaca para motivarlos a seguir trabajando el arte popular que es la identidad de Oaxaca. Aquí se promueve su trabajo a través de los tianguis artesanales, las piezas se quedan para la colección del museo y de esta forma, además de apoyarlos a través de cursos de historia y teoría del arte, preservamos la



historia del arte de nuestros pueblos, para que se conozca la identidad y la grandeza de nuestras raíces. Estos jóvenes artistas acuden a una sesión cada semana, con ponencias del arqueólogo-antropólogo de nombre Juan de Dios Gómez Ramírez y el maestro Emilio León Zurita, licenciado en Letras Españolas e Historia de México, que son de pueblos de Oaxaca, el primero originario de Xoxocotlán y el segundo de Santa María Coyotepec. Nos están ayudando en la instrucción a la juventud de Oaxaca. A lo largo de este texto se presentan muestras de las exposiciones, aquí hay algo importante, porque nuestras exposiciones no son dirigidas sólo a los turistas, son dirigidas a la propia gente de los pueblos. En este recinto cultural nos admiramos y respetamos al exhibir todos los trabajos creativos de Oaxaca, como la talla de madera de Miahuatlán de Porfirio Díaz; los trabajos de los jóvenes, como el de Fernando Félix Peguero de Atzompa, Oaxaca, que es Premio Nacional de la Juventud 2014. Realizamos actividades culturales, trabajamos en demostraciones del arte popular, conciertos, participamos en entrevistas y programas de televisión a los que somos invitados y que se hacen en este espacio. Nosotros nos damos cuenta de que, en la medida en que se difunden estas actividades en el museo, se promueve la difusión en televisión, en la radio, en Internet, el flujo de visitantes llega para fortuna de los pueblos indígenas de Oaxaca. Llega cada año, por ejemplo, de Yogana Ejutla, que está a una hora más o menos de Coyotepec, un profesor con su grupo de niños para que compren silbatitos. Él les dice que es importante que vean los silbatos prehispánicos y los actuales, y que se sientan orgullosos de aquéllos por sobre los productos chinos de plástico que nos venden. Los niños se van felices tocando los pitillos de barro negro. Hacemos los talleres y las visitas guiadas; esto lo confieso honestamente, yo vi en Chicago y en San Francisco lo importante que es acercar a los públicos para que se instruyan, para que vean, conozcan y se sensibilicen de lo importante que es el arte popular oaxaqueño. Uno de los problemas que tenemos los muesos de Oaxaca y los museos comunitarios, sobre todo, es la cuestión económica. No tenemos recursos para nada, trabajamos con un presupuesto anual de 150 mil pesos, ahora, si bien nos van a dar 300 mil pesos. Le tenemos que apostar a las fundaciones, tenemos que hacer ahorro, ver, como se dice en Oaxaca, el *tequio* de las comunidades cuando llegan con sus obras artísticas. Ellos ponen el coctel, ellos ponen todo, y nosotros ahorramos eso para poder hacer el catálogo de barro negro, como de los orfebres. Así nos hemos mantenido durante los 13 años que vamos a cumplir en este 2018, 13 años de estar trabajando como el Museo Estatal de Arte Popular.

Quiero comentar que este museo se abrió un año antes que el Museo de Arte Popular de la Ciudad de México. Con toda la austeridad en la que trabajamos, estamos muy contentos porque ha habido muy buena respuesta de los pueblos indígenas de Oaxaca que trabajan estas artes. Es parte de lo que comparto; me da mucho gusto compartir la experiencia de cómo para las comunidades es una necesidad el mantener nuestra memoria intelectual de los pueblos originarios en un espacio museo, como es el Museo Estatal de Arte Popular "Oaxaca".



Catálogos de piezas de barro negro y de orfebrería. © Abdiel Cardozo Calderón



# LA IMPORTANCIA E INFLUENCIA DE LA BIODIVERSIDAD EN LA CREACIÓN POPULAR Y ACADÉMICA

**Walther Boelsterly**

Director del Museo de Arte Popular

“Geografía determina medio ambiente, medio ambiente determina biodiversidad, biodiversidad determina formas de vida que devienen en asentamientos humanos, etnias, y éstas terminan creando hábitos y costumbres que a la larga generarán su cultura”. Frases como ésta las hemos escuchado hace mucho tiempo, de generación en generación, en los dichos y refranes populares, en casa con la familia, y es por eso que se han hecho débiles, comunes y corrientes, ya no las concebimos en la medida real de su significado, sólo es un refrán popular, solemos decir. Lo que no se dimensiona es que los refranes populares están fundamentados en siglos de experiencia, en la repetición de hechos y costumbres que se convierten en reglas esenciales de vida.

La biodiversidad es el origen de la materia prima de las regiones y lugares donde se asientan los grupos humanos, es la conformadora del diseño de los objetos utilitarios o decorativos, es la fuente de inspiración cuando se “copia” a los elementos y gamas cromáticas que nos rodean, es finalmente la que condicionará formas de vida, de alimentación, de indumentaria, de vivienda y de transporte que moldearán el carácter y la forma de comportarse de los pueblos y, a la larga, de las naciones. No todo es economía en el diálogo Norte/Sur, no todo es explotación en la dicotomía riqueza/pobreza, colonizador/colonizado. La exuberancia tropical la determina su clima. La riqueza marítima es determinada por la temperatura de los mares, por los yacimientos de combustibles fósiles no renovables; la determinó su riqueza biodiversa. La “ausencia” de vida en los polos es generada por la intolerancia de los organismos vivos a esas condiciones. La actividad nocturna de los seres vivos en los desiertos es una forma inteligente de adaptabilidad y lucha contra las altas temperaturas. No podemos desplazar estos factores de forma simple e irresponsable. En el campo cultural, el ejemplo e influencia del factor biodiverso es determinante en varios campos.

El diseño de los depósitos creados para contener el vital líquido fue una constante de errores/ensayos del hombre hasta descubrir que una boca angosta evapora menos agua que una boca ancha, por lo que los diseños en toda la faz de la tierra han sido

determinados por un fenómeno químico, no por las costumbres y menos aún por modas. Sí participa el medio ambiente en las funciones secundarias, mas el diseño *per se* está determinado por las condiciones básicas de resguardo y aprovechamiento del vital líquido. Como este ejemplo, hay infinidad de pruebas en todas latitudes, en todas las culturas y en cada ambiente compartido por sus condiciones ambientales, que hacen coincidir a diferentes culturas a miles de kilómetros de distancia, pero sobre todo a miles de años de diferencia en su desarrollo, con adaptaciones y resultados parecidos.

La “simbiosis” creada entre necesidad/desarrollo y la biodiversidad ha sido una mancuerna tan antigua como la presencia de la vida en la tierra, pudiendo resumir que la necesidad hizo al hombre. El *patrimonio natural* es parte indivisible del *patrimonio cultural*, y se convierten en un bien común, que posteriormente conforma el concepto de *nación* y pasa a ser piedra angular de la función social, llevándolo a ser un *patrimonio sagrado*. La *entidad colectiva* es un concepto abstracto que metafóricamente hace visible y es base fundamental para una identidad. El patrimonio de una nación puede estar dividido en el regional y, en su conjunto, el nacional. Todos estos términos asociados son igual que inventario, reserva, depósitos, que a su vez son términos ligados a recursos que en su conjunto y flujo de producción generan un consumo. Este patrimonio constituye el pasado en la memoria que da pie al presente colectivo. La memoria es eso que nos permite tener presente; a su vez, gracias a esta identidad colectiva, generamos una identidad en el tiempo que transmitimos y usamos, en el sentido etimológico el término de *patrimonio*, como lo determina el derecho romano, es decir, los bienes transmitidos de padre a hijo. Este acto de transmisión da pie a la existencia de la familia y posteriormente a entidades colectivas. Sin embargo, nos obliga a conservar, salvaguardar, como garante de una transmisión de algo específico. Genoma del bien común. Conservar el patrimonio natural suscita artes y oficios que a su vez generan la propiedad industrial y comercial que producen economía, y ésta a su vez permite la creación de museos, monumentos, cultura, y hoy que todo se vende, la creación de patrimonios múltiples origina la importancia en las personas y de la sociedad para que en sus vidas estribe y refleje la sociedad en la que vivieron.

Hermes Trismegisto (Thot), “creador” de las ciencias y el arte, origen de mitos y ritos, secretos de inducción mágica, gran conocedor y observador de la naturaleza, origen de filosofías y leyendas, fundamentó sus conocimientos en la naturaleza. Tolomeo, que vivió en el siglo II d. C., escribió un tratado de astronomía, fundamentándose en la observancia de los cielos, los astros y traduciendo del árabe las observancias de antaño. Muchos años pasaron para que Occidente, a través de uno de sus grandes genios, Copérnico —quien no usó el método científico porque en el siglo XV simplemente no existía—, desarrolló teorías y conclusiones que cimbraron al mundo religioso y científico. Gérard de Cremona tradujo un texto del siglo II en el cual se basaron Kepler y Galileo. René Descartes, en 1637, con su *Discurso del método* y su aforismo “pienso luego existo”, propone y establece el método científico, sentando las bases matemáticas y físicas observando la naturaleza. En 1605 surge la primera ley de Kepler: cada planeta tiene su propia órbita. Su contemporáneo Galileo Galilei estudió las supernovas en 1611,





declarando su enigmática frase, que lo llevara al límite del desacato religioso (*eppur, si muove* [sin embargo se mueve]) y a ser juzgado por la Santa Inquisición. Edward Tyson escribió *Sive Homo Sylvestris: or the anatomy of a pygmie compared with that of a monkey, an Ape, and a man* y esbozó la teoría de la evolución. Robert Hooke (1635) realizó los estudios de las estructuras de las plumas de las aves, del ala de la mariposa, del ojo compuesto de la mosca e inició la clasificación de fósiles. Isacc Newton (1642) fue uno de los grandes impulsores de la ciencia en la historia, descubridor de la ley de la gravedad y su atracción a la tierra. Halley (1656) estimó la medición de la distancia entre la Tierra y el Sol, calculada en 153 millones de kilómetros en el siglo XVII, con instrumentos a los que hoy no les daríamos ninguna credibilidad, y cometiendo un mínimo error de cálculo, ya que la exacta distancia es de 149.6 millones de kilómetros. John Ray (1627), autor de los libros *History of fishes* e *Historia general de las plantas* (1831), sentó las bases para la clasificación científica que hoy en día conocemos y utilizamos. Bacon, Leibnitz, Buffon, Erasmus, Lamarck... pudiéramos mencionar cientos de nombres y datos, de nuestra época o de miles de años atrás, de anécdotas y leyendas, de avances y disparates, pero todos esos resultados, o en su defecto la inmensa mayoría, se obtuvieron por observar, conocer, estudiar, analizar la naturaleza, sus individuos y sus entornos, sin distinguir si pertenecían al reino mineral, animal o vegetal, al micro o macro cosmos, a la tierra o a sus atmósferas, al astro rey el Sol y sus efectos sobre nuestro planeta, al elemento agua, tierra o aire, a la reproducción o a la conducta, a su uso y explotación, a su uso y manejo, a su colección y atesoramiento. En cualquiera de sus niveles, formas y manifestaciones, la naturaleza ha sido el gran libro, la enorme y sabia maestra, la inspiración para todo tema y concepto; sin embargo, no la hemos cuidado, no la hemos respetado ni valorado en su justa dimensión. Éste es, pues, un intento por rescatar la importancia de este gran tesoro al que, con enjundia y entusiasmo, vamos empujando a un viaje sin retorno, a una muerte segura y a la pérdida, con su desaparición, de sus grandes y pequeños secretos.

Como todos sabemos, la conformación de los museos tiene diversos orígenes y, en varios casos, estos orígenes determinaron su futuro e incluso nos permiten descubrir su objetivo y alcances. Los fondos de un museo también determinan su nombre. Museos como Rufino Tamayo, en la Ciudad de México; el Museo Fernando Botero, en la Ciudad de Bogotá, en Colombia; el Museo Picasso en Barcelona, España; la Casa Azul o Museo Frida Kahlo, en la Ciudad de México, o el Museo Rodin, en la Ciudad de París, son ejemplos de museos de autor o monográficos y nos adelantan el contenido y origen de sus fondos, nos ilustran sobre la vida y obra del autor que da pie a su nombre. Los museos de índole nacional nos invitan a disfrutar fondos con sentido local (regionales) y paralelamente ofrecen una “historia revisada” del país en cuestión: el Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, en la Ciudad de México; el Museo Nacional del Oro de Perú; el Museo Nacional del Prado; el Museo de Arte Popular, en Ciudad de México, o ciertos recintos regionales como el Giverny; la Casa-Estudio de Claude Monet; la Cappella dos Ossos, en Évora, Portugal. También encontramos museos que nos muestran las colecciones particulares que se conformaron en un ámbito familiar, personal o empresarial y que mantienen la memoria del propietario de la colección, como La



Frick Collection en la Ciudad de Nueva York; el Castillo de los Hearst, en los Ángeles; el Museo José Luis Bello, en la Ciudad de Puebla, México; el Museo Dolores Olmedo, en el típico barrio de Xochimilco de la Ciudad de México, y muchos ejemplos más. En Europa, la monarquía y la aristocracia fueron parte fundamental de la conformación de colecciones y, en buena medida, responsables de fondos tan importantes, como el del Museo Británico de Historia Natural, donde se origina la colección de plantas conocida como la *Tradescant's Ark*, “curada” por John Tradescant, jardinero del Duque de Buckingham, Sir Cecil, y legada posteriormente por Sir Hans Sloane, con su nada despreciable colección de 68 millones de Lepidópteros en la ya muy lejana primera mitad del siglo XVIII, para conformar uno de los museos más importantes en su género a nivel mundial. También está la maravillosa colección de cráneos donada a Francia y base sustantiva del fondo del gran Museo del Hombre (Musée de l'Homme) en París, propiedad del Dr. Franz Joseph Gall, quien conformó una colección de más de 4 mil cráneos que fue recolectando durante su vida académica y científica con el fin de estudiar las deformaciones y enfermedades del cerebro, investigaciones base para el mapeo del cerebro —funciones y enfermedades—, hoy muy socorrida y esencial para el estudio y diagnóstico. Otra fuente insaciable y determinante fue el comercio de muchas especies de plantas y animales “exóticas” o mejor llamarlos desconocidos, que se almacenaban en estos espacios o gabinetes que guardaban y atesoraban objetos que provenían de lugares lejanos o “desconocidos” para occidente. Especies comunes y corrientes en otros lares, pero extrañas e irreconocibles en la Europa colonizadora de los S XVI, XVII y XVIII. Estos especímenes ejercían un poder espiritual, mágico y curativo, lo que las llevaba a alcanzar precios desorbitados y fuera de lo común. Otra fuente importante y definitoria, con una carga de valores que suma un extra a las colecciones o fondos, es la muy socorrida “creación religiosa” que en la Europa Central, después de salir del oscurantismo medieval, dio pie a la colección —con fines contradictorios— de las reliquias de santos y personajes vitales de la religión católica enmarcada por el fanatismo, el terror y la Santa Inquisición. La Abadía de Saint Denis en Francia, dominada por el abad Soger de Saint Denis en el muy lejano 1081, acumulaba, comercializaba, enviaba y negociaba con partes de las vestimentas y utensilios de santos, con partes de artículos “sagrados”, clavos y astillas de la cruz donde supuestamente murió Cristo; incluso la muy célebre abadía de Charroux fue oficializada por el Papa Clemente VII como la iglesia que guardaba celosamente el prepucio de Cristo. La demanda y el comercio creció, llegándose a manejar tal cantidad de “reliquias” que hubo que clasificarlas como *insignes notabilis* (brazos, piernas, cabeza), *non insignes* (pelo, dientes, ropa, pedazos de artículos personales, etc.) y *exiguæ* (poco consideradas, pequeñas de valor). El furor y la demanda fue tal que el Papa Bonifacio VIII emitió una bula *detestandæ feritatis abusum* (abuso de detestable crueldad), para delimitar, controlar y autenticar su manejo y comercio. En todos estos casos y en muchos otros más que no son materia de este tema, la inmensa mayoría de los fondos o colecciones tuvieron su origen en la naturaleza, base de todo conocimiento e inspiración, muestra de la importancia de este recurso que se creía inagotable y que hoy está permanentemente amenazado, llegando a niveles alarmantes, con una desaparición de 200 especies de animales o plantas... diariamente.



