

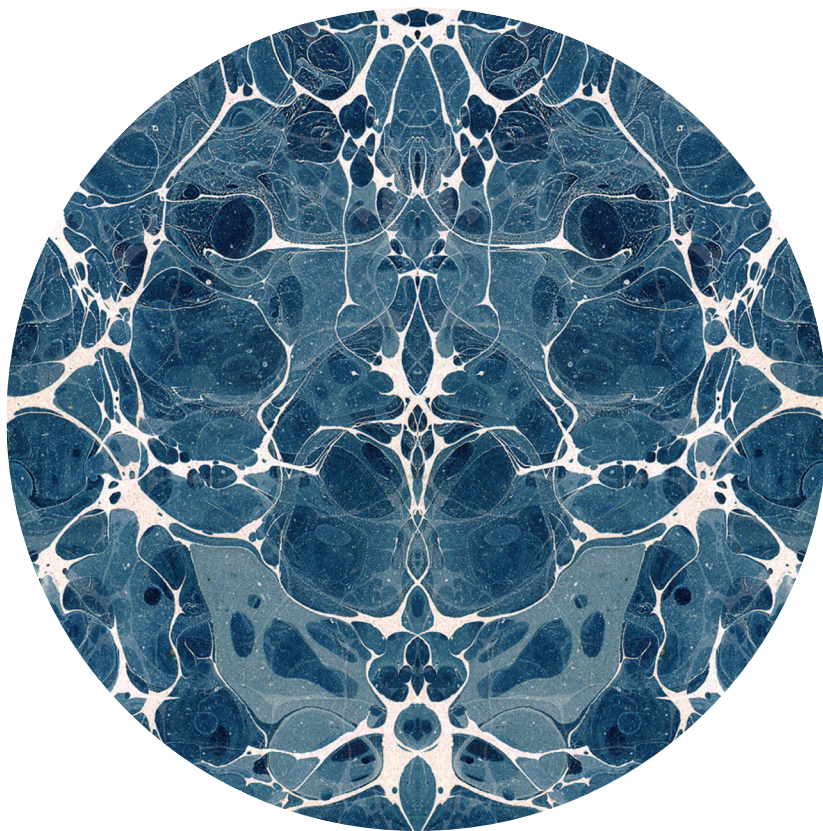
PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS FROM THE NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE AT ATHENS

VOLUME 13

# THEORY OF MUSEOLOGY MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT 1960-2000

Edited by

Delia Tzortzaki  
Stefanos Keramidas



ATHENS 2021



On the cover:

Thanos Makris, *Ephemeral Exercises - Caving Diary* p. 54, digital printing on textile, 50x50 cm (edition of 10 +1 A.p.), 2020

Makris' recent works focus on the history of the colour blue and its connections to melancholy, and on the transformation and representation of found objects, such as motifs, porcelains, bones (mainly the sacrum), and stones. His interpretation of these linkages composes a new autonomous artifact / palimpsest.

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MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT  
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In memory of Daphne Voudouri



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## Foreword

THE BOOK *Theory of museology: main schools of thought* is the fruit of a long-term effort aimed at giving prominence to the theoretical pursuits and visions of at least two generations of museologists, spanning nearly half a century. Although published in Greece, the book concerns a much wider realm beyond European borders. It addresses the circulation of ideas as well as the creation and development of museums, and is therefore of great scholarly and historical interest. Moreover, its publication comes at a time of momentous change and developments that are unsettling certainties and leading to the renegotiation of many institutions. Within this frame is the discussion on a new definition of the museum that over the past years has aroused the interest of the museum community worldwide. And since the focal point of museology is the museum as an institution that operates in a multitude of ways in space and time, the relevant dialogue pertains directly to this scientific field.

The publication is timely for Greece as well. Museum studies is now a well-established field in Greek universities, new museums are being set up and old ones refurbished while, at the same time, there is a spotlight on museum evaluation and accreditation schemes. The legislative framework introduced in the early 21st century is undergoing readjustment, while the social role of museums has been universally acknowledged.

Yet Greece has travelled a long and difficult path to get to this point. A gradual shift in mentality occurred in the second half of the 1970s, when the prospect of joining the European Union opened up new horizons in all areas. The broadening of the concept of cultural heritage, the realization of the significance of its integrated protection and, simultaneously, the establishment of museums of various types across the country gave rise to a lively and constructive dialogue over man's relation to cultural goods, the environment and present-day reality. At this time, Greece was gradually accepting the idea that monuments and museums, apart from being useful tools for preserving historical memory and reinforcing education, also serve as the mainspring of social cohesion and development. In the international arena, these theoretical discussions had already broadened the horizons of museology, thereby creating new perspectives.

Within the broader context of reflection and renewal prevailing at that time, the establishment of the Hellenic National Committee of ICOM in 1983 was decisive for mobilizing ideas and people. A series of international meetings, publications and courses were organized, a special library was created, and International Museum Day was instituted. The remarkable dynamic thus created also helped museology claim a distinct position in Greece, setting it apart from museography, which had so far constituted the exclusive sphere of interest of those responsible for the organization of museums.

In a landmark event, Athens was selected as the first European Capital of Culture in 1985 and within this framework major exhibitions—mostly archaeological—with fascinating themes and up-to-date standards were planned. Concurrently, an international architectural competition fuelled a passionate debate over the building of the New Acropolis Museum. All this intensified the discourse surrounding museums, imparting to it not just interdisciplinary interest, but also ideological character.

The turning point was, however, the Annual Symposium of the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) held in Athens and Thessaloniki on 17-23 May 1993. The Symposium, titled ‘Museums, Space and Power’, offered the Greek museum community an opportunity to come into contact with the international scene to discuss mainly theoretical issues, but also touch on practical matters that were topical at the time in our country. A special debate focused on the scientific aspect of museology, the relevant schools and the content of museum studies. It should be noted that a decision was taken during the Symposium sessions in Thessaloniki for the systematic documentation and presentation of the Basic Museological Ideas (*Idées Muséologiques de base*), which culminated in a series of publications in the years that followed. It was a significant moment for museology, moving into the next century with new implements.