Bien podríamos usar la palabra *generaciones* para la clasificación y ordenación de la historia museística. No se trata de encasillar ni de acotar, simplemente de facilitar su comprensión para poder analizar las ventajas y posibles desventajas de cada uno, así como su forma de solventar los errores o de incrementar sus metas y objetivos. La iniciativa de coleccionar objetos —como ya sabemos— es muy antigua y conlleva implicaciones políticas, militares, económicas, culturales, científicas, etc., y aunque los gabinetes de curiosidades son parte estructural de la historia museística, la conformación formal de los museos comienza con los espacios dedicados a la historia natural, a lo que nos rodea, a la riqueza de la biodiversidad, cualquiera que ésta sea. Aunque el planteamiento de vinculación no era el origen del diseño y uso de materia prima, no se perdía de vista la importancia, variedad y necesidad de conocer lo que nos rodea y, al mismo tiempo, de conocer la riqueza mundial a pesar de las imposibilidades económicas y físicas de entender de forma directa a través de viajes. Es así como surge esta primera generación, mostrando simple y llanamente la riqueza de la naturaleza.

La segunda generación es la que presenta la muestra de objetos de uso cotidiano, las herramientas y utensilios de las diferentes etnias y culturas alrededor de la tierra, museos etnográficos que son testimonio de la cultura material, de la biodiversidad, de las tradiciones locales y su folclore, de la forma como se trasladan, visten y habitan, de su dependencia de la agricultura y recolección, el uso de utensilios diseñados por y para su uso específico. Habrá que recordar que los museos, los de este tipo en específico, son ámbitos privilegiados de la memoria, espacios de conservación de nuestro patrimonio y depósito de la memoria colectiva. Con esto quedan propuestas las futuras bases para los recintos de tercera generación, que reutilizan estos objetos primitivos y sencillos, muchas veces rediseñados por los grandes talleres de artesanos y de gremios especializados. Estos talleres aprovechan el uso original de estos objetos y mejoran la calidad de los materiales, pulen su diseño y producen objetos para ser adquiridos y utilizados por una clase con cierto poder económico y con mayores pretensiones sociales. El objeto utilitario pasa a ser objeto de deseo y decoración, de explotación y comercialización, inclusive dándole un uso decorativo. Recordemos que los objetos no se deben a la casualidad, son un testigo permanente de la historia, de la biodiversidad, de las invenciones y de sus herramientas, de la conformación educativa y, finalmente, de los ritos y su cosmogonía. Los museos de cuarta generación muestran las obras encontradas o producidas en la región, eclécticos por naturaleza y, muchas de las veces, su valor será determinado y dependiente de su geografía y riquezas regionales; nos muestran obras que van conformando la historia de lugares, espacios y personajes. Muestran actos de transmisión, dando pie a la existencia de grupos que pasan a conformar sociedades, y éstas, a su vez, estructuran las bases culturales que los definirán como entidades colectivas modernas, donde nos aseguran la transmisión de hechos, actos y objetos creados con un fin específico. Los recintos de quinta generación son espacios que nos muestran periodos de la historia nacional, ciertos periodos importantes por su desarrollo cultural, político o económico y por su naturaleza histórica. En el caso de los de sexta generación, nos muestran ciertos periodos específicos de la historia plástica, escuelas conformadas por alguna teoría,

con fundadores y seguidores, estilos pictóricos que convergen en una forma de ver, entender y transmitir al público sus principios plásticos, escuelas que agruparon a artistas de diversas disciplinas, que generaron un movimiento regional, nacional o internacional, autores importantes que por su valor y producción, ameritan espacios para comprender su obra, mostrarla y dar pie a su popularidad. Aquéllos de la séptima generación son espacios donde la propuesta arquitectónica es *in situ* y por sí misma una “obra de arte”, favoreciendo el “capricho” personal de toda iniciativa de contenido. El arquitecto impone su proyecto sin ningún miramiento, condicionando la obra, realizándose bajo este precepto esté o no de acuerdo la comunidad. A pesar de todo, los resultados han sido positivos en la mayoría de los casos y responden prácticamente a una firma, un estilo, una “marca”, que con la trayectoria y mercadotecnia del autor/despacho han alcanzado éxitos inusitados. Muchos de estos espacios manejan un lenguaje y objetivos interactivos de tecnología de punta, donde incluso se ofrece la posibilidad de no asistir al espacio museístico y, sin embargo, de poder deambular por sus salas y pasillos, por sus obras maestras y depósitos.

Hoy, la tecnología y la apertura a todo tipo de público ha generado un gran número de ofertas para poder conocer y recorrer en forma “virtual” las colecciones de museos de todo tipo y generación. Estos museos son ajenos a su tradición cultural, sin embargo, son testigos de nuestra permanencia, razón por la cual la propuesta arquitectónica es totalmente independiente al contenido, a la historia urbana del espacio, a la tradición arquitectónica de la zona y a los intereses del propio museo.



A raíz de este planteamiento, la posibilidad de enfocar una forma para proteger el patrimonio material e inmaterial, de vincular el patrimonio natural con el cultural, se vislumbra no sólo como una posibilidad concreta, se plantea en forma indirecta para lograr la protección de los dos patrimonios, y se concientiza al público para entender y trabajar de forma coordinada e interdisciplinaria, para proteger nuestra mayor riqueza, nuestro mayor museo sin muros, nuestra única casa que nos ha acompañado a través de nuestra corta y pequeña presencia sobre la faz de la tierra y su gran legado: el patrimonio natural.





*Antiguos ficheros bibliográficos en el Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México. © Rodrigo Morlesin*

**IV.** Setting the foundations for international cooperation between museums through anthropology

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**IV.** Sentando las bases para la cooperación Internacional entre museos desde la antropología



# SUMMARY REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON MUSEUMS, ANTHROPOLOGY AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES, IN THE ESSENCE OF THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

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With respect to social cohesion and inclusivity the meeting acknowledges and supports the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*, Article 27: (1) “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.

With respect to ethnographic collections with a tangible connection to extant indigenous communities, the meeting acknowledges and supports the *UN 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, in particular recognizing (p. 2) :“that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment”; and:

“*Article 11*: 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature”.

The meeting also:

- *Recognizes that museums are not a value-free space and that all forms of curation are political with complications for upholding or impeding the human rights of diverse peoples.*

- *Recognizes that museums were formed under a legacy of colonization and run the risk of reproducing power structures based on age, gender, social class, disabilities and colonialism.*
- *Reaffirms the positive potential museums have to contribute to ongoing social transformation.*

With these points in mind, the working groups recommend the following with respect to the role of museums in promoting social cohesion and inclusion:

- *Museums should facilitate the expression and defense of cultural rights in order to maintain cultural diversity and social cohesion as specified by Article 27 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*
- *Museums should explore mechanisms to promote social inclusion and diversity; museums should avoid admission fees, when citizens cannot afford them.*
- *Museums should reflect the diversity of their catchment area with respect to staffing, visitor attendance, exhibits, and the demographic composition of the place where they are located.*
- *Museums should reflect the linguistic diversity of their publics whenever possible. Written expression in museums, descriptions and information should be at least bilingual and accessible to all age-groups and those with disabilities (e.g. braille, haptics, audio).*
- *Museums should serve their wider (and increasingly multicultural) public and not be preserved for the elite.*
- *Museums should, wherever possible, address contemporary issues such as migration, social differences, power, marginalized communities, climate change, political conflict, conflictive memories, and decolonization, and create a forum for interaction and dialogue between different source communities.*
- *Museums are not static repositories of the past, but should engage in collecting contemporary objects in order to create innovative and diverse collections for the future so that museums can serve as agents of dialogue between different cultures, views and values.*
- *Museums have an important role to play in educating the public on issues of museum ownership and appropriation, and should actively engage in outreach to diverse publics around museum policy, programs and education. In order to remain relevant and dynamic institutions, museums must also be self-critical of their established practices.*





- *UNESCO should call on all member states to support museums with adequate means and funds to generate social inclusive cultural diversity policies.*

**Ethnographic collections:** Because ethnographic collections of artefacts, documents, photographs etc. were acquired in an era of colonialism and imperialism that paid little regard to the rights of indigenous peoples, great sensitivity needs to be used when relating these collections to extant indigenous communities to which the items in these collections once belonged. With respect to museums containing ethnographic collections that have a direct connection to extant indigenous peoples, the working groups recommend the following with respect to indigenous groups:

- *Museums should implement the UN Resolution of 2007 regarding the rights of indigenous peoples.*
- *Museums should recognize the human rights of living or descendant communities' rights to access their objects for healing, rituals, research, and social cohesion.*
- *Museums should document as fully as possible the history and context of their ethnographic collections in order to build the basis for the communities to claim access, use, and in some cases, to repatriate museum items. They should allow communities to have access to the original objects easily; seek funding in order to help communities to interact with objects and create permanent positions in the museum to attend these human rights issues; allow the use of the objects respecting their belief systems, and establish infrastructures so that they can use them according to their own traditions and beliefs; and provide and not obstruct the provenance of objects to the public upon request*
- *Museums should also establish long-term relationships with communities that include understanding, respecting and implementing those communities' protocols and rights to intellectual property and traditional knowledge;*
- *Museums should establish whenever possible a museum position that engages with indigenous communities and honors the traditional knowledge of the source communities of the understanding and curating of objects.*
- *Museums should whenever possible consult communities to obtain free prior and informed consent of the curation and display of ethnographic objects; and collaborate with members of source communities to uphold their legal intellectual property rights, as indicated by Article 11.1 of the UN 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.*

# **THE WORKING GROUPS' CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING MUSEUMS AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES**

## **GROUP 1**

### **MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

These recommendations are on the relevance of museums for the 21st century and beyond. In the past three decades, in the globalized world, interest in cultural diversity and faithful representations of different peoples have increased.

- Museums must do more than they do at present in respect of cultural and social diversity. Diversity should be present in every aspect of museum life: staff, curators, collections and perspectives to classify and present them. We should have diversity among decision-makers, including gender and class diversity, native curators and collection organizers. Museums should reflect the diversity of the environment where they are settled. They should be useful tools or instruments of change by reflecting their social setting and also by including other professions in museums. The choice of the subject of exhibitions should also reflect the social milieu (environment, social differences and conflict). Museums should go beyond being places of harmony where conflict is not acknowledged, to be places that reflect conflict and the possible ways of dealing with it. Museums should promote dialogues and explore the debates around them. We should support museums in addressing contemporary issues: e.g. migration, social differences, power, climate change, political conflict, conflictive memories, decolonization. The responsibility of museums in dealing with these issues is strategic.
- Anthropology has developed and accumulated knowledge and experience dealing with diversity and sociocultural differences. This knowledge may contribute to build a strong relationship between anthropology and museums, in order to better represent the material and immaterial cultures of different peoples. There





Day 2 of the International Meeting. © Gabriela Velázquez

is a need to better define what the subject of the museums is and whom they wish to address. Because of anthropologists' professional experience with alterity (or the "other"), they could help to develop better definitions of the grammar of diversity in museums.

- Museums need to respect the objects they display as representations of peoples' cultures. The dignity and biography of the object (where does it come from and its meanings) need to be respected when displayed. Context, meaning and history must be taken into account at all times.
- Museums should always hold high ethical standards whenever cultural diversity is involved.
- Museums should facilitate the expression and defense of cultural rights in order to maintain cultural diversity and social cohesion.
- Museums should reflect the linguistic diversity of their publics whenever possible. Written expression in museums, descriptions and information should be multilingual.
- For the sake of museums' own diversity, museums should work in networks to take advantage of the innovative international debates, towards future creativity and experimentation.
- In view of increasing changes and the use of rapidly decaying materials, museums should engage in collecting contemporary objects in a creative way, in order to create innovative and diverse collections for the future.
- UNESCO should call all member states to support, with adequate means and funds, museums and other inclusive cultural diversity policies.



## GROUP 2

# MUSEOLOGY AND MUSEOGRAPHY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

- Museums that care for collections from varied and diverse societies must ensure the best cultural diversity necessary to speak respectfully to objects in a way that reconnects them to societies for the benefit of all.
- Managing and curating objects from culturally diverse backgrounds and societies that may involve colonial histories require that museums must take the necessary steps to include knowledges outside the museum including active participation from source regions and communities, recognizing their hybrid and diverse nature and histories.
- Museums must recognize that they are no longer the owners of collections they hold. Instead, they are stewards who recognize their obligations to take informed consent and ethical practice seriously, and to actively enable source regions and communities to participate in the governance and curatorship of their objects.
- Museums need to embrace approaches and methods that are premised upon a pluralist sense of the social sciences' disciplines and draw upon the best achievements of anthropology, archaeology, historical studies and philosophy. These museum approaches should be premised upon an interrogation of conventional classificatory systems in order to build a dialogue between culturally diverse audiences and objects through a deliberate process of decolonization and the breaking down of essentialisms in ways that allow objects and publics to influence each other.



Working groups. © Rodrigo Morlesin



## GROUP 3

# THE ANTHROPOLOGIES OF THE WORLD

We are convinced that the study of anthropology is the best agent for change in the museum context. The goal of this working group is to elaborate recommendations and suggestions regarding the role of anthropology in museums.

- It is important to define exactly what anthropology means. The multiplicity of anthropologies is an advantage to recount a diversity of views. However, we need to define how anthropology respects cultural differences.
- It is important to recognize that there are different kinds of anthropologies: physical, cultural anthropologies, archaeology, etc. Anthropology allows us to look at phenomena and ideas in human evolution through the lens of different cultures; how different cultures perceive, understand and express different cosmovisions and beliefs.
- Three important issues to take into consideration:
  1. The intellectual diversity of anthropology is extremely important and fertile.
  2. Anthropology behaves as a translator of cultures.
  3. Anthropology is the only discipline that has discussed the equilibrium of human principles and universal values. It is necessary to go back to anthropology to consider the next step in cultural evolution.
- Anthropology offers the opportunity to consider and explore art and history in new ways.
- Anthropology as a discipline is always situated at the border of the museum milieu.
- Anthropology is less of a disciplined discipline than it was in the past. Anthropology has the capacity of self-critique and sees itself in a perpetual crisis of identity.
- Anthropology has been pivotal in the development of cultural and political diplomacy.
- Anthropological studies have been influencing other disciplines, but not as yet the cultural debate in museums.
- The growth of global art could be understood as a product of the legacy of the anthropological discipline.
- Anthropology is the recognition of the inherent value of differences.
- Archaeology has emphasized uniqueness, anthropology should discuss universality.
- We need to go beyond the opposition between anthropology and art history and we need to develop a cross-disciplinary approach.
- Anthropology has the potential to change traditional ways of looking at things.
- Today, anthropology is not active and engaged enough to promote a social dialogue in museums.





*Working groups. © Gabriela Velázquez*

- Museums are changing today. A museum is a space for a living art and a living culture. It is no longer seen as a temple. Museums are living organisms. We need to enhance this new role and try new readings of old materials.
- One of the major duties of the museum is a conciliation between the past and the present, and between the self and the other. This can be successfully accomplished by an anthropological approach.
- It is also an opportunity and moment for museums to apply the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights. The museum can be used as a platform to capture the UN Declaration on Human Rights and put it into practice on its 70th anniversary. [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/)
- What are the key positions and areas by which indigenous people can manage control of these collections? How can we bring the academic and the indigenous knowledge traditions together? These are important reflections before starting a cultural dialogue project.



- To what extent can the integration of indigenous people and/or local communities cause change in the decision-making process of museums?
- Museum networks extend far beyond the walls of a museum: interculturalism, not multiculturalism.
- How to hire people in this context? If you are looking for change, then you need international cooperation and cultural diplomacy.
- Cultural diplomacy is key for this purpose and dialogue.
- Anthropology is a technology for thinking about cultural complexity. It has the capacity of sharing knowledge by mediating between different worlds. Anthropology understands culture as dynamic and can facilitate a reconciliation between past and present, and between alterities.

### **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Implement the UN Resolution of 2007 regarding the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Anthropology may act as the agent by which to implement the UNESCO recommendation on museums and cultural diversity.
- Anthropologically-based critical museology helps museums to question their own operations from a research based practice.
- Anthropology can be helpful for museums to deconstruct existing decision-making processes in order to analyze their forms of organization and update them to meet current social demands.
- Museum collections, present and future, should serve as agents of dialogue, between different cultures, views and values.
- In addition to their traditional roles of conservation and protection, museums should become spaces for intercultural production.
- Ongoing research and collecting are key practices that enable museums to fulfill their mandate.
- In order to remain relevant and dynamic institutions, museums must be self-critical of their established practices.
- If a museum would like to operate as a true forum, then it should take into consideration the above recommendations.

## GROUP 4

# CREDIBILITY AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PREAMBLE:

- Recognizing that museums are not a value-free space and that all forms of curation can uphold or impede the human rights of diverse peoples.
- Recognizing that museums were formed under a legacy of colonization and run the risk of reproducing power structures.
- Reaffirming the positive potential of museums in contributing to ongoing social transformation.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

1. **Recognize the human rights of living or descendant communities' rights to access their objects for healing, rituals, research, social cohesion, etc.**
  - Internal (not public), responsible and as accurate as possible cataloging of the provenance of existing information and associated records in order to build the basis for the communities to claim access, use, research, defense of their rights, repatriation.
  - Allow communities to have easy access to the original objects.
  - Obligation to seek funding in order to help communities to interact with objects and create permanent positions in the museum to attend these human rights issues.
  - Allow the use of the objects respecting their belief system and establish infrastructures so that they can use them according to their own traditions and beliefs.
  - Provide and not obstruct the information of the provenance of objects to the public upon request.
2. **Establish long-term relationships and dialogue with communities which include understanding, respecting and implementing communities' protocols and rights to intellectual property and traditional knowledge.**
  - Establish a position in the museum to engage with communities and to set up long-term relationships.
  - Honoring the traditional knowledge of the source communities as a curating priority.
  - Whenever possible, consult communities to obtain free prior and informed consent of the storage, stewardship, care-taking, research, display, and public visibility





*Theme 3: Anthropology in the world. the role of anthropological disciplines and the conceptualization of contemporary dialogue between cultures. © Gabriela Velázquez*

(publication/interpretation/labeling) of the objects in exhibition.

- Integrate established symbolic, moral and enforceable existing and future legal instruments in the museum practice, such as the provisions developed by UNDRIP, UN, UNESCO, WIPO.
- Proactively inspire the creation of legal instruments that protect intellectual property of the source communities.

**3. Develop protocols which protect the human and cultural property and customary rights of all people.**

- Develop, update and follow a working document in the museum (by all employees) on the implementation of cultural rights.
- Cultural landscape: Obligation to investigate material, techniques and trades of raw materials originating in certain geographies that have been or are being used by certain groups/people to create their objects. Acknowledge the connections between the collections and their uses of biodiversity.

**4. Recognize the on-going “life of objects”, meaning stewardship, caretaking and authority of knowledge and interpretation**

- Establish an interdisciplinary laboratory that allows the use, re-interpretation and investigation of the use and meaning of objects.
- Create a forum for interaction and dialogue between source communities and social sciences.



Working groups. © Gabriela Velázquez

## 5. Function of a museum

- Ongoing self-reflection of the museum on their legacy, collection and practice
- Moral obligation of the museum to educate themselves and the public on issues of ownership and appropriation.
- Actively engage in outreach to diverse publics around museum policy, programs and education.
- Museum should be a space of empowerment for communities and be able to transform itself from a space of based on a paradigm of "salvage" to a space for co-constructed cultural expressions.
- Recognize that the museum is a space of resource for communities that are sometimes running into dead-ends with conflictive objects.
- The physical space of the museum does not only include the building but also embraces all the communities related to/included in its collection.
- Make the information available to everyone.



**V. Interviews  
and Bios**

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**V. Entrevistas  
y semblanzas**

# ALEXIS BUNTEN



Alexis Bunten, (Aleut/Yup'ik) has served as a manager, consultant and applied researcher for Indigenous, social and environmental programming for over 15 years. After receiving a BA in Art History at Dartmouth College, Alexis returned to Alaska, where she worked at the Sealaska Heritage Institute, and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Subsequently, Alexis earned a PhD in Cultural Anthropology at UCLA, and has served as the Project Ethnographer for the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, and as a Senior Researcher at the FrameWorks Institute. Alexis is an accomplished researcher, writer, media-maker, and curriculum developer. She has published widely about Indigenous and environmental issues, with articles in *American Indian Quarterly*, the *Journal of Museum Education* and *American*

*Ethnologist*. Her 2015 book, "So, how long have you been Native?" *Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide* won the Alaska Library Association Award for its originality, and depth. In addition to writing, Alexis has contributed to several Indigenous-themed productions, including co-producing and writing the script for a documentary nominated for the Native American Film Awards. Alexis has developed educational material for both formal and informal learning environments including university level-courses as well as lifelong learner curriculum.

*Hello, my name is Alexis Bunten and I come from the United States and I manage a program called Indigeneity and I also do consulting for indigenous groups and other NGOs around indigeneity related issues.*

## **Nowadays, what makes a museum universal?**

I think that every kind of museum has the potential to be universal even though there are different kinds of museums, such as national museums or very community based cultural centers. I feel like there is space in all of these different kinds of places for people from all different walks of life. They may take away a different message... So, I guess the universality of it is that it's a space that welcomes visitors to learn something new and think about issues and ideas and objects in maybe a new way.

## **How can we relate universality to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism?**

I think that when museums answer the very, very big questions that are germane to all humankind around the world it actually acts as a weapon against anti-intellectualism



and a weapon against fundamentalism. So, in that way when people from all different walks of life go to a museum and they're confronted with these big universal ideas such as... What does it mean to be a family? Or, what does it mean to grow old? Those kinds of universal questions, it cuts through to the core of what it means to be human which I think begins to strip away the fear of fundamentalism or ideas that are based in ignorance and hate.

**How can museums make sure that their concepts on universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

I think that the messages that museums have to offer the world can definitely cut through social media and other forms of more traditional media that dominate people's attention because the museum is fundamentally a place where people can go... If they're in a new place, if they're visiting even in their hometown if they're confronted with it, people would go. So, it's a little known fact that... I heard a statistic once that in the United States more people go to museums than sporting events. That's very hard to wrap your mind around. So, I think it's more of a fallacy to think that museum's ideas aren't getting across to people. However, that being said museums can look towards new technologies and new platforms and new ways of reaching out to even broader audiences.

**Because this statistic... Does this statistic talk about local people going to the United States' museums or people from abroad?**

Yeah, in kind of the tourism statistics there is always a distinction between domestic visitors and international visitors. I think that statistic I said refers to domestic visitors but I'm not sure because I literally heard it like ten years ago. So, but the point is to say we do need good statistics on this and people do visit museums, they don't... That's on their check off list. When they go to Mexico City they want to... "I went to the Templo Mayor, first place I went." You know? "It drew me there." People just, they want to see it, they want to experience it.



I think that when museums answer the very, very big questions that are germane to all humankind around the world it actually acts as a weapon against anti-intellectualism and a weapon against fundamentalism."



**For example, what do you think when you hear people like Carlomagno? He said almost standing at the doors of his museum asking people to come by... What do you say about this?**

I think geography is really important. Museums that are in a major metropolitan center that have some kind of hype or reputation to go with them... For example like the MoMA in New York City. Everybody is going to go there, people want to go there, so maybe museums need to be a little bit less academic and possibly adopt maybe a little more marketing, get a little bit more savvy around getting the word out that they exist. So we heard a great example here today about the former curator of a museum in Paris and how she curated an exhibit in 2011, co-curated with a football player. And, she said that brought the youth out from the suburbs of Paris who have previously been an unreached audience, an erased audience. So, why not? Why can't museums partner with pop culture icons like football stars that young people look up to? I think that's an amazing use of that star power. And, just like the power of marketing... There is no reason we can't cross over... There is no reason museums have to be so elite that they won't work with a football player, I think that's amazing.



# ANTONIO CARLOS MOTTA DE LIMA



Estudió Historia Moderna y Contemporánea en la Universidad de París-Sorbonne, donde concluyó la maestría en 1992. Continuó su formación académica en antropología social y etnología en la École des Hautes Études en Ciencias Sociales de París, donde obtuvo el doctorado en 1998. Fue investigador visitante en la Sorbonne en el Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, en calidad de becario del Gobierno francés. En 2001, se convirtió en profesor en la Universidad Federal de Pernambuco y en 2002, profesor colaborador en el Programa de Antropología de Iberoamérica de la Universidad de Salamanca, España. Durante el periodo 2006-2008 fue profesor visitante en la Universidad de Salamanca e investigador visitante en las siguientes universidades: la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, la Universidad de

La Coruña, el Instituto Superior de Ciencia del Trabajo y de la Empresa de Lisboa (ISCTEC) y el Instituto de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Lisboa. Actualmente es investigador en la Universidad de Oxford, Reino Unido. Es autor de varios trabajos publicados en Brasil y en el extranjero, consultor científico de periódicos, editor de revistas, coordinador del proyecto editorial de la Asociación Brasileña de Antropología. Sus investigaciones contemplan la antropología del mundo contemporáneo, los museos, políticas y derechos culturales. Fue miembro del Consejo Gestor del Sistema Nacional de Museos del IBRAM/MinC; titular de la Comisión Nacional de Cultura en el área del Patrimonio Cultural del Ministerio de Cultura (MinC); es miembro del Consejo del Patrimonio Museológico Nacional del IBRAM/MinC y del Consejo Internacional de Museos (ICOM-UNESCO).

*Soy Antonio Mota, antropólogo brasileño. Me interesa mucho el diálogo entre la antropología y los museos, están muy cerca. Mi investigación actual es en el campo de las políticas de los derechos culturales en América Latina, especialmente en Brasil. Tengo especial interés por la museología social, los museos comunitarios, indígenas, afrodescendientes y todos los cambios de una museología que está involucrada con la inclusión social de la periferia.*

## ¿Qué convierte hoy a un museo en universal?

La categoría “universal” es debatible. Hay todo un planteamiento después de la crítica, de las grandes narrativas. El desafío más grande de los museos es que la contemporaneidad integra sus particularidades, sus singularidades, en un campo más general, en el que el público puede interactuar con los temas de los museos

más clásicos, aquellos con una tipología tradicional, como los museos europeos. Es necesario repensar estrategias para establecer el diálogo universal entre las culturas; hay que integrar acervos, colecciones, y estar en contacto con los problemas contemporáneos, para que las personas puedan verse representadas dentro de los museos y éstos no se tornen espacios caducos u obsoletos. Los museos particulares estarían dentro de esa dialéctica entre un particular, un singular y un general. Un museo con una propuesta local puede ser y debe ser también universal, en la medida en que los problemas locales pueden también generales y traducen intereses más contemporáneos. Este tema replantea la misión de los museos y los cambios necesarios para la museología actual.