Today, thirty years after the Symposium and forty years since the establishment of the Hellenic National Committee of ICOM, the Greek museum community remains largely involved in the international discussion. Museology, an evolving scientific discipline that conforms to the demands of the time, is continually increasing in complexity yet at the same time stays highly relevant, linked to the philosophy of knowledge, social and cultural anthropology, political sciences, environmental sciences and, of course, new technologies that inevitably create new conditions.

The book *Theory of museology: main schools of thought* offers an exceptionally valuable framework for understanding and critically evaluating the past, tracing the dynamics of the present and contemplating the future.

I would like to congratulate my friend Delia Tzortzaki, archaeologist-museologist and currently advisor and legal representative at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, for launching this initiative and bringing it to fruition with great academic diligence and persistence. Delia introduced museology teaching (both theory and practice) in Greece in 1993 within the framework of the Adult Learning Programme at Athens College, a course that continued for years before the establishment of museology as an academic discipline in this country. The co-editor of the volume, Stefanos Keramidas, archaeologist-museologist at the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and a very inquisitive mind, is also to be congratulated for his overall contribution and devotion to the endeavour.

TETI HADJINICOLAOU

President, Hellenic National Committee of ICOM  
Director *Emerita*, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports



Comme en poésie où l' image naît d'une sorte de condensation du langage, le musée qui saurait mêler les témoins matériels d'une culture -tant de la vie quotidienne que de la création artistique- celle-ci dans la continuité ou l' apparente discontinuité de ses manifestations, et en tous cas sans l' arbitraire et chirurgicale fragmentation entre arts ancien, moderne et contemporain- ce musée-là nous mettrait enfin face à la Réalité (notre réalité ontologique), non plus dans une situation d' apprentissage, mais dans une position de questionnement, le seule qui importe vraiment.

Bellaigue, M. (1993) 'Mémoire, espace, temps, pouvoir' In *Sumposium Museums, Space and Power – Musées, espace et pouvoir, Athens-Thessaloniki 17-23 May 1993*. ICOFOM Study Series (22), 29. Athens: ICOM, Hellenic National Committee.

As in poetry where images are born through a kind of condensation of language, a museum which would know how to blend the material evidence of a culture—both from contemporary life and artistic creation—manifesting itself in the continuous or apparently discontinuous flow of events, and in any case without the arbitrary and surgical fragmentation into ancient, modern and contemporary art, that museum would finally bring us face to face with Reality (our ontological reality); no longer in a learning state but rather in a state of questioning, the only one that really matters.

[translated from French by D. Tzortzaki]





## Schools of thought: the map and the stratum

*Delia Tzortzaki*

I wrote my first ever text on museology in 1992, just after completing a Master's degree in the UK; it was a treatise on why museology should be seen as a science, studied in the frame of a four-year academic degree. I submitted it to a big newspaper in Athens, acclaimed at the time for its cultural section. Late one rainy night, I met with the editor-in-chief at his office and received a blunt 'no' for an answer. The newspaper, he explained, could not go to war with archaeologists who understood museology as an extension of their own profession. The article was a good piece, he said, but museology—or musicology, as many would mishear—could not be seen to supplant archaeology in a country where the ancient past operated as the set square, or *γνώμων*, for every discussion about museums and heritage. Whether he was right or not, this exchange pointed out the particularity of the Greek case. Still, I never abandoned the idea of putting in writing how the system of knowledge(s), ideologies, practices and operations referred to as museology acquired momentum and became inextricably connected with distinct social contexts (places and people). Over the years, my idea took a different turn, and I began to question the first verities (i.e. museology as science). Rather than a truth in itself, museology clearly developed as a field of contested truths and actions, revealing historical and social parameters, such as why it grew as it did, by whom, where, upon what premises (science or specialized practical knowledge, sociopolitical movement or museum solicitor) and epistemological counterpoints (positivist objectivity / late modern reflexivity, eurocentrism / decentralized voices, curatorial authority / agency from below). This is how the seed of the *Theory of museology: main schools of thought 1960-2000* was sewn.

The literature on the nature of museology has accumulated over the thirty years since my encounter with reality. While the concerns of the profession have gradually moved to the neighbouring branch of Critical Heritage, one cannot bypass the fact that Critical Heritage is currently flourishing thanks to a body of 20th century avant-garde thinkers who, on the pretext of museums, transliterated the anxieties, hopes and aspirations of their times into critical reflections on humans, objects and memories, social possibility and

social utopia. They themselves were building on a debate that took precedent in the 19th century over how to name this long-standing concern with curating human testimonies, a debate that is still ongoing.<sup>1</sup> Museology, Museum Studies, *Museumwissenschaft*, New Museology or Critical Museology: the semiology of the term *museology*, which occurs in different contexts during the 19th century,<sup>2</sup> points not to a list of synonyms but to a jargon echoing political and epistemological views dispersed across the European continent and all the way to North and South America, Asia, Africa and the Pacific region. By political, one refers to relations of power vis-à-vis the geopolitics of museological literature, as recently shown by Bruno Brulon Soares and Anna Leshchenko, who argue that museology is still mostly produced in the French-speaking and Anglo-Saxon regions of the world which continue to operate as ‘diffusers’ of colonial hegemony.<sup>3</sup> By epistemological, one refers to particular uses of terms, thus to particular ways of knowledge production in these different regions.

The volume *Theory of museology: main schools of thought 1960-2000* then, is the outcome of a long-lasting desire to contribute to the documentation of museology as a discipline by gathering museological thinking from around the world that explores this formative time.

### *Why those years?*

Our point of departure, the 1960s, is primarily remembered for the political upheaval at the peak of the Vietnam War, the radicalization of public speech, acts of resistance, efforts towards the consolidation of human rights in the turmoil of decolonization and deindustrialization. The decade that featured the erection of the Berlin Wall at one end and the Prague Spring on the other saw momentous events with significant repercussions in the intellectual arena, outside, strictly speaking, the museum field. Nevertheless, the politicized debate set the stage for the radical changes to come. Furthermore, surrealism and avant-garde movements of the early 20th century had already paved the way for a broader mind shift to happen, evident, for instance, in André Malraux’s *Musée Imaginaire* (1947) and in the consolidation of museological and heritage history ever since.