### **¿Cómo pueden hacer los museos para que sus concepciones sobre la universalidad sean escuchadas en un mundo que está dominado por los medios tradicionales y las redes sociales?**

La sociedad contemporánea actual está muy conectada. Entre los continentes, entre las poblaciones, hay un flujo de información que está en todas partes, hay una cultura más globalizada o una mundialización de la cultura. Esto tiene un impacto sobre los museos y los medios son importantes. Los museos no pueden pensarse sin el público, sin acciones educativas, y este público está muy influenciado por todo el medio. En México y Brasil, los pueblos más alejados están muy conectados por la tele y el internet. Estos medios actúan directamente sobre el imaginario social y esto cobra relevancia al reelaborar el imaginario dentro de los museos. Es imposible pensar en un museo sin que tenga exposiciones o expografías relacionadas con esa contemporaneidad y que tengan un reflejo en los medios. Es importante considerar este papel. Es crítico, pero es inevitable pensar que las personas están muy influenciadas por esos temas. No se puede pensar en la cultura, en una institución-museo, como algo congelado en el tiempo.

### **¿Consideras que hay fenómenos globales que son universales?**

Existen fenómenos contemporáneos como la inmigración, es un fenómeno local pero universal. No se puede pensar en una cultura exótica, como se plantea en la antropología, o en una cultura aislada. Hoy tenemos una cultura de cambios extremadamente dinámica. La antropología cambió su objeto, los antropólogos también. Para nosotros, que estamos próximos a la antropología, los museos, así como el mundo contemporáneo, son desafíos, porque tenemos que reflejar esa capacidad de cambio de las culturas. Ésa es la principal cuestión, la contemporaneidad. Otra de las cuestiones sería el cosmopolitismo. Reflejar este cambio de los fenómenos universales, pero que también son particulares, es una misión de los museos.

### **Dijo Karl Heinz, “Creo que los museos deberían regresar a su concepción original, que sean un poco más contemplativos”. ¿Cómo hacer cosmopolita un museo como el de Carlomagno en San Bartolo Coyotepec, Oaxaca, que tiene pocos visitantes, pocos recursos?**

No concuerdo con esa idea contemplativa, contemplativo es un templo. Los museos deben replantear su función social, su función de espacio de museo. El museo tiene que



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Se tienen que repensar estrategias para poder establecer el diálogo universal de las culturas, de la civilización con nuevas propuestas contemporáneas, que integre sus acervos, colecciones, y se ponga en contacto con los problemas más contemporáneos, donde las personas pueden ver representadas dentro de esos museos, para que no se torne espacios caducos u obsoletos.”

crear condiciones para que los visitantes, al salir del museo, tengan muchas preguntas sin respuesta. Hay que crear contradicciones y conflictos dentro, vivimos en un mundo contemporáneo, permeable de conflictos, pero el fenómeno de la migración es también uno de ellos. Otros conflictos serían las diferencias sociales. Se puede pensar en el museo como algo cosmopolita que puede ser también particular, es decir, que puede hablar de una cultura, de experiencias comunitarias, pero que no deja de ser un museo universal, porque son dinámicas culturales que otros países pueden reconocer. Los museos particulares, locales, lejos de este sistema establecido, son también museos universales, en la medida que retratan e integran temas generales y particulares. Y que hacen esa perfecta dialéctica entre particular, singular y universal.



# ANTONIO SABORIT



Director del Museo Nacional de Antropología. Distinguido historiador, ensayista, narrador, editor, traductor y columnista. Es investigador de la Dirección de Estudios Históricos del INAH. Cursó la licenciatura en Letras Modernas, la maestría en Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UNAM y el doctorado en Historia y Etnohistoria en la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia. También realizó estudios de cine en el Centro Cultural Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (UNAM). El historiador también forma parte del Sistema Nacional de Investigadores desde 2001, y es miembro del Consejo Técnico Consultivo del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones Mexicanas, del Consejo Académico del Museo Nacional de Arte y del Consejo Editorial de la colección Pequeños

Grandes Ensayos, de la Coordinación de Difusión Cultural de la UNAM. Desde 1995 forma parte de la mesa directiva del proyecto Recovering the U. S. Hispanic Literary Heritage (Universidad de Houston).

*Soy Antonio Saborit, Director del Museo Nacional de Antropología. Me interesan fundamentalmente la historia y la literatura.*

## **¿Qué convierte hoy a un museo en universal?**

No hay universalidad si no comenzamos por lo local, si no entendemos minuciosamente lo propio, si no nos sumergimos en lo que nos rodea, en lo que tenemos aparentemente más cerca. Esto es lo que nos conecta con el resto de la humanidad.

## **¿Por ejemplo?**

Un textil.

## **¿Cómo elaborarlo?**

Por ejemplo, un textil manufacturado en una comunidad otomí. Por ejemplo, un *quechquemitl*. Esa misma prenda se realiza desde hace siglos y se sigue realizando en la actualidad.

## **¿Y nos conecta con la universalidad al utilizar los colores, la manera en que se hace?**

No. Es que lo averigüe quien está viendo. El que nos va a ver.





### **¿Qué significa lo universal en el mundo globalizado?**

Percibo en la pregunta un antagonismo entre “universal” y “global”. Si no estoy equivocado, “global” remitiría a lo que desde la plataforma de la economía y la política contemporáneas se imaginan una serie de comunidades, un mundo regido por normas, prescripciones y prohibiciones de tipo económico, administrativo, comercial fundamentalmente. En tanto que lo “universal”, en este antagonismo, está vinculado más con otro tipo de valores, como el humanismo, la comunicación, el entendimiento entre todos. Al ver este antagonismo no hay una relación armónica ni sana entre lo global y lo universal. El centro de la respuesta debería tender a fijar la atención sobre lo que hay de universal en el mundo contemporáneo y lo que le falta para contener lo universal.

### **Creo que la globalización no está simplemente suscrita a la economía. La comunicación no es solamente universal, sino que tiene herramientas que la convierten en global.**

En la actualidad, la voz “global” es sinónimo de lo que dije. Por eso existen movimientos globalifóbicos, porque sobre la voz “global” se ha concentrado estrictamente esto, no porque por fuerza lo global sea eso. Uno de los significados actuales de la voz “global” es precisamente esto, y no es algo muy bueno. El mundo es global desde por lo menos el siglo XVI.

### **¿Cómo rescata lo positivo en el mundo global?**

Querría pensar que en la pregunta está implícito este antagonismo. Dos maneras de calificar el espectáculo que tenemos enfrente o la agenda del mundo contemporáneo. Entre un mundo que sólo atiende lo global y un mundo que debiera mirar hacia lo universal.

### **¿Cómo los museos pueden hacer sus concepciones sobre universalismo?, ¿cómo se han unido en un mundo dominado por los medios y las redes sociales?**

No estoy seguro de que el mundo esté dominado por los medios o las redes sociales.

### **¿Cómo los museos pueden hacer sus concepciones sobre universalismo?, ¿cómo se han unido en un mundo dominado por los medios y las redes sociales?**

Una de las materias primas con las que trabajan los museos es la cultura material. Hay que entender que ése es el punto de partida. La materialidad que se conserva en los acervos de los museos y que transita de ahí a la exhibición, a su despliegue en las salas, hacia su incorporación en un relato, en donde ese objeto recobra su sentido original. En esta encrucijada entre el objeto y el relato es donde el museo puede buscar su conexión con la universalidad. Por eso hice a un lado lo de los medios y redes sociales, porque no serían los únicos adversarios de este trabajo. Quizá alguno de los más poderosos obstáculos por vencer en este momento sería el de la imagen. Vivimos en un mundo colmado de imágenes absolutamente banales, pobres, delgadas, sin sustancia. Es un mundo de pastelazos, en términos cinematográficos. El obstáculo que debemos de brincar es el de aprender a observar, aprender diversas maneras en que convoca un objeto a nuestra vista. Hay numerosas maneras de observar un objeto.

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Hay que ir al museo. Ese es uno de los problemas, nada sustituye la experiencia directa de observar un cuadro o un objeto arqueológico, de contemplar su belleza o sus enigmas. No lo sustituye la imagen.”

**La gente está horas en las redes sociales, en videojuegos, en películas... ¿Cómo hacer para que la atención de las personas regrese hacia los museos cuando ahora están acostumbradas a una experiencia que no les demanda nada?**

La primera respuesta sería reconocer que no sabemos cómo lidiar con esto. La segunda es intentar lo que sea. Decir eso es una trampa porque hay una sola manera, que es el relato que el museo ofrezca, es lo único que va a poder competir con la oferta cotidiana que tienen los que algún día son visitantes del museo. El relato que ofrezca la sala al visitante, el tipo de conocimiento que a través de un relato se comunique.

Hay que ir al museo. Ése es uno de los problemas, nada sustituye la experiencia directa de observar un cuadro o un objeto arqueológico, de contemplar su belleza o sus enigmas. No lo sustituye la imagen. La imagen es un medio, no es el fin, y se ha vuelto en ello. La gente observa a través de sus teléfonos inteligentes. Es un problema de educación y todos los procesos educativos son lentos. Pero no por ello hay que dejar caer los brazos.



# BENJAMIN W. SMITH



Benjamin Smith obtained his Phd at the University of Cambridge, UK, in 1995. The subject of his doctoral research was rock art in central Africa. From 1997 to 2012 he worked for the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, directing the Rock Art Research Institute from 2000 to 2012. He is now Winthrop's Professor of World Rock Art at the University of Western Australia and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at the Faculty of Arts.

*I'm Benjamin Smith, I'm the professor of World Rock Art Studies and the head of Heritage Studies at the University of Western Australia in Australia.*

## **In the globalized world what does "universal" mean?**

Universal in a museum context is really what every museum is about. So, museums have to speak to multiple audiences, their local audience; but in a world that is increasingly perturbed by xenophobia and with nation states increasingly showing xenophobic tendencies, I think it's the responsibility of all those involved in culture to show that the world is not just recently connected and that globalization is not just a recent phenomenon but, archeologists can demonstrate that this has been going on for thousands of years and therefore universality is something that every part of the world has experienced. Globalization is something that every part of the world has experienced for centuries and dealt with very well. Migration is not something new that we're experiencing now, we have seen migration for thousands of years, we've learned how to deal with them, we shouldn't be scared of this phenomenon now. So, a universal museum is really about how we live with other people today.

## **Are there global values? Are these equal to universal values? Or, are there local phenomenon which are not universal?**

Of course, every people sees the world in a different way, that's what makes the world interesting, that's why we travel the world to experience different cultural values. But, there are so many things also that we share, and those are written for example in the declaration of universal human rights. The respect for life, the respect of other people are things almost every culture shares almost identically. And, therefore there are global ideals that we can espouse that can help us create the just world that we all seek even with our global diversity that we can also celebrate. So, we can celebrate diversity without that diversity necessarily leading to animosity, difference, xenophobia.

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I think the physical space around physical objects is also very important, a place where people can meet face to face in real time, engage with each other, celebrate each other's cultural differences, understand each other's cultural differences, and come to an appreciation on how to live together in a shared world with shared values but also understanding of course the notion of diversity.”

**Universality is a tool of the museological narrative about what is universal? Or, is it our desire to build ecumenical solidarities with the participation of everyone? Or, are both statements correct?**

I would rephrase the question but, I think universality in a museum is about dealing with global issues. And, museums have to deal with global issues such as climate change, migration, these are things that are not just faced in small areas but are things that are faced right across the world. So, we're dealing with global issues, museums have to respond to this and there are certain global ways in which one can do that responsibly. So, museums are not just the voice anymore of expert scientists but become places where communities can have a voice about their aspirations for the future. So, some of those values that I think should be universal around allowing people the right to speak through places of power, and a museum is a place of power. So, opening that up so that ordinary people get a say and can express what they want to say about themselves and not have their own past and their own future spoken for by someone else but spoken for by themselves. I think these are some of the universal values that we should see in a museum, and that are creating some of the really exciting museums of today and the future.

**How can museums make sure that their concepts of universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

It is a challenge for museums to deal with the move online and the social networks. Some museums are dealing with this by simply going online and creating a virtual museum, you know you can create a virtual space for dialog and for discussion. But, I think the physical space around physical objects is also very important, a place where people can meet face to face in real time, engage with each other, celebrate each other's cultural differences, understand each other's cultural differences, and come to an appreciation on how to live together in a shared world with shared values but also



understanding of course the notion of diversity. I think that the physical space of the museum and the very physicality of the objects of the museum and that physical link to a past a real past is something that cannot be recreated in the digital domain; there is of course a value and a worth in the digital domain, but the museum... You know some of those steadfast things that have been with us for centuries in the physicality of a museum, in the physicality of museum objects are things that have enormous power today perhaps even more so as we become so tied to our phones and the internet. You know, the museum offers something real, something physical, something tangible that we can hold on to. And, is more meaningful to us than a superficial tweet.



# CHRISTIAN FEEST



Specialist of the Northeast Native American culture and of the Anthropology of Native American Art. He is one of the pioneers in the subject of the European-indigenous contact and the collections of the museums. Feest studied at the University of Vienna in the 1960s. He began publishing articles in 1964 and worked at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna. He was professor of Ethnology of Indigenous America at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main from 1993 to 2004. From 2004 to 2010, he served as director of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnology) in Vienna. Feest is director of the European Review of Native American Studies.

*My name is Christian Feest. I was formerly Director of the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna Austria and professor of Anthropology at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. Presently a freelance author and curator on anthropological subject matter and cultural diversity.*

## **Today, how should we define Universality in culture?**

That's an interesting question and one that is not easy to answer because much of the anthropological research in the past generations has focused on difference rather than the similarities and to the common features, the universal features of humanity. I think however, that especially in a globalized world it is important to stress the features that are universal, the needs that all humans have and that are satisfied in very different manners by specific societies.