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Mairesse 2018; Popadić 2020; Shelton 2013; Walz 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See Walz in this volume. Moreover, according to Maroević 1989, 77, the term is mentioned in Phillip Leopold Martin’s book *Praxis der Naturgeschichte* (1869) which dealt with natural history collections, see also van Mensch 1992, 258.

<sup>3</sup> Brulon Soares and Leshchenko 2018.

Between 1960-2000 systematic and more institutionalized theoretical museological work began to take shape within the framework of committees, conferences, emerging university courses, unpublished MA and doctoral theses, seminal books, all classical by now in the history of museology. The ICOM sub-committee for Museology (ICOFOM) was established in 1977 in Moscow and operated as a bridge to bring East and West together on issues related to the nature of museology, its scope and structure, its social impact and activist potential. The epistemological and societal frame built around these issues allowed for the actualization of a discussion of museology as a science during those pivotal years. We were at the doorstep of the 'stage of maturity', as Peter van Mensch puts it.<sup>4</sup>

In his seminal, unpublished thesis *Towards a Methodology of Museology*, van Mensch recounts that the 'second museum revolution' in the 1960s was anticipated by earlier shifts in thinking, namely the renewed interest in applied and practical knowledge regarding the museum field which had intensified in the closing decades of the 19th century and up to the years after the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> Those earlier advancements were characterized by a sort of consensus that outdated institutions should be upgraded both morphologically and educationally. To that end, museum associations (such as the Museums Association, MA, in the UK, 1889 or the American Alliance of Museums, AAM, in the US, 1906) and training programmes were established, journals were issued, a vivid dialogue among peers was instigated, amateurs became professionals and an aura of a discipline in the making, albeit with an applied, museographical orientation, could be discerned. Similarly, in central and eastern Europe, we note a paradigm shift towards a modernized conception of both the institution and the profession in the 19th and early 20th century, which signalled the formation of a new phase termed by the Czech theorist Zbyněk Zbyšlav Stránský the *empirical-descriptive* phase. Lectureships and courses appeared in as dispersed locations as the Czech Republic (Jan E. Purkyně University and the Moravian Museum, Brno, 1921 and 1932, respectively)<sup>6</sup> and Brazil (University of Rio de Janeiro, 1932), encompassing different forms of practical activity and training.

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<sup>4</sup> van Mensch, 1992, 9.

<sup>5</sup> van Mensch 1992, 5; van Mensch 1995, 134, footnote 3. Peter van Mensch expands on the term 'revolution' applied in this context by Duncan Cameron, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, in 1970 (ICOM News 23) and subsequently used by the Croatian museologist Antun Bauer in 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Teather 1985, 25.

Although the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was founded as early as 1948, it took more than a decade for professionals to inquire into the nature of this set of applied knowledge, understood at the time as a useful tool inherited by the previous museum wave. Practical knowledge needed its theory, a process different from what 19th century disciplines have acquainted us with. Starting in the 1960s, theory became important and provided new guidelines for practice. That theory-in-progress drew on many dispersed centres of influence, taking in fresh approaches of what was happening there or elsewhere—in universities, ICOM colloquia and round tables—hence the various schools of thought. The museological scene at the time was like a sponge, absorbing different views and contexts with the result that the object of museology came into focus. Is the museum itself the object of museology? Is museology above and beyond the museum itself? Should museology investigate the social reason museums exist? Should museology aim towards an all-encompassing scientific spectrum which would reconnect humans and human artefacts, tangible or intangible, within the broader life-world that we call reality? Or rather, should museology be mostly a pragmatic concern aiming at shaping more hospitable museums, better trained employees, more receptive audiences? Are museums temples or fora? Those questions and more laid the groundwork for the emergence of professionalism in the field, mostly in the 1970s.

The forty years that separate the beginning and the end of the narration in this volume saw a profound discussion about how humans think and act in regard to those places stuffed with rare goods that we call museums. And it is actually because of those forty pioneering and formative years that we can now answer, with a degree of certainty, that museology, no matter from which part of the world we look at it, and with whatever tools at hand, has an indisputable interdisciplinarity that cuts through structured (and structural) dilemmas. It is because of this collective knowledge produced in numerous publications throughout the final decades of the 20th century, that theory would finally appear tinted with doubt. Museum theory began to understand itself as a narrative, a historical product that needs to be told and reflected upon, and questioned, time and again, enabling further steps towards reflexive thinking, as current Critical Heritage Studies proves.

### *Scope and analytical framework*

Yet this volume does not emphasize the much-discussed dichotomies, nor follow the labelling among regions, thinkers and ideologies, centres and peripheries, especially as it happens to be published amidst consecutive outbreaks

of worldwide crises and an ongoing war in the heart of Old Europe. We endeavour to overcome the ghetto-ization of theory, which continues to exist, by providing a trans-geographical reference illustrating distinct museological moments that took shape in the heated discussions during the 1960s and thereafter. The present volume hosts voices that in the trajectory of our professional lives have left an imprint on our way of perceiving museum affairs. If, as Jan Dolák postulates, museology is about relationships (between humans and objects),<sup>7</sup> I would add that it is also a potentiality, a space of possibility, where it is possible to diagnose the circulation of patterns mentioned above despite the fact that these patterns are not always spelled out word for word but implied by people's particular choices, preferences, omissions and obsessions.

To this end the book operates, analytically, on a double conceptual axis: the *map* and *stratigraphy*. Both norms of human inquisitiveness, the *map* helps identify geographical connections, moments in space. It 'depicts entities (objects/phenomena) and sets them in relations (directions, distances)'.<sup>8</sup> Like a board game we used to play as kids, in which a lightbulb lit up every time the correct word was paired with the right object or concept, words or rather key concepts such as museology, museum, museum studies, new museology, ICOM-ICOFOM, musealium, ecomuseum, representation, discourse, Marxism-Leninism, the School of Leicester, Stránský, Sofka, Waidacher, sociomuseology, might light up in the Czech Republic, Brazil and Latin America, Scandinavia, Canada, Greece, France, Croatia, the US, Russia—or they might not. I did not learn about Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský's theories in Essex but students at the Reinwardt Academie certainly did. Stránský was made known in Greece through many of ICOM's publications, available at the ICOM Library in Athens, since the late 1980s. By the same token, Avram Razgon was studied in the former East Germany while in Russia, Peter Vergo's book *The New Museology* was not part of the curriculum. This situation would appear self-evident or at least accepted by those of us who have experienced the East-West contrapunto during the 20th century, but for younger generations the history of spatial terminology (and the epistemology of respective choices) is not on focus. Terminology can be vague. Terminology can be a conundrum. Terminology can create all sorts of conceptual gaps and lead to omissions, misunderstandings, reappropriations and circular, unproductive argumentation. Quoting Dolák again, Eastern thinkers viewed museology in quite dis-

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<sup>7</sup> Dolák 2019, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Fairbairn 2021.

tinct ways, both conceptually and methodologically and not everybody was drawing upon Marxism-Leninism.<sup>9</sup> This point is well illustrated through the example of Stránský, whose ideas marked the School of Brno and who was utterly influential for most countries outside the Anglo-Saxon world. Yet Stránský's main concept *museality* was perceived by Western thinkers as an overtheorizing, obscure, ideology-laden and probably pointless explanation as to why we do what we do in and with museums (evaluate and select things to house in memory institutions). Moreover, his concern to ascribe scientific solidity to museology through the application of three main criteria, *historicity* (a historical trajectory throughout modern times), *internal scientific logic* (distinct object of knowledge, language, methods, system and interconnection of museology with the existing sciences), and *social necessity*<sup>10</sup> was again seen as an effort to rigidly handle and essentialize thinking. Stránský did not lay claim to essentialism, but rather to a unification process of terms and concepts through language. Because of its utopian connotations, the claim that the terms *museality* and *musealia* designate common grounds of human activity (the tangible or intangible tokens of the act of evaluation) brings to mind 18th century attempts to reach a universal language not only made of words (Leibniz) but also of objects (classificatory tables, Royal Repository).<sup>11</sup> In this light, Stránský occupies a moment in the history of ideas and becomes an illustration of his own argument, anchoring museological meta-theory within stages of modernity. Hence, the *map* is an imaginary cobweb of interconnections which brings to the fore the agents and content of 20th century museological discourse, as regionally fragmented as those may be.

If the map accounts for spatiality, dispersion and unification, *stratigraphy* reflects relations in time, which do not always follow the principles of linearity. When was a term used? Is there an 'archaeology' of the term? Or is there an interpretative appropriation instead, a critique of the term, a fruitful exchange, a change in the end? A very telling example in the discussion concerns the use of the term *new museology*, to which many authors in this volume refer. The first stratum appears to form in France, growing out of the revolutionary ideas of French sociologists, historians and philosophers, such as Pierre Bourdieu (*L' amour de l' art*, 1966) who posited the impossible equation of art loving-museum going, and Michel Foucault with his magnificent *Les mots et les choses* (1966) that delineated layer upon layer the epistemological taxonomy of museums, objects and collections since the 16th cen-

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<sup>9</sup> Dolák 2019, 22.

<sup>10</sup> van Mensch 1992, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Hooper Greenhill 1992, 145-157.

ture. Despite the fact that neither used the term ‘museology’, they are among the most influential minds who revolutionized thinking in the 1960s, laying the ground for a reflexive institutional critique of museums.<sup>12</sup> Another stratum saw the term *new museology* used in an anglophone context. *The New Museology*, Peter Vergo’s much discussed edited volume published in 1989, stirred the waters by suggesting a concept already put forth some years before by French thinkers, first by Hugues de Varine and later, more explicitly, by André Desvallées.<sup>13</sup> *The New Museology*, notwithstanding the critique and polemic tones from more theoretically ripe contexts, managed to disconcert while at the same time voicing ‘alternative’ views by looking at the ‘subtext’ behind panels, captions and communicative processes, as Vergo himself points out in his Introduction to the volume. The subtext constitutes a conceptual space where ideologies and unexpressed assumptions always lurk.<sup>14</sup> Without specifically stating the origins of the neologism (clearly one of the reasons for the strong criticism levelled at Vergo), the Introduction lays out the analytical frame of the book, explaining the importance of the contributors to the volume in familiarizing British audiences with the prominent socio-political concerns of the time. The proof of the impact the term had, and its historical value, lies in the fact that it is still strongly present in current publications.<sup>15</sup> New Museology was seen as the fuel for educational and cultural reforms during the productive years 1970-1980. It played the role of political manifesto, preaching emancipation and the idea of open and accessible museums for local communities, thus offering an exciting and disputed promise. By this token New Museology appears to be an institutional arena vis-à-vis professional associations, such as MNES (Muséologie nouvelle et expérimentation sociale, 1982) and MINOM (Mouvement international pour la nouvelle muséologie, 1984), which attempted to profile themselves as experimental in contrast to the more established ICOM / ICOFOM structures. As Bruno Brulon Soares puts it, new museology is probably a spatiotemporal definition, designating the before and after of its use; in so doing, the term creates a new

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Bennett (1995) who renewed thinking in Cultural and Political Studies, especially among Australian thinkers, inspired by the Foucauldian critique on governance and the technologies of self-management, also Hooper Greenhill 1992 using the Foucauldian stratigraphic epistemology to analyze the evolution of the museum institution.

<sup>13</sup> In 1980, André Desvallées proposed the addition of the word ‘nouvelle’ before museology in an entry he wrote for the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (cited in Brulon Soares 2015, 57-72).

<sup>14</sup> Vergo 1989, 3.

<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of New Museology as the vehicle of reform in public cultural policies both in France and francophone Canada, see Gunter 2019.



order (or stratum), by which novelty gradually becomes the norm and the scientific field of museology is thus reshaped, reorganized, reconfigured.<sup>16</sup> If the 1970s were the preamble of the scientific phase of museology, the 1980s constitute a rough *terminus post quem* for the solidification and expansion of the discipline. Nowadays, museology cannot be conceived without its academic status, evident in the plethora of university courses worldwide, the multidisciplinary of research, the ever-growing list of publications. Seen in this light, *new* has already become *old*, and *critical* is the new kid in town.