## **Are there global values? Are they equal to universal values? Or, are there global phenomenon which are not universal?**

Well, again it's a tricky question. Of course, we today have defined values like human rights which are universally applicable. However, one must say that in historical view not all of these values were shared by all cultures in the world. So, these values like human rights are a manner of attempting to create a common ground for different societies to behave peacefully together in a way that they can still keep their diversity but maintain order and equality in the world.

## **How can we relate universality to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism?**

Well, the idea of universal values is one that is cosmopolitan that believes in the equality



of all cultural expressions in the world, not in the identity but in the equality, the equal value of these different orientations. By contrast, fundamentalism makes the opposite statement in that one set of values which is absolutely true and all others are measured by these values which are very peculiar and particular to one culture tradition. So there is an opposition between cosmopolitan globalists thinking and fundamentalist thinking whether it is religiously based or otherwise.

**How can you see and make sure that the concepts on universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

Museums should remind themselves that they are not movies or the press. Museums should recall the specific strengths which reside in their collections. And try to develop strategies to use these collections and artifacts and objects to tell a story which cannot be told in the print media or in a movie or whatever.

So there is a temptation always to integrate the media into the museum discourse, and it is impossible not to do so. You have to use labels in an exhibition, and you have to use images and also moving images in an exhibition, but this shouldn't detract from the strategic resources of museums, which are artifacts as cultural documents.

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Museums should recall the specific strengths which reside in their collections. And try to develop strategies to use these collections and artifacts and objects to tell a story which cannot be told in the print media or in a movie or whatever.”



# DOROTHEE WAGNER



Dorothee Wagner studied Cultural Studies and Art History in Hildesheim, Marseille and Berlin. In 2016 she completed her PhD on the relationship between art and literature in 1960s American Art. Since 2015, Dorothee Wagner has been a research assistant for National Museums of Berlin, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. During this time, she has been involved in a wide range of collaborative exhibition projects, including “Art During the German Reformation” and an exhibition on the Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni. Since 2016, she is Scientific Coordinator to the Commissioner of the Founding Directorate for the Humboldt Forum. She is currently organizing the special exhibition “New Neighbours. On the Way to the Humboldt Forum”, where works of art from different cultures, regions and traditions from the Berlin

collections will be presented together in dialogue with one another.

*My name is Dorothee Wagner. I'm the Scientific Coordinator to the Commissioner of the Founding Directorate of the Humboldt Forum. So this is a quite long title for a job, mainly my job is to coordinate the contents between our collections and our curators as there will be three museums exhibitors in the future Humboldt forum, the museum for ancient art and the ethnological museum. And so my job is to organize a program on the way to the Humboldt Forum until the opening in the end of 2019.*

## **How should we define universality in culture?**

This is quite a big question. Universality is something that we are looking for when we are working with collections from different backgrounds so we are always comparing the objects from different contexts, trying to find out what the specificity of the particular objects and their context is. But at the same time, what is the same about the objects? And my personal reality as a visitor in a museum. So, I'm looking for the universal links that are very often very personal because despite the personal and subjective view of the objects, at the same time there are questions that are in a certain way universal because of the problems that always came up during history which are still very current; like the question of migration: how does it change objects and our views and the people living with us in our countries? So there are both people migrating but with the people who move from one place to the other their objects, their traditions, their practices are changing and influencing the other countries. And this is something that comes up very often when we are looking in our collections from different backgrounds. We very often find these kind of migrating forms and migrating



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There is this wider concept of museums not only as a building but linked to different kind of practices and narrative modes and different museology in certain ways, so these are all kind of channels with which we can reach people and hopefully engage them to come to our museums finally.”

traditions. And this is something that I think opens up people's minds to see that everything's changing and we always find our place in it. And this is something that we as a museum are working on: the museum has to relate this process.

**Are there global values? Are these equal to universal values? Or, are there global phenomenon which are universal?**

There are phenomena which are universal. So, today we talked about twins. We talked about motherhood and the love between a mother and a child for example. But there are phenomena which are universal and which everybody coming to a museum for example has this subjective idea of what is meant by this. At the same time, we made the experience that when we... For example we are going to organize an exhibition on childhood and the question: how do we raise our children? And there we get to know that the concept of childhood is quite different in very different regions and traditions. So, to be a child and to be integrated into a community as a child or not is quite different if we are going to the Amazonian region, and it's quite different to the region of East Asia for example where the child is not the same concept that we have in Europe for example, in so-called western societies. And this is quite different to also deal with these differences; that there are values which are universal like love, like the search for peaceful living together, but that these values are connected to different concepts and different traditions in the context of different peoples. To tell both these stories and to bring these together is quite interesting, I think.

**How can you see and make sure that the concepts on universality are being heard in world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

Well... I define my role as a translator between different collections and curators but also between the creators, the scholars and the visitors who are coming to our museums. I think it's only about what kind of story I want to tell and what the narratives are that are really linked to the public and so it's not about being anxious in the face of social media but to use it and to reflect it in a certain way. So, when I'm telling a story I also have



to reflect the way and the medium in which I am narrating the story. I think that social media have quite a huge potential to reach people who don't tend to go to museums. With quite fascinating traditions or... Yeah migration stories for example that are so relevant in our times.

**Some of your colleagues would say that there is no way social media and traditional media can reflect the true meaning or true message?**

But really... Coming from an art historical background I'm asking myself: what would this true meaning or this true message of one optic would be? Certainly this, the background community or the people who have a certain belief about this object for example. But at the same time everybody who is looking at this object has this very specific subject reaction to it so... And this is truth as well. I can't make this difference between truth and not truth. That's why I think it could be quite amazing to people to tell their very personal stories even if it's not perhaps the scientifically true one. And this is something that social media can perhaps tell us as well, or give the opportunity to a certain open space where everybody can share their knowledge and their reflections with regard to the objects. This is also something that we can perhaps learn from social media as it is a very short-term media so reactions are quite immediate, and sometimes posts receive many likes. Others are not very successful and they are forgotten very quickly. And, I think this immediate process that we learn from social media is something that we could bring into the museum as well.

**There are two kinds of metrics in social media, one is the vanity metrics which are likes and shares but not necessarily interaction.**

I also thought much more of sharing the impressions that I gained as a visitor in the museum, this is something quite amazing. We as museum experts can learn of it very much because when we see what people are posting on Instagram for example we can learn what is triggering them, what is interesting for them.

**But is there any rate of conversion? Conversion in the sense of likes versus visits to the museum? Do you have that?**

Well, the number of likes is sometimes quite interesting to see what is triggering the reaction of the public. And it's a little bit like the number of visitors. We had this discussion this morning that the number of visitors does not necessarily correspond to the quality of an exhibition, but at the same time we have to deal with it when a museum hasn't many visitors, we have to react to it. And it's also quite interesting to see when a museum has quite a lot of visitors. Why is it? Is it only because many tourists are coming? Or is it actually because the exhibition has something that is engaging many people, and they are really likely to revisit the museum for example? Because our goal is not only to reach the tourists who are coming for the first time to an exhibition and they can say "Okay I've done this museum." We also want to reach the Berlin public because in a certain way these are their collections as well because they're public collections. Their taxes paid for this building and for the museum and so we need to do work for these people living in the city and in our country to engage them with



our museum and to create a space that is very attractive for them as well. We need these reactions, we can't work for ourselves and our research but we have to be open-minded also with regard to our visitors and to see what they are interested in and what their questions are. They are thinking about what political questions are up to date, I would say, and how we can create a space to handle or to discuss certain questions that always have been relevant for example.

### **How can we relate universality to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism?**

We always have to be open-minded and also facing people who are perhaps anti-intellectual or who are like: "I don't have to do something with it" or "I don't want to go to the museum" we can't exclude them in a total way but we need to search for discussions or a certain way to integrate them, and there's no doubt this is a complex and complicated process, and we have to try out different ways and we mustn't give up on this trial and error process. Certainly we won't be... We can't find a solution to every problem, that's true, but if we start to think that this kind of fundamentalism is something that we can't respond to, then we are lost in a certain way. We have to react to it and we have to talk with people and also make clear what the opportunities of a museum are, for example in these whole discussions that are taking place with regard to fundamentalism, with regard to radicalism also among the German public for example.



# CARLOMAGNO PEDRO MARTÍNEZ



El Maestro Carlomagno Pedro Martínez es un artesano reconocido a nivel internacional y es un ejemplo vivo del interés por preservar las tradiciones y raíces de su tierra. Nacido en el seno de una familia de artistas, Carlomagno vivió influenciado por el arte de moldear para crear. Desde pequeño se interesó en trabajar el barro negro haciendo figuras de silbatos y guerreros aztecas. Ingresó al Taller Rufino Tamayo de la ciudad de Oaxaca, estos estudios lo afinaron en la estética de las artes convirtiéndolo en un artista plástico.

*Soy Carlo Magno Pedro Martínez, originario de Oaxaca, de San Bartolo, Coyotepec, y soy creador del arte popular oaxaqueño en la técnica del barro negro.*

## **De acuerdo con su punto de vista, ¿cómo se puede definir hoy la universalidad de la cultura?**

Es la propuesta de cada lugar, de cada individuo, de cada cultura. Es cuestión de darle el valor que tiene en este mundo, la cultura es universal en el momento que todos lo humanos tenemos la capacidad intelectual para proyectarnos a través de ella.

## **¿Qué puede convertir a un museo en algo universal hoy?**

Es la difusión, la conservación y la promoción de los aspectos culturales, del acervo cultural de cierta etnia, de cierto espacio, de ciertos individuos que están haciendo algo que resalta la intelectualidad del hombre.

## **¿Por qué es importante tener la universalidad por objetivo?**

Para conservar la memoria intelectual de la humanidad; en este espacio, un museo, se vuelve como el cofre que atesora la universalidad de la cultura del hombre.

## **¿La universalidad es un control de la narrativa museológica sobre lo que es universal, un deseo de construir solidaridades con la participación de todos o ambas posiciones son correctas?**

Para mí ambas posiciones son correctas porque es cuestión de espectadores: los que proponen, el espectador, el que difunde, y es cuestión de ambas cosas, de los conceptos que se preguntan.



### **¿Hay valores globales?**

Yo siento que sí. Hay ciertas cuestiones que nos atañen en esta globalización, sobre salvaguardar esos valores de la humanidad, de preservar la cultura.

### **¿Qué significa lo universal en el mundo globalizado?**

Lo universal, para mi concepción en este mundo globalizado, es la permanencia de la memoria colectiva de la humanidad a través del tiempo, esto es muy importante para nosotros como humanos, como gentes intelectuales, desde una comunidad muy apartada, hasta Nueva York, París u otras ciudades.

### **¿Cómo los museos pueden hacer sus construcciones sobre universalismo desde un mundo dominado por los medios de comunicación tradicionales y por las redes sociales?**

Como soy director de un espacio cultural en una comunidad indígena, en estos tiempos de redes sociales, de los medios de comunicación, el museo tiene la función de acentuar qué tan importante es lo que se está difundiendo y lo que se está promoviendo, lo que le da particularidad a cada individuo, a cada objeto que se está proyectando en los medios, para no caer en una globalización que nos confunda. La función del museo es precisamente atesorar, proyectar, difundir y conservar lo que tiene cada comunidad, lo que tiene cada individuo y cada objeto que se trata de compartir.



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Lo universal para mi concepción en este mundo globalizado es la permanencia de la memoria colectiva de la humanidad a través del tiempo, esto es muy importante para nosotros como humanos, como gentes intelectuales...”

### **¿Cómo la universalidad puede relacionarse con el antiintelectualismo?**

La universalidad es precisamente eso. Muchas veces el antiintelectualismo es —como se dice en las comunidades— la manera de hablar rebuscado, una concepción diferente de la situación que se atesora y se valora en el contexto de una sociedad, esta cuestión es muy práctica, muy importante... En esta situación la universalidad es importante porque es donde se resaltan esos valores, esas formas.

### **¿Hay fenómenos globales que son universales?**

Sí, fenómenos globales que son universales son la cuestión del origen común de la humanidad. Todos los humanos tenemos una tendencia a comportarnos de una manera intelectual civilizada; en cualquier ámbito, en cualquier cultura, en cualquier región que estemos, tendemos a esos fenómenos que proyectamos a través de los espacios, museos, galerías y proyecciones. Es importante la situación de la juventud, antes era como no querer ser de la comunidad, y ahora es un fenómeno que se está dando en las comunidades: los jóvenes ilustran, son médicos, ingenieros, arquitectos, diseñadores, quieren volver otra vez a la raíz, ése es un fenómeno realmente universal, porque es donde queremos adaptarnos, preservar la la intelectualidad de las comunidades, los pueblos originarios.





# ANTHONY SHELTON



Director del Museo de Antropología de Vancouver. Especialista en la cultura visual mexicana y andina, particularmente en las relaciones entre las expresiones creativas indoamericanas e hispanoamericanas. Asimismo, ha trabajado en torno a las influencias evangelizadoras y políticas de la cultura visual latinoamericana desde el periodo colonial hasta la actualidad, así como los vínculos entre las artes visuales y escénicas tradicionales y la cosmología y estructuras sociales. Como parte de su labor en museología, ha desarrollado diversas líneas de reflexión como la imitación y apropiación de la naturaleza desde el periodo moderno temprano a través de la pintura; la incorporación del arte precolombino en las colecciones occidentales; el arte no occidental del siglo XX; el mercado del arte no occidental, los museos y la construcción

de la identidad nacional, la historia de las colecciones y los museos y la teoría postcolonial.

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*Soy Anthony Shelton, director del Museo de Antropología en la Universidad de Columbia Británica en Canadá y profesor de Historia del Arte de la misma universidad. Las cosas que me interesan son museología crítica, el futuro de los museos y también la cultura visual de México.*

## **¿Hoy en día qué es lo que puede volver universal a un museo?**

El problema de la universalidad es bastante grande. Tenemos museos como el Museo Británico, como el Museo de Berlín o el Smithsonian Institute, que quieren cubrir toda la historia de la humanidad y tienen sus propias maneras de conocimientos para entender esta historia en sus propias maneras. Pero es difícil decir que estas maneras no son ideológicas y que son universales, y que tienen un entendimiento neutral que es común a toda la humanidad. Personalmente, no creo que haya solamente una forma de conocimiento, sino que hay varios conocimientos y tenemos que respetar y representar este diferente tipo de conocimiento que tiene sus orígenes en diferentes pueblos y civilizaciones.