### *Whose voices?*

The book unfurls part of that (hi)story by bringing together the voices of some of the pioneers and representatives of subsequent generations. A historiography of museology pays tribute to personalities who shaped and substantiated epistemological paradigms in the East and West and debated fiercely upon the concept of museology as a view changer, a field of knowledge that goes deep into the very existence of heritage institutions and meticulously scans their foundation axioms. All contributors in the present volume, in their own distinct style, have served the cause. The chapters are arranged in such a way as to juxtapose, unite and contextualize these voices, either by kinship or difference. Yet in both cases they present a coherent passage between countries, time slots and mentalities and reveal the map and the strata in which the testimonies are located.

First voice: Susan Pearce opens the volume by presenting the evolution and rationale of the first Department of Museum Studies founded in western Europe, namely the one established in 1960 at the University of Leicester. At the same time, she takes us on an epistemological journey that embeds the history of the Department within the cultural inquiries of the era. Pearce intertwines Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*<sup>17</sup> and the taxonomical systems of modernity with the development of the Department, which she served for over twenty years as Head and lecturer, 'a worker in the field' in her own words. Leicester can indeed be termed a *school*, given the solid viewpoint of its educational approach: vocational training and preparation for museum work anchored upon strong academic frames systematized in the now classical Leicester Modular Packs. The packs drew on topics as diverse as Museum and Collection Management, History, Archaeology, Education, Market-

<sup>16</sup> Brulon Soares 2015 (section 45).

<sup>17</sup> Foucault 1966 (translated into English in 1970 under the title *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge).

ing, Conservation, Communication and constituted the basis for numerous Leicester publications thereafter. Pearce's engagement with the history and philosophy of ideas and material culture studies is intimately communicated in her personal address to the reader.

On the other side of the ocean, Marjorie Schwarzer similarly adopts a pragmatic approach, this time explicitly inserting the word 'practical' in her title. Schwarzer focuses on the professionalization of the field, bringing the evolution of Museum Studies in American universities to the fore. Within this scope she gives a comprehensive picture of the emergence of the first museums and associations throughout the vast federal state. By juxtaposing stakeholder and marketplace concerns stemming from the libertarian US economy, on the one hand, with the theoretical discourse of European new museology, on the other, Schwarzer calls for a more reflexive, collaborative and socially oriented path for museums, scholars and educators.

Taking a leap from the world of pragmatists, Dominique Poulot paints a solid picture of institutionalized museology in France since the 18th century with its complexities, advancements and novelties. In his historiographical approach, Poulot a) accentuates the role of philosophers, sociologists, and literary critics constituting the community of French theoreticians immensely influential in critical thinking since the 1960s and b) sketches the map of post-revolutionary France vis-à-vis the birth of major museum institutions with universal appeal (École du Louvre, Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Grand Louvre, and others). Poulot concludes his article with a paradox: why has French museology, which played such a catalytic role both within the ICOM community (particularly the ICOFOM sub-committee) and academia (Rivière's lectures at the Sorbonne), introducing pioneering concepts like ecomuseology and new museology, recently stopped producing so many critical voices and substantial literature in a field that it so diligently served?

French museology was certainly influenced by the Brno School in the present Czech Republic, as the stratigraphy of publications from the mid-1960s to today attests,<sup>18</sup> but France also seems to have had an eclectic affiliation with the Brno idea that museology is more than the museum itself, seen in the works of practitioners/theoreticians as diverse and dispersed in time as Georges Henri Rivière and Mathilde Bellaigue. The historic Brno School of Museology, which emerged in the 1960s under the guidance of two key

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<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive list of Stránský's ICOM and ICOFOM related publications see Brulon Soares 2016, also Dolák for Stránský's influence on French museum thinkers.

Czech academics, Jan Jelínek and Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, is here presented from *within*, in the collaborative contribution by Otakar Kirsch, Lenka Mrázová and Lucie Jagošová. The foundation of the Brno Chair of Museology, its intellectual dialogue with ICOFOM, as well as the establishment of the influential Summer School of Museology in 1987 have constituted Brno the producer and disseminator of museology as an aspiring scientific discipline in Central and Eastern Europe and as far as Brazil.<sup>19</sup>

The Eastern European discourse of scientific museology, its rationale and philosophical vision informed museum professionals in the West who delved into theory while serving as distinguished ICOM members, thus bridging East and West. One such figure is Peter van Mensch, whose voice cuts through schools and paradigms to create a distinct museological context at the Reinwardt Academie in Amsterdam. Van Mensch's contribution in the volume focuses on exactly that phase of his life, namely the development of the Academie's curriculum since 1976. The hallmark of the Academie was its 'pragmatic' and 'eclectic' character (in the author's words) tinted with van Mensch's inclination towards Central European and Stránskian, in particular, museological theory. At the same time van Mensch's leadership at the Academie attracted input from other contexts, such as Britain, Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

In his contribution on the history of the International Committee for Museology, Bruno Brulon Soares points to the debate regarding the core issue: What is museology? He does not target an ontological definition but rather aims at a reflexive, epistemological inquiry in order to understand the geopolitical development and different uses of the term. His point of departure is the establishment of ICOFOM in 1977 by the then ICOM President Jan Jelínek from Brno. ICOFOM was soon enriched by the presence of Vinoš Sofka, also born in Brno, and the creative thinking of Stránský. Brulon Soares clarifies an important point: inasmuch as ICOFOM was conceived as a theoretical platform (it was *about* museology), its pioneering founders were constantly seeking to bridge theory and practice. ICOFOM has been the intellectual arena for views to be exchanged, circulated, adopted and disputed in the spirit of cross-cultural tradition detected in the founding principles of ICOM itself. The author argues that if we are to think historically and critically about the trajectory of museology as a branch of knowledge, we must distinguish three phases: the *normative* phase where the standards are set, the *theoretical* phase where the discourse becomes internationalized and the *reflexive* phase where

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<sup>19</sup> Brulon Soares 2017.

knowledge dichotomies are set aside in favour of interdisciplinarity. In the current reflexive phase, concerns revolve around the role of museum studies, museum ethics, and research into museology itself, echoing the Stranskian faith in meta-museology.<sup>20</sup>

Darko Babić's chapter on Croatia demonstrates how Eastern thinking and ICOFOM-related work, together with a degree of eclecticism drawn from other contexts, reverberated and advanced in the work of thinkers like Ivo Maroević, who published his opus *Introduction to Museology: A European Approach* in 1998. Maroević not only concerns himself with the origins and historical orbit of museology, but also discusses it on the basis of modern science, namely information sciences and semiotics. Maroević himself acknowledges the influence of Croatian colleagues from the Department of Information and Communication Sciences, where museology was first established as an academic discipline in 1983, but he pays further tribute to Stránský, Waidacher and van Mensch, as well as to the Leicester School for its thought-provoking work in theorizing museum history.<sup>21</sup> With these eclectic affinities in mind, Babić begins his contribution with Maroević's own account of theoretical museology. As the chapter unfolds, Babić eagerly discusses the emergence of Critical Heritage Studies, heritage literacy and the empowerment of local communities. In so doing, Babić draws on his own Croatian roots, namely Tomislav Šola's pioneering view of heritage as an all-encompassing science which understands memory as a qualitative, spiritual action leading to human wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

Next comes Kerstin Smeds writing on the situation in Scandinavia and Finland. Her chapter is a dense, well-documented and informative historical account of the development of museology as an academic discipline in that part of the world, into which she weaves the intellectual connections between diverse geographical and epistemological contexts. Many 'schools of thought' and international protagonists were evident from the 1960s onwards, such as the French fathers of *muséologie nouvelle* and *écomuséologie* (Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine), also the Czech Vinoš Sofka who in 1968 sought refuge in Sweden and carried along ideas that were seminal for the establishment of museology at the University of Umeå in 1981. Šola, van Mensch, colleagues from Leicester and other foreign scholars took part in

<sup>20</sup> On this particular note the reader should refer to Bellaigue's intellectual aphorism, citing the need to understand knowledge as an interconnected whole (page 15 of this volume).

<sup>21</sup> Reference to Hooper-Greenhill's *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* 1992 in Maroević 1998, 10.

<sup>22</sup> See Šola, n.d., chapter V onwards, particularly page 265.

ICOFOM conferences in Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s thus increasing the international visibility of Scandinavian museology, which was already vivid in Denmark and Finland though less so in Norway. True to the visionary European tradition, Smets focuses her attention on the role of museology as a critical tool for raising awareness of global socio-political issues, such as poverty and social cohesion, the environment, and sustainable choices.

Equally multivocal was the museological thinking in Eastern Europe under the Iron Curtain, as we learn in the contribution by Vitaly Ananiev. In the Soviet Union, research on the theory of museology gained momentum in the mid-1950s through the endeavour to prepare the first Soviet textbook on museum studies, *Basics of Soviet museum studies*. At the same time, efforts were made to document the 'history of the museum field' (historical museology). Ananiev, a historian himself, chronicles the epistemological complexity of Soviet and later Russian museology by presenting a series of textbooks aimed to prove the ideological basis of the times: Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge. Museology in the USSR was understood, most fervently until the 1970s, as the theory and practice of museum work and not as an independent discipline. Gradually, and with Avram Razgon becoming part of academic museology in the 1980s, international cooperation was facilitated and the influence of mostly Czech and East German museologists was felt in the discourse (which itself was a terrain of conflict), while at the same time museological education was steadily gaining ground.

In Germany, which for most of the period in question was a divided country, museological theory followed two parallel developments, using the same language but under different regimes. Markus Walz unravels a lesser-known chapter in the museological story—as Ananiev does previously in the volume—from before the erection of the Berlin Wall to the unification of Germany. He explains further the connection between the USSR and GDR, discusses the impact of the Brno writings and refers to the intense debate between the idea of a general museology and the existence of subject-matter disciplines (special museologies), as argued by Razgon, Stránský, Wojciech A.J. Gluziński, Wilhelm Ennenbach, Klaus Schreiner and others. Meanwhile, as Walz argues, the Federal Republic of Germany was not active in the heated discussions underway in Eastern Europe but was rather focused on museum work and education without an overall theoretical framework in mind. What united East and West Germany, however, was the significance that both invested in the subject of history. History in German museums was much informed by an original way of juxtaposing objects of material culture so as to bring about unexpected, ambiguous and thought-provoking connections. Memory was evoked not by romantic, nostalgic connotations and authentic-

like environments but by a constant interplay of meaning in the most reflexive sense of the term.<sup>23</sup>

The Greek case, presented by Alexandra Bounia, is interesting to examine next, as it applies historiography to describe local museological advancements while referring to personalities and ideas already touched upon in the volume. Although Greece was on the periphery of early theoretical achievements, heritage protection and dissemination formed Greece's constitutional backbone from the outset and therefore the country nurtured museum professionals early on. For the most part, these were archaeologists, art historians and ethnographers, who despite their diverse methodologies and ideologies, saw in the act of safeguarding, documenting and displaying the past a possibility of national integration, social cohesion and intellectual emancipation. Based on references in the local press and other textual and archival sources, Bounia investigates the development of Greek museology from the interwar years to post 1990s with the help of an illustrative methodological scheme. First, from a historical perspective, she detects three main phases of evolution: the setting of standards and common vocabulary among local professionals (1930), the phase of theoretical synthesis influenced by the international museological debate (1970), and the phase of maturity after the 1990s when museology as a university degree was acknowledged and endorsed. Bounia then aligns these three historical strata, informed by key personalities in the Greek museum field, with the tripartite Stranskian epistemology (pre-scientific, empirical-descriptive and theoretical-synthetic phases),<sup>24</sup> thus making the point that there was a paradigm shift in museological theory in Greece.

In Canada, the 'defining moment in a radically transforming field' took place in the 1960s, affecting both the French- and English-speaking schools of thought in the country. In their chapter, Jennifer Carter and Sheila Hoffman trace forty years of transformation through the major topics of the debate that shaped scholarly ideas and museological practice. They touch upon Peter Vergo's *New Museology* and André Desvallées's *nouvelle muséologie*; Rivière's *ecomuseology* and the influence of French thinkers; the impact of local and aboriginal communities on processes of decolonization and decentralization; the growth of the heritage movement; Anglo-Saxon tinted approaches of criticism and reflexivity in exhibitionary complexes; and prag-

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<sup>23</sup> Korff 1993. The reflexive focus on material culture brings to mind Pearce's theoretical accounts on the meaning of objects (Pearce 1989, see also other publications by Pearce from the early 1990s) as well as the deconstructive irony of the Cambridge School (Shanks and Tilley 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Bounia in this volume, note 9 and elsewhere in her contribution.

matic concerns vis-à-vis the challenge of digitization, professionalization, and outreach. In an eloquently documented epilogue, Carter and Hoffman summarize the epistemological significance of a region that fuses together the local and the international, the central and the peripheral, the continental and the Anglo-Saxon to argue that museums, both as thought and matter, are loci of struggle and connection.