## **¿Por qué es importante tener la universalidad como objetivo?**

La universalidad es importante cuando hablamos sobre derechos humanos, sobre cosas que definen nuestra humanidad. Vivimos en una sociedad, a pesar de Trump, que está gobernada por reglas internacionales y tenemos que fijar estas reglas de una forma u

otra, que es una forma universal. Entonces ésta es una forma de universalista, porque es parte de la humanidad. Pero cuando estamos hablando sobre las cosas culturales, por ejemplo, sobre las maneras de ver el mundo personalmente o como grupos, pero no internacionalmente, entonces hay otros tipos de conocimientos de los que tenemos que dar cuenta.

**¿Cómo los museos pueden hacer que sus concepciones sobre universalismo se escuchen en los medios tradicionales que hay, o cómo están funcionando actualmente las redes sociales?**

En el caso la mayoría de los museos, si dicen que son museos universales, solamente es una autoexpresión. Yo creo que no todas las exposiciones son universales, sino que tienen su propia manera de expresar el mundo. En realidad tenemos una gran variedad de conocimientos para interpretar las exposiciones. No sé si el universalismo en los museos es en realidad tan fuerte como se llega a pensar.

**¿Existen fenómenos globales que son a la vez universales?**

Yo creo que sí. Los fenómenos universales son el sentido del tiempo, el sentido de espacio, por ejemplo. Pero la manera como entendemos el espacio, el tiempo y la temporalización del espacio, así como la espacialización del tiempo, son completamente distintas en sociedades diferentes.

**¿Existen valores globales? ¿Existen fenómenos globales? Por ejemplo, la migración...**

Creo que siempre hemos tenido migración. En un directorio de teléfono de París, por ejemplo, se puede ver una gran variedad de nombres de todas partes de Europa, de China, de regiones islámicas y, más que de cualquier otra parte, de América Latina. Siempre hemos tenido migración, no es algo nuevo. Lo que es nuevo es que estamos dándole un valor negativo.



Yo creo que los universales son el sentido del tiempo, el sentido de espacio por ejemplo. Pero la manera a través de que entendemos el espacio, el tiempo y la temporalización del espacio, y la espacialización del tiempo son completamente diferentes, en sociedades diferentes."



**Sí, pero ¿éstos son fenómenos universales?**

Creo que tiene que ver con la historia y con la etapa del fenómeno mismo el que se considere o no universal.

**¿Cómo podríamos relacionar la universalidad con el fundamentalismo y el antiintelectualismo?**

Tenemos que cuidar el uso de la palabra *universalismo*, porque puede provenir de un esencialismo. Cuando se tiene un esencialismo, se puede caer en un fundamentalismo.



# FERNANDO SALMERÓN



Doctor en Sociología por la Universidad de Texas, en Austin. Realizó estudios de Maestría en Antropología Social en el Colegio de Michoacán y la Licenciatura en Relaciones Internacionales en El Colegio de México. Es miembro de la Academia Mexicana de Ciencias e Investigador Nacional, Nivel I. Entre 1984 y 2007 se desempeñó como Profesor-Investigador en el Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS), en sus Unidades Golfo y Distrito Federal. En esa institución, ocupó los cargos de Coordinador de la Unidad Golfo, Coordinador del Programa de Doctorado en Antropología y Director Académico. Asimismo, ha sido profesor visitante en la Universidad de California, Campus Santa Bárbara y San Diego. A partir de septiembre de 2007, cuenta con una licencia para ocupar el

puesto de Coordinador General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe en la Secretaría de Educación Pública. Ha realizado investigación sobre temas de antropología sociocultural; política, poder y economía; estudios urbanos y territorialidad de las ciudades medias; políticas públicas y recursos estratégicos; metodología de la investigación en ciencias sociales y sobre el campo laboral de la antropología social. Recientemente ha impulsado proyectos sobre migración y comunidades de origen mexicano en Estados Unidos, educación y diversidad cultural.

*Soy Fernando Salmerón Castro. Soy profesor investigador del Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios superiores en Antropología Social. El CIESAS, en la Ciudad de México. Trabajo temas de Antropología del Desarrollo y Educación.*

## **¿Qué es lo que puede tornar hoy en día a un museo universal?**

Yo creo que hay temas que los museos desarrollan que tienen interés para todos y para mí, eso sería el sentido de lo universal. No que el tratamiento o las perspectivas que ofrecen sean iguales para todos, sino que tienen interés para todos. Es a partir de la construcción de estas presentaciones que uno puede tener diversas maneras de entender lo que los museos están planteando. Para mí eso sería lo universal en el museo.

## **¿Qué significa lo universal en el mundo globalizado?**

Yo creo que justamente hay algunas preocupaciones que son comunes a todos. No quiere decir que las resolvamos del mismo modo o incluso a veces que las planteemos del mismo modo, pero sí son preocupaciones generales. Digamos que además



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Yo creo que hay temas que los museos desarrollan que tienen interés para todos y para mí, eso sería el sentido de lo universal. No que el tratamiento o las perspectivas que ofrecen sean iguales para todos sino que tienen interés para todos.”

probablemente no son sólo contemporáneas, pero preocupaciones como la vida, la ética, un comportamiento recto, adecuado, entre muchas otras. Son preocupaciones que las distintas sociedades siempre han tenido y siguen teniendo y que estas en ese sentido son universales.

#### **¿Hay fenómenos globales que son universales?**

Yo creo que sí. Algunos de los fenómenos que están asociados a la vida cotidiana de las personas son claramente universales. Todos tenemos que encontrar alguna manera de alimentarnos, de relacionarnos con los demás, con el entorno en el que vivimos, de mantener un lugar o una posición dentro de la sociedad y de organizar a las sociedades. En ese sentido esos temas son universales. Eso no quiere decir se resuelvan del mismo modo, en algunos casos hay antropólogos que han sostenido que probablemente hay sociedades históricas o contemporáneas que no enfrentan los mismos problemas y que entonces eso sería muy interesante de explorar, por qué hay sociedades que tienen problemas que otras no tienen.

#### **Por ejemplo, ¿la inmigración sería un fenómeno global, universal o ese no es el caso?**

Yo creo que en mundo contemporáneo sí. La migración es un fenómeno global que es universal en la medida en que todos nos vemos de una u otra manera afectados por él y todos tenemos una experiencia cercana de relación con el fenómeno de la migración. Algunos porque nos movemos directamente o porque convivimos con personas que han participado en estos mecanismos de movilidad. Otros porque nada más somos testigos de cómo esto sucede y qué efectos tiene en distintas sociedades.

#### **¿La universalidad es un control de la narrativa museológica sobre lo que es universal o un deseo de construir solidaridades con la participación de todos? O ambas.**

La verdad es que no sabría yo cómo responder eso exactamente. Me parece que ciertamente los museos plantean temas que de alguna manera nos son comunes a quienes visitamos los museos. Los museos son una invención de una parte de la humanidad que después el resto de la humanidad de alguna manera ha adoptado,



con ciertos cánones y mecanismos de organización. Aun cuando hoy hay grandes innovaciones en los temas de los museos, los espacios en los que hay colecciones de objetos que obtenemos necesidad de visitar si queremos conocer más sobre quienes lo originaron y a veces sobre quienes los coleccionaron y vamos a ver el museo no tanto por los objetos mismos como sobre quienes los juntaron. Hay algunos discursos universales en ese sentido. Lo que resulta muy importante para las nuevas discusiones que está encabezando la UNESCO es que los museos también son espacios de diálogo, en donde es el conocimiento que podemos tener de estas diversidades y diálogos lo que nos puede permitir llegar a una concepción mucho más ecuménica, en el sentido que no depende de las propias creencias, sino de una forma de construir perspectivas que pueden ser más generales para todos. Más interculturales de alguna manera.



# GUSTAVO LINS RIBEIRO



Doctor en Antropología por la City University of New York (1988). Director del Instituto de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB). Investigador del Consejo Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico de Brasil. Dirige el Laboratorio de Estudios de Globalización y de Desarrollo de la UnB. Fue presidente de la Asociación Brasileira de Antropología, primer presidente del World Council of Anthropological Associations, secretario regional de la Sociedad Brasileña para el Progreso de la Ciencia. Es presidente del Comité World Anthropologies de la Asociación Americana de Antropología, vicepresidente de la Unión Internacional de Ciencias Antropológicas y Etnológicas. Autor de múltiples publicaciones, ha recibido diversos premios por su labor.

*Mi nombre es Gustavo Lins Ribeiro. Soy antropólogo, investigador asociado al departamento de Antropología de la Universidad de Brasilia. He estudiado los últimos veinte años o más lo que se llama Globalización y sus distintos aspectos económicos, culturales, incluso psicológicos.*

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## **¿Qué vuelve a un museo universal hoy en día?**

Yo creo que hay dos maneras de contestar esta pregunta. Una es que los museos se pueden encontrar en varias partes del mundo, entonces hay un lado concreto, ya que los museos forman parte del paisaje de las ciudades, no necesariamente en ciudades grandes. Hay una cierta distribución casi global de los museos. La parte más interesante sobre la posible universalidad en los museos es por qué la gente tiene interés por los museos, porque creo que los museos muestran artefactos, narrativas, posibilidades de ser otras posibilidades, muestran la diversidad de la experiencia humana, lo imprevisto, lo desconocido, y es una fuerza que atrae muchos a todos nosotros. ¿Qué es lo que no sabemos?, ¿cómo es que otra gente vive?, ¿cuál es la capacidad humana de crear?, ¿qué es la creatividad?, ¿qué es nuestro destino común?, ¿qué es lo que son nuestros destinos diferentes? Por esto creo que los museos son universales, porque abren la posibilidad de ver lo que tenemos en común y lo que tenemos de diferentes.

## **¿Por qué es importante tener la universalidad por objetivo en museo?**

Tiene mucho que ver con la pregunta y la respuesta anterior. La universalidad supone que hay una disposición en común para el diálogo. Que nosotros compartimos determinadas calidades, intereses y formas de ser. Que podemos reconocer que existen también en nosotros. Por eso merecen nuestro respeto y admiración. Es un

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Esa es la universalidad criticable. La otra universalidad es una que supone que si podemos construir un mundo de diálogos, comprensión porque compartimos intereses y visiones comunes. Esta es la universalidad importante políticamente y el mundo globalizado, porque la capacidad de estar más juntos en el mismo planeta y pensarlo como una unidad que es única y diversa al mismo tiempo.”

juego de espejo donde tú te ves, pero tampoco te ves. En esto surge una noción de universalidad más rica, que aquella que supone que lo universal es algo más que lo que una determinada cultura hegemónica defina como universal, sino que la universalidad contemporánea tiene que estar siempre en una tensión entre aquello en lo que me reconozco y en lo que no.

**¿La universalidad es un control de la narrativa museológica sobre lo que es universal? O bien, ¿es un deseo de construir solidaridades vecinas con la participación de todos? ¿o ambas posiciones son correctas?**

Ambas son correctas, en el sentido de que hay una determinada visión de la universalidad, que es una visión que impone una perspectiva de estar en el mundo. Es un control sobre determinados discursos y determinadas narrativas. Esperemos ésta sea una vieja noción de la universalidad, que sea sobrepasada por diálogos mucho más complejos. Que no suponga que todo lo que es universal empezó en la Grecia antigua y que eso pasó por el romanticismo alemán, hasta llegar al Occidente, al máximo ejemplo de lo que es deseable para todos. Ésa es la universalidad criticable. La otra universalidad es una que supone que podemos construir un mundo de diálogos, porque compartimos intereses y visiones comunes. Ésta es la universalidad importante políticamente, porque es la capacidad de estar más juntos en el mismo planeta y de pensar como una unidad que es única y diversa al mismo tiempo.



# JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO



Jean-Pierre Bekolo is a noted African film director from Cameroon. He already garnered attention at the Cannes Film Festival with his debut film *Quartier Mozart* (1992), with a style that is playful, comic, and sardonic became the representative of a new generation that has been working against the restrictive expectations of African cinema, mixing genres and linking pop with politics. Bekolo also created in 2008 a video installation called 'An African Woman in Space' that was on display at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, as part of the Diaspora exhibition curated by Claire Denis. Banned in Cameroon in 2013, Jean-Pierre Bekolo's controversial film 'Le Président' questions the phenomenon of Africa's perpetual government. His new film, a 4-hour documentary 'Les Choses et Les Mots de Mudimbe' was part of the official selection at

the 2015 Berlinale. Alongside his work as a film director, Bekolo is an activist, he writes and publishes, in addition to teaching at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and at Duke University. Recently he has been dividing his time between the USA, France, and Cameroon, and starting in the summer of 2015 he is a fellow of the Artists Program at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Berlin.

*My name is Jean-Pierre Bekolo, I'm a film maker from Cameroon, I have made many films, one of the first one got an award in Cannes.*

## **Today, how should we define universality in culture?**

What I would say is that it's very suspicious the term of universality because it's in the name of universality that a lot of colonialism was happening and a lot of cultures were being denied to the advantage of Western culture. So I think it's very clearly that in the whole idea of cultural diversity there is a rip off, somebody is being cheated. And, I think it seems like the encounter... Let's say the first encounter between say us Africans for example and the other, that first encounter is kind of problematic because what happened is that it was out of balance and also under a kind of domination. So, that first encounter unfortunately has produced very strange feelings on both sides and [inaudible] as a thinker actually says that the first encounter made African people sick but it also that first encounter made westerners sick. Unfortunately the Western world doesn't seem to acknowledge their sickness because whatever you're feeling, the kind of supremacy ideology is part of that sickness in my opinion and obviously on the African side you have this complex of inferiority, you have a lot of shame of self, you have a lot of things that are being told to Africans like: they are behind, you know



they have to catch up. So, all this is in the name of cultural exchange and universality. So, what for me is very important is to start thinking about the second encounter because the first encounter was problematic, the second encounter should be the healing encounter. The encounter during which both parties are healing, it's like with viruses, when a vaccine is always like the second time the virus or the bacteria is going into your body, and the body is ready; and that's what gives you immunity. So I think somehow look at those relationships with the other, and that way for me is actually a way to cleanse the world from that historical past somehow. But, it doesn't seem like we are going in that direction, even if we have a lot of discussions about what should be done. It always feels like supremacy intention in whatever is being planned, whatever is being suggested. And, I wonder how much the West is listening? The last... Lately what was really interesting to me was... Being in parties I could see Africa in all the museums, African exhibition in Galeries Lafayette in all these places. But, at the same time the same French culture was ready to vote for Marie Le Pen, who belongs to an extremist, racist party that almost won, I mean it almost won even if she lost at the end. But, I'm just saying: What does it mean? What does it tell us? Do you mean that that fashion of [inaudible] culture somehow doesn't really go with people votes or people willing to put in power? Somebody who is openly racist? So, I think universality has a lot of questions, but I think so far we're still dealing with Western universality meaning Western culture, just as was the case during colonialism.