This is a point much emphasized in the Brazilian contribution by Claudia Storino, Judite Primo and Mario Chagas. Struggle and confrontation constitute the historical moment when Social Museology, rooted in the ecomuseum tradition and informed by the 1960s and 1970s social upheaval, began to modify the perception of what museum and museology could stand for vis-à-vis real societal needs and community rights. With particular reference to Canada (the Quebec Declaration and the International Movement for a New Museology), Storino, Primo and Chagas examine five case-studies in Brazil and discuss the potential of museological activism for empowering the voices of people who are rarely heard, documented and publicly exposed. At the level of epistemology, Social Museology enhances the idea that museology, in whatever form of social engagement, is more than the museum itself and can stretch to encompass issues of territorialization, gentrification, global economic crises, and illiteracy. Memory thus becomes a tool for research but also action.

Further exploring museology in Latin America, Óscar Navarro Rojas completes the volume by focusing particular attention on Costa Rica, Mexico and Colombia. His chapter explains how the museological trajectory, or rather some of its major moments, images and specific stories, light up in this part of the world, taking the ground-breaking Round Table of Santiago de Chile (1972) as a point of reference and listing other milestone professional meetings from the 1980s onwards. His main methodological concept is informed by the history of the region and the colonial origins of Latin American museums. Navarro Rojas concludes that in order to fathom the whole edifice of museology in Latin America, structural, institutional and philosophical contexts need to be assessed and set in perspective.

The book is dedicated to Professor Daphne Voudouri (Panteion University), who exited the noble party very early in life. She was a mentor, friend, supporter, and for some happy years, a colleague, too. I missed her acute comments and rigorous critique throughout the process of preparing this volume.

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## MAPPING THE GRAND NARRATIVES



# Museum Studies: the view from Leicester

*Susan Pearce*

## *Abstract*

This chapter outlines the history of the Department (now School) of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester from its foundation in 1960 until 2000, tracing the development of its course in relation to changes in the training of museum professionals as well as changing ideas of the museum, collecting, and curating in Britain over the same period. When it was founded in 1960, the Department of Museum Studies was the only full university department in the field, and was intended for post-graduate students with a strong element of vocational preparation. In the 1970s and 1980s, courses included subjects like Museum History, Museum Management, Collection Management, Conservation, and Exhibition and Visitor Services, and also included a parallel course offered to people already working in museums. The value of the Department's programmes was amply demonstrated by the ease with which graduates found employment in the profession, or achieved promotion.

With a shift in the emphasis from the material evidential basis for true understanding to a more historiographic approach, it was clear that the concept of museum studies teaching and research needed renewal. In 1986, the course was completely re-designed. The full-time students and the in-service people were now taught together through a system of two-week-long modules, ten in total, which were taught throughout the year. Almost all students from both groups went on to write a dissertation, so that everybody emerged with a Master's degree. The concerted efforts of all the staff succeeded in raising the profile of the Department. Doctoral students began to gather, books and papers began to be published by the staff based on the material they were developing in their teaching and research, and a yearly journal, *New Research in Museum Studies*, was issued. The Department also began to organize yearly conferences, which continue to this day, enabling new ideas to be aired, developed, and disseminated. New fascinating ideas continually arise, which present and future generations of Museum Studies lecturers and their students will continue to explore at Leicester.

**Keywords:** University of Leicester, Museum Studies, teaching modules, material culture teaching, curationism

I must begin by setting out the limitations of this paper. I joined the (then) Department of Museum Studies at Leicester in 1984, became Head of the Department in 1986, gave up the Headship in 1996, and ceased teaching there in 2000. In 1983, Geoffrey Stansfield and Geoffrey Lewis were both nearing the end of their careers in the Department, and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and Gaynor Kavanagh had been appointed quite recently. I am not competent to discuss what has happened since the turn of the millennium, nor the immensely significant work achieved by Eilean and Gaynor during their Leicester careers; I hope that at some point all concerned will do this for themselves. Perforce, this paper will concentrate on broad issues of structure, and on the teaching areas for which I was personally responsible. This is how it seemed to one worker in the field.

In 1960, the University of Leicester in Britain took the decision to set up a Department (now School) of Museum Studies. This was a very innovative thing to do at the time, and the University was persuaded to take the step through the encouragement of the Museums Association of Britain, itself the oldest in the world, and that of Leicester Museums Service, which was regarded as one of the foremost museum services in the country, and was famous for exhibiting the series of life-size models of prehistoric families which were made for the Festival of Britain in 1951. Ironically, these groups, still sometimes on show with their senior male clutching his symbol of authority—spear or sword—with mother well back holding the baby, are now regarded as prime evidence for how society used to be regarded and how matters have changed. They might serve as a template for how museums themselves have changed, and how, as I hope to show, the Leicester Department has been embedded in, and contributed to, this change. In 1960, it was the only full university department in the field, and, indeed, the only one in Western Europe.

The Department was, and still is, for post-graduates only. The thinking in the University has always been that Museum Studies will and should always have a very strong element of vocational preparation, and that this should follow a first degree. It therefore accepts people who have already completed a subject-based degree, in the early days usually in History, Archaeology, or one of the Natural Sciences, and those intending to go into museum education normally had also completed an educational qualification. The Department also requires those who come on the course to have demonstrated a commitment to museum work, usually by working as a volunteer. By the 1970s, the Department took about 25 British students each year, fully funded from the public purse, together with a sprinkling of people from overseas. Most of them completed a one-year Diploma, though a few wrote a dissertation as well and achieved their Master's degree.