**In your point of view, and speaking about museums: how can museums make sure that their concepts on universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

I don't think there is a difference between what museums and media are doing... I think the same people are the ones producing these things and the same audiences are watching television and going to museums. I think what is very important is the ability to create a space, what I call a second encounter space which is the reinvention space. I was talking how about how Africa is a Western invention, it's Valentin Mudimbe a professor at Duke who says this. But, I think it doesn't matter that Africa is a Western invention, what matters is the reinvention which is a creativity space. You know what actually, what are we really to do to kind of reinvent the relation. And, again I'm going back to the second encounter. And, I think in the media... Obviously the media are carrying the burden of Stanley going to Africa writing these articles on these people he met you know... Stanley was actually pretending to be looking for Livingstone. And I think the same Stanley syndrome telling the West but for example, the "other is about" is still in the media, I don't think much has changed. And, I think there is not much difference with the museums somehow. But the question is: Why is this? The perception on the other? And Jean-Paul Sartre actually talks about it very well in *Lettre à Merleau* where he talks about the thrill of being seen. It's like for the first time the Western world discovered that it also can be seen or watched and that created kind of discomfort. So what for me is very important is how you change the gears and obviously in the media and the museum. Actually for me an interesting project if you know... We really decide to change that perception where we look at things, because we always look at



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I'm afraid of the idea of imposing some of this value as global because human life and human culture is always about negotiating. Negotiating relation, negotiating what is acceptable and what is not, but you cannot come with all these rules and impose them on others.”

things from a place. And, I actually like the idea of making things from a place not for an audience. So if we make museums from a place it's much more interesting than making museums for an audience. When you're talking about making a museum from a place, it's actually: Who are we? You know? Where are we standing now? And who are the people who are actually creating this thing? You know? What is our history? What is our history to this day? So I think making movies from a place, making museums from a place is for me an interesting project.

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**Do you think there are any global values? Are these equal to universal values? Are there global phenomenon which are not universal?**

It's very interesting when we start talking about the global. I mean the global world we live in is clearly... When you watch an American film and there is a moral at the end of this film, the good is always winning against the evil and the bad, one would say: "it's very religious, it's very Christian somehow," maybe it's also Islamic I'm not sure. But I'm just saying you can trace down very clearly where the value is coming from, what it entails. But, you have the biggest values you know... Good, bad, you know. But, when you start going down to other different values there are, could be more tricky. For example, one would say capitalism is not ethical and then you start having problems because you should see in many cultures for example the capitalist practice is not ethical so that means that isn't. But, at the moment we live now the capitalist value is a global value. You make money it's normal, you hire people, you give them salaries, you pay... So all this is normal, acceptable... But for who? So I think all these values that are being spread, are actually spread almost with an ideology behind and it's always somebody as value, and I think... I'm afraid of the idea of imposing some of this value as global because human life and human culture is always about negotiating. Negotiating relation, negotiating what is acceptable and what is not, but you cannot come with all these rules and impose them on others. What happened not just during colonialism but is still happening now? Is what I would call capitalistic imperialism. So, I would say as a film maker, as an artist, as an intellectual, "the more specific you are the more universal we are." Because we need to find humanity in every human being living all in the world,

and sometimes you can even find values in animals, in plants, so because we talk about the Anthropocene, in the sense that we're living in a planet where we cannot ignore anymore plants, animals. So, we shouldn't just draw values from humans you know. We need to kind of start thinking about where do we get what we believe in in every living being. So I do think we are unfortunately experiencing... Obviously, with the museum of anthropology the nineteenth-century burden in many ways. And I really think sometimes certain things should just disappear and then create new things instead of dragging... You know, some of the previous things that really create a lot of harm. Obviously, museums are not creating much harm but I'm just saying the same century is also the one that produced the idea of inequality of races. So, I'm just saying when you really deal with that knowledge or that vision from that time you should really be ready to deconstruct all this and to really almost destroy it to actually allow something else to be born.



# NANETTE SNOEP



Nanette Snoep studied anthropology and cultural management in Paris. Since February 2015 she is the director of the State Ethnographic Collections of Saxony (SES) – three ethnographic museums in Leipzig, Dresden and Herrnhut with a collection of around 300.000 objects from over the world. Her goal is to develop new exhibitions drawing on contemporary ethnographical and postcolonial approaches. Until 2014 she was Chief Curator of the Historical Collections Unit at Quai Branly Museum in Paris – a collection of European drawings, prints, paintings and sculptures dealing with the history of discovery and European expansionism, slavery and French Colonial History.

*I'm Nanette Snoep, I'm a Dutch Director of three museums, three anthropological museums, in East Germany, in Leipzig, Dresden and Handhant. I'm an anthropologist, studied anthropology, cultural anthropology in Paris, and my mission is to change the three anthropological museums in the next five years.*

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## **Nowadays what makes a museum universal?**

What makes a museum universal? Its collections? For example, our Dresden collection in my museum its part of a museum group which has collections of paintings, of china ware, technological objects so this collection could be seen as a universal collection. It has also been built with this idea to create a universal encyclopedic museum. Universal, what could be a universal museum? It's really to include the whole world and to speak about global history, world history in a museum based on its own collections that would be for me a universal museum which is not the point today, if you look for an example at the Louvre museum in Paris, if it is a Universal Museum many parts of the world are not represented and I think this will be the aim for the 21st century, to create a real universal museum.

## **But you're also so keen about the diversity, cultural diversity, how can we put this together with the other?**

For me a museum with world collections it's really important to underline the idea of diversity. By diversity I mean that we have to show different stories, global and local and try to bring those stories into the museum. Cultural diversity in that sense to show different interpretations of collections. Cultural diversity means for me also that we must have multidisciplinary approach on our collections. Cultural diversity is also trying to have a more collaborative approach and work with a range of different people from

different sides of the world in order to show the subjectivity of interpretations of history and histories.

**In a globalized world what does universal mean? The concept of universal.**

In a globalized world I would say of course in a museum you have to try to also show do we share and we spoke yesterday there were two examples, for example, of the idea of motherhood, the notion of death in our culture. Those universal questions, those universal notions, that is something that we can show in museums.

**How can museums make sure that their concepts of universality or cultural diversity are been heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social media? Are those messages getting through the traditional media or the social media?**

No, I think the museum has another mission, because the museum has those collections and the audience has this contact with those collections therefore those are different medias. I do not compare museums with social media, so the experience of the visitor is completely different. It is through those collections that museums are telling stories so I really do not see a link, I see, the museum has a completely different mission.

**Are social and traditional media an important factor in the management of a museum?**

Of course this is one of our tools in order to get our audiences. I think we have very different approaches and that's why I say that of course museums need social media and so on but in a museum we can build this intimate experience with objects which social media cannot do that and that's the reason why I think museums will always exist.



Cultural diversity is also trying to have a more collaborative approach and work with a range of different people from different sides of the world in order to show the subjectivity of interpretations of history and histories."



# NELIA DIAS



Professor at the Anthropology Department of ISCTE-IUL (University Institute of Lisbon), she is currently a visiting professor at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Sciences (Berlin). Nélia Dias studied Ethnology at the Sorbonne University in Paris and obtained her Phd in Modern and Contemporary History at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. She is the author of 'Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Anthropologie et Muséologie en France' (CNRS, 1991), a book in which she analyzes the role of collecting practices during the emergence of the 19th century French anthropology; Two of her current projects examine the cultural notions and practices of documentation, conservation and museographic practices.

*I'm Nelía Dias. I come from Lisbon. I teach at the department of anthropology at University of Lisbon and I teach museum studies, history and anthropology and heritage studies.*

## **In the globalized world, what does the universal mean?**

I think that we have to think about the way in which the universal has different contents according to different historical periods. The idea of universal in the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century is not the same but in our globalized world I think that the universal requires as to search for common values and common destinies and what we all share as part of a common species.

## **How can we relate universality to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism?**

I don't think we can relate universalism to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism because fundamentalism is somehow to privilege something against another thing. Anti-intellectualism as the term itself means it means against something. So once you take a position against something you are taking a stance that is not a relativistic stance. For me it seems that there's a contradiction in the terms and universalism is not compatible with anti-intellectualism and fundamentalism because the message of universalism is to go and to accept in a certain sense different ways of conceiving the world, different values. Even if some of these values can be in contradiction there are still some universal values. Such as for example the human rights values and sometimes we can have clashes between the human rights values and the cultural values. And I think that human rights values may and should be valued over the cultural values.

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For me it seems that there's a contradiction in the terms and universalism is not compatible with anti-intellectualism and fundamentalism because the message of universalism is to go and to accept in a certain sense different ways of conceiving the world, different values.”

**Are there global values? Are these equal to universal values or are there global phenomena which are not universal?**

I think there are global phenomena which are not universal. I think it's important to make a distinction between global values and universal values. Because what is global for some people cannot be global for some other people. Even the very notion of the global is quite a recent notion. By contrast, the notion of universal seems, as I've said before, to have its roots since outside the eighteenth century. In a certain sense, I mean what is, for anthropology, monumentally important is to deal with universal values and what we as human beings share with one another regardless of our cultural particularities and the cultural diversities.

**Nowadays what makes a museum universal?**

I think we have to distinguish. There is a recent movement by several European and North American museums to proclaim themselves as universal museums. One thing is the recent proclamation of museums as universal ones. Other thing is to consider somehow that museums are universal because they collect objects and preserve objects coming from different historical periods and different cultures. In a certain sense the message that they convey is a universal message, I can't say that's a global message.



# NUNO PORTO



Nuno Porto es antropólogo social. Realizó trabajo de campo a largo plazo en el centro de Portugal a principios de los años noventa, estudiando las relaciones entre la adquisición de conocimientos de alfabetización y los conocimientos culturales de género. Su tesis doctoral exploró la articulación del colonialismo, la ciencia y la cultura museística, y su fusión en el codesarrollo entre el Museo Dundo en el noreste de Angola y su propietaria, la Compañía de Diamantes de Angola. Esta tesis recibió el premio de la Fundación Calouste Gulbenkian a la Tesis de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, y fue publicada por la misma Fundación en 2009. Entre 2006 y 2012 integró la Comisión de Reapertura del Museo Dundo, liderado por el Ministerio de Cultura de Angola, que concluyó con éxito sus trabajos en 2012. También fue miembro del equipo

de investigación del proyecto "Bearing Waters", dirigido por la escultora de Lisboa, Virginia Fróis, sobre la renovación de la cerámica tradicional de mujeres de Cabo Verde. Entre 1991 y 2011, impartió clases en la Universidad de Coimbra, Portugal, sobre temas relacionados con la teoría de la antropología social, la cultura material, la museología crítica, la cultura visual, la fotografía y los estudios africanos. Su trabajo ha sido publicado en cuatro idiomas en ocho países. Fue director del Museo de Antropología de la Universidad de Coimbra, Portugal, entre 2002 y 2006, donde su equipo desarrolló una serie de exposiciones temporales basadas en la noción de instalación etnográfica. En 2013 fue Profesor Visitante en el Programa de Posgrado en Memoria Social de la Universidad Federal del Estado de Río de Janeiro - UNIRIO, Brasil. Actualmente es Director Asociado de Investigación y co-curador de África en el Museo de Antropología de la Universidad de Columbia Británica.

*Mi nombre es Nuno Porto, soy antropólogo y en este momento trabajo como curador de las colecciones de América del Sur y de África en el Museo de Antropología de la Universidad de Columbia Británica en Vancouver, Canadá.*

## **¿Qué torna a un museo universal hoy en día?**

Lo que torna a un museo universal hoy en día es la capacidad de interpelar a sus visitantes, cualquiera que sea su formación, su identidad étnica, sus conocimientos del mundo contemporáneo.

## **¿Qué significa lo universal en el mundo globalizado?**

Lo universal en un mundo globalizado quizá sean los valores que no son discutibles.

Los valores que están arriba, que están a lado, que están más allá de la cultura, las convicciones políticas, religiosas, o de lo que sea. El valor de la vida humana, de la igualdad de las personas, de la igualdad de la identidad de género, son valores universales en cualquier parte o deberían serlo.

**¿Hay fenómenos globales que sean universales?**

No creo que haya. Fenómenos globales, ¿cómo lo definiríamos?

**Por ejemplo: las redes sociales, se convirtieron en un fenómeno de comunicación, de relación.**

No lo creo, cuando hablamos de fenómenos que tienen una base tecnológica, como antropólogo siempre recomendaría colocarlos en un contexto. No es lo mismo hablar de Facebook en América del Norte o en Mongolia, donde trabajé, por lo que en abstracto me parece difícil pensarlos como universales.

**¿Cómo la universalidad puede relacionarse con los fundamentalismos y el antiintelectualismo?**

La única forma en que podría haber una relación sería de oposición fuerte. En el sentido de crear una forma de transformar los fundamentalismos en una comprensión de otras posibilidades.

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Lo que torna a un museo universal hoy en día, es la capacidad de interpelar sus visitantes, cualquiera que sea su formación, su identidad étnica, sus conocimientos del mundo contemporáneo.”



# RAFFAEL GADEBUSCH



Raffael Dedo Gadebusch studied Romance and Oriental Studies, specializing in early Islamic art and literature at the Freie Universität in Berlin. He joined the National Museums of Berlin as Assistant Curator in 1997. In 1999 he was appointed curator for Indo-Islamic arts and was instrumental in developing a new concept and design for the Museum of Indian Art, Berlin. In 2001, Mr. Gadebusch was appointed Deputy Director of the Museum of Indian Art and in 2006 Head of the South, Southeast and Central Asian collections at the Asian Art Museum, Berlin. In 2017 he was appointed coordinator of the Asian Art Collections in the Humboldt Forum. Mr. Gadebusch has curated numerous exhibitions featuring ancient, medieval, Indo-Islamic as well as modern and contemporary art from South Asia. Since 2000 his

curatorial activities and research have focused on Indian art from the Mughal period and photography from South Asia (19th century, modern and contemporary). He is the author and editor of several articles and books on South Asian art and photography (Magische Götterwelten, Potsdam 2000, Picturesque Views, Ostfildern 2007, The Colonial Eye, Berlin 2012, Landscapes of Sri Lanka, Berlin 2013).

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*My name is Raffael Gadebusch, I'm from Berlin. I was recently appointed the coordinator of the Asian collections in the Berlin Humboldt Forum, the Berlin Palace. I'm an orientalist basically, and head of Indian art, I was then appointed as the head of the Central Asia collections in the Asian Art Museum, well I'm now very much involved in the planning of the Humboldt Forum.*

## **Nowadays, what makes a museum universal?**

A museum should be for everybody and the Humboldt Forum is actually not a museum in a classical sense, it's a forum. It goes beyond a classical museum. I think a classical museum is to say in very simple words kind of outdated. The audience, the youngsters don't come to classical museums. So I feel that a museum should address as many communities as possible, our world is getting global. The Humboldt Forum is based in Berlin, a very cosmopolitan city, a very global city so we want to attract anybody.

## **But speaking only about the Humboldt Forum, what characteristics would make a museum universal?**

Well that's a very difficult question, I think that it's very important to compare in the museum. So not just showing one single culture but to understand your own culture,

if you focus on one culture you can only understand it if you juxtapose it with objects of other cultures. If you confront it with other ideas. I think this is the basis for universal museums.

**Is universality a tool of the museological narrative about what is universal, or is it a desire to build ecumenical solidarities with the participation of everyone, or are both those statements correct?**

I think both are correct, of course the communities have an important part but also objects can be truly universal. I'm just thinking about an exhibition proposal

I was just presenting about Ivory, and

Ivory it's a material completely universal because it was found all over the world and it was crafted in the ice age. Now we have just discovered that it was already crafted forty thousand years before Christ, and there are many places all over the planet and interesting thing is that the qualities associated with this material were perceived in a similar way in very different cultures and very different places around the world. This is a nice example of the universal character of something.

**Are there global values? Are these values equal to universal values or are there global phenomena which are not universal?**

There are certainly global values. I mean, the idea of equality is something truly global, the feelings of the people of the world don't differ, they don't differ considerably, the culture differs but we are all human beings with very similar feelings, desires and so this was the first part of the question.

**How can museums make sure their concepts of universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

That's a very smart question. First of all, not everybody has access to social media but there is also a control of social media, there is control of the Internet in countries which are not democratic. I think social media is a not a mainstream media and is problematic because people get a lot of information through social media today, but it's the control of the social media that might be the problem and the other problem is really that there are still areas of the world where there's no media at all, or very little media, and there we might find a solution in getting in touch with these communities. We could invite these communities into our museum.



A museum should be for everybody and the Humboldt Forum is actually not a museum in a classical sense, it's a forum. It goes beyond a classical museum."



# TAREK IBRAHIM



Tarek Ibrahim is a research associate of Neil MacGregor and one of the founding directors of the Humboldt Forum. He received his undergraduate degree in Art and Architectural History at New York University, and his Masters of Architecture at Columbia University and Parsons School of Design. After working for several years at the Berlin firm of Sauerbruch Hutton on projects in Munich, Paris and Venice, he returned to academia, and completed his Masters in Art and Architectural History at the Humboldt University in 2015. In addition to his duties at the Humboldt Forum, Tarek Ibrahim is an assistant lecturer at New York University Berlin. He is currently writing his PhD on the life and work of Johann Adam Rennebaum, a German expatriate architect living in colonial Egypt during the late 19th and early 20th century.

*My name is Tarek Ibrahim. I'm the research associate for Neil MacGregor and part of the committee of the Humboldt Forum. I was the first employee hired at the Humboldt Forum. We now have built up a team of thirty-five people but I've been accompanying the project at least the Humboldt Forum Couture (Germany) subsidiary of the Humboldt Forum (Germany) since it was founded last year.*

## **How can we relate universality to fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism?**

Universality seeks to find a common ground amongst the various peoples, ethnic groups, religions, languages, cultures of the world. It seeks to draw threads between these often seemingly disparate cultures, races and religions and tries bringing them together based on these common themes or common ideas. What is universal and shared amongst all of us. Fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism, well first fundamentalism. Fundamentalism seeks a certain exclusivity with its identity, with its religious worldview, with its race. Fundamentalism says that its ideology, its vision, its religious concept, its belief system is singularly unique because it is the only right one. By extension, it seeks to stamp out or obliterate any others. Consequently, that flies in the face of universality which seeks to draw a common thread between seemingly different cultures. I think fundamentalism obviously goes hand in hand with anti-intellectualism because anti-intellectualism rejects any notions, ideas, themes or thoughts that might question a fundamentalist worldview, that questions the exclusivity and the absolute certainty of a specific religious, political, racial ideology.

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Fundamentalism seeks a certain exclusivity with its identity, with its religious world-view, with its race. Fundamentalism says that its ideology, its vision, its religious concept, its belief system is singularly unique because it is the only right one.”

**In a globalized world what does the universal mean, or universality?**

Universality means exactly what obviously the word universal is contained in the concept of universality. That the quality of being universal obviously. Universality is something that is shared by all peoples and all things. Not necessarily at the same place, at the same time but that there's a common thread between all things. A common denominator. A baseline. That if you scrape away the superficial layers the differences in skin color or height, language, creed, belief, that there's still a common base that drives us.

**Do you think that the globalized world paves the path for universality? Is that possible?**

Not necessarily. It might bring it back to the forefront but this concept of universalism has existed for centuries. Particularly by people that have been in some kind of transcultural dialogue. Whether that be artists or scientists that have gone abroad or merchants who recognize that there's a common thread, that there are common needs, fears, wants, hopes, that are shared by all people that can be on one hand exploited for bad or it also can be aggrandized or celebrated for something quite good.

**How can museums make sure their concepts of universality are being heard in a world dominated by traditional media and social networks?**

I question the basic tenet of that question in that I wonder if the world is still dominated by traditional media. With the proliferation of the internet and smartphones at any time we can go online and find any number of news sources, blogs, opinions. That notion or the dominance of a specific media I think it's questionable. On the other hand, the internet is paradoxical in that on one hand it democratizes knowledge but you only receive what you're looking for. In other words, you enter a specific phrase or a specific URL and that means you're calling out and you'll receive a response for something that you're already kind of looking for. That means the opinions, the viewpoints, the ideas, the thoughts that are presented on those websites, in that media is essentially reaffirming your already pre-existing world view. It creates an intellectual and ideological echo chamber. That is in part responsible for the ever-growing polarization of political ideologies in the world today and it's leading to a great divide between, for example, those on the left and those on the right.



**Are there global values? Are there global phenomena which are not universal?  
Which are universal?**

Are there global values? I think it depends on what you define as a value. A global value, that's a difficult question. A universal value? I think there are universal themes and emotions, I'm not sure if there are universal values. To some degree yes, there are universal values. Charity, love thy neighbor, the desire for peace, and that's shared by a broad spectrum of the world. You see that idea, that thread that often becomes the pillars of many world religions, political ideologies or philosophies. That's a very rosy view however and I think that these values can be easily manipulated. That religious ideologies are something that often are so vague that they can be modified to represent the opposite. The idea of conquest, expansion, religious crusades, jihad, you see those themes again, time and again, that on one hand positive values emphasizing love, peace, broadly speaking can easily be manipulated by the same ideology to exhort war, violence and persecution.

**For example, freedom, the right to freedom of speech, freedom of mobility, freedom, that's not a universal value that every human being has?**

Sure, every human being should have the right to speak their mind. Sometimes that has consequences that are not necessarily the best thing.

**The other part of the question is, are there global phenomena which are not universal?**

Which are universal? Yeah, the common or body, the corpus of emotions that drives us. Whether that's hope, fear, love, lust. Universal themes like insecurity as a teenager, the fear of dying alone, fear of death universally, absolutely. I think that these, I wouldn't call them values, I would call them emotional states, stages of life but I think values it's a bit more difficult. This is phenomena sorry! Yeah, in that sense the phenomenon of emotion particularly fear, hope, and love I would say are universal phenomena.

**What about migration?**

Not necessarily. Yes, it depends on who you are and what your station is in life. Some people are born in a certain place and they never want to leave it because they believe that that's the best place in the world to live and the only place they could would imagine living. Others driven by war, famine, poverty believe there's another place better for them. One could say not that migration is a universal phenomenon but rather the belief in finding the perfect place for you. Everybody believes that there's a perfect place for them. The place where they can flourish, the place they can live best. Some of them believe however that that's where they are now, while others believe that it is in a far away place and I think that's a universal phenomenon, not quite migration.



### **Nowadays, what makes a museum universal? Can a museum be universal?**

I think a museum can try and be universal. I think that's a challenge that's almost impossible but I think that's a goal you can try to reach. A universal museum to me is an impossible challenge but I think it's a challenge a museum should accept. Not merely to present old facets of the world, or facets of knowledge but also to make them available and to communicate them to all people. So I think there are two aspects. On one hand this, let's say the creation of knowledge or the corpus of material that seeks to understand the world and at the same time communicating this knowledge of the world in all of its facets in all of its forms to a broad, to the biggest spectrum of the population possible, i.e. all people. Both of those things I think today are impossible but they are still things that we should drive at, even if it is a distant fantasy.

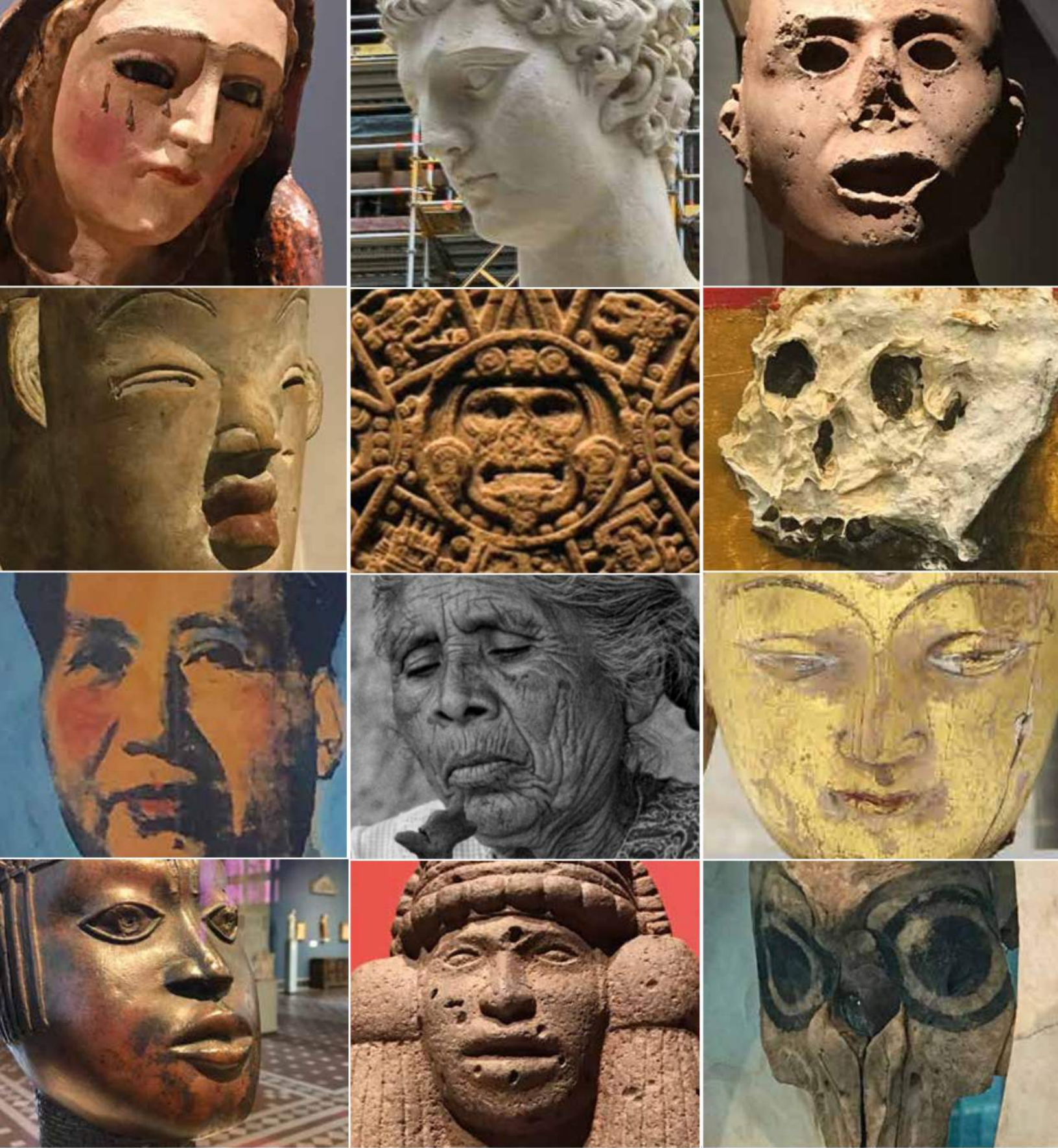
### **And is it impossible because we have different backgrounds? Or why is it impossible?**

I think it's impossible because there is no way, the world has become so complicated. There are so many facets of knowledge, so many disciplines. It would be impossible to understand the world in its entirety, in its countless facets. I think you can attempt to, I think you can get glimpses of it but the idea of presenting it in its entirety, no way.

### **What is the aspiration in that context of the Humboldt Forum?**

Exactly to do that. One of our driving mottos is "he or she who wants to understand the world goes to the Humboldt Forum" and I think that's a great goal. We can continue to explain aspects of it, facets, chapters, vignettes, fragments. But the idea of taking it in its totality is something that's impossible. I think in that moment of a story from Indian mythology in which one of the protagonists in an Indian myth asks a deity to show him the world, and the deity being so supernatural and huge opens his mouth and when he opens his mouth sees the entire universe. And the viewer says "I can't look at it, I can't look at it it's too much information, it's too much for me" I think that's something to consider that the idea of so much knowledge, so much material, the idea of presenting it at a single moment in a single time, let's say one exhibit or one museum we can try, we can present facets, we have moments and glimpses of clarity but the idea of doing it all at once would be, on one hand it would be impossible and whatever one would present would ultimately be reductive.





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