As the 1970s and early 1980s unfolded, there were usually four full-time teaching staff, together with a Technician and two Secretaries. They taught courses in subjects like Museum History, Museum Management, Collection Management, Conservation, and Exhibition and Visitor Services. In addition, each student took a special subject, based on the subject of their first degree, which prepared them to be museum educators, or curators of history, geology and so on. By this time, too, the Department was teaching the in-service courses, organized by the Museums Association, which involved people already working in museums coming to Leicester for three separate blocks of teaching spread over two years, funded by their employers, local authorities for the most part. Student numbers tripled, and teaching a dual system was complicated. Graduates of both the systems were awarded the Associateship of the Museums Association. The emphasis was on the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and the value of the Department's programmes was amply demonstrated by the ease with which graduates found employment in the profession, or achieved promotion.

At the same time, in 1979, Mrs Thatcher had come to power, and in the British museum world, where Leicester graduates mostly looked for employment, new challenges were in progress. The accent was on 'visible value for money', public accountability, transparency, and cuts in public funding. Workers had to be 'flexible', which meant doing more-or-less whatever the employer required, with consequent threats to the professions. In museums, this meant sharper resource management aimed at bridging financial gaps, much more emphasis on visitor services, and enhanced exhibition programmes, and included flirtation with various charging schemes. Jobs and their practices had to be justified in the new terms. The implications of all this had to be melded into the Department's teaching; at the same time, student grants began to peter out, and the number of jobs in museums shrank.

Meanwhile, below these serious economic and political changes, deeper tides were flowing, and to understand their fundamental impact upon museums and museum studies, a broader excursion is necessary. The origin of modern museums lies, as we all know, in the cabinets of curiosities which gentlemen across Europe were collecting, beginning tentatively in the 15th and 16th centuries as the ideas of the Renaissance moved north, and reaching their apogee in the 17th century with exhibitions like that of the Tradescants in London, but continuing well into the 18th century with men like Hans Sloane in England. Both collections are still in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the British Museum, respectively. The view of the past inherent in the collections was 'early antiquarian', that is to say odd or rare things were brought together not because collectively they could be seen to tell a coher-

ent narrative, but because individually, they *were* odd or rare. If they were brought into one story, its basis was generated from outside the material and rested in contemporary ideas of cosmology, magic, and the notion that the small represented the universal whole.

As the 18th century wore on, and Linnaeus had created his system for classifying living things, the aim of a collector in natural history was to gather as comprehensive a collection as possible, so that the material could be arranged in two-dimensional patterns which would demonstrate the classified relationship of one individual specimen to another. At the same time, antiquarians interested in the human past were beginning to sort out the heaps of archived documents, explore the countryside for ancient remains, and publish their findings.

By the decades either side of 1800, by which time European sensibility was bewitched by the Romantic Movement that included, among many other things, a lust to understand national and community origins, enough remnants of the past were being brought to light to enable men in all the main European languages to start writing long and detailed histories of their peoples. Disparate events were woven together into historical narratives which demonstrated this or that 'inevitable' historical progression to the writer's satisfaction, and often to that of his readers. This drive was encouraged by the shift brought by Darwin's new way of seeing the natural world as the result of past forces of challenge and failure.

The old flat patterns of shells or fossils became three-dimensional as nature too acquired a history, and it is very significant that this vision is exactly suited to sequential and organized display in museum cases; indeed the exhibition of inter-related material and the knowledge produced are essentially the same thing. How this operates in geology can still be clearly seen at the Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge. An effort was made to push the understanding of material culture, never very amenable to this kind of interpretation, into patterns of evolution and inter-relationship, notably by Pitt Rivers, whose thinking is still on display in Oxford: both the Sedgwick and the Pitt Rivers museums were visited in every student year. Material culture is, however, very easily set out in 'periods' corresponding to moments of important change in human society, as a thousand exhibitions demonstrate. It is no accident that the 19th-century turn to notions of 'true scientific knowledge', material evidence, and essential meaning also produced the founding of hundreds of museums across Europe and the wider world, in which the material evidential basis for true understanding was set out for all to see. In Leicester, much as—or perhaps more than—other centres, this understanding was the basis of the Department's philosophy of museums from its inception, and the

foundation of its approach to teaching and research through its first 25 years.

If the early phase featured antiquarianism, and through the long 19th century, history with its creation of narratives was the fundamental method of explanation, in our own lifetimes, these have been replaced by historiography. We now ask not ‘what happened?’, but who produced the story of what is said to have happened, what material did he or she find and choose and for what reasons, and how did she or he organize the history, and select beginnings and endings. All this is, of course, understood as post-modernism and similar terms, and associated with post-Second World War thinkers, especially in Paris, and with the American social upheavals stemming from the Vietnam War.

By the 1970s, most of the crucial writings by Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, and others had been translated into English and had begun to be absorbed by museum people together with everybody else. The consequences for the established disciplines, including those represented by traditional curatorship, were fundamental and inescapable. Bare facts might remain verifiable, but meanings made by putting them together was only in the eye and imagination of the beholder. Literature was created as much by the reader as the writer. Understanding of the past was made by historians, not by history itself. Nothing, including human individuals had essential existence: all was contingency, construction, and flux. Social hierarchies, whether based on breeding, money, or education, were self-inflicted. Notions of inherent quality, or superiority were unacceptable because any effort to justify them was a mirage. Judgements were illusory, because their basis rested in the end on belief.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the implications of these lines of argument were being absorbed. Out in the museums of Britain, the huge—but hitherto taken for granted—gaps in provision were becoming clear. There was almost nothing about women, or the recently settled incomers, or gay history, or the disadvantaged, or even about many local working-class communities, and still less about how we actually knew about anything, or who had done the knowing. This, inevitably, worked with the political and economic conditions just described, in which resources were becoming scarce and all providers of services, including museum services, needed to explain what they were doing and why it was valuable. They needed to respond to what it was gradually becoming clear their surrounding inhabitants wanted, and to find ways of truly involving people not just in carrying out museum tasks, but in generating fuller understanding of what museums are and what they can be.

The impact of all this on young museum staff, and those who wanted to



become museum professionals, was very considerable. They knew they needed vocational training in the older sense. They needed to understand the fundamentals of collection management, storage, conservation, and exhibition management. They also had to know the background of law, administrative structures, and financial accountability within which museums operated. They also, and urgently, needed to get to grips with computer-based data systems, which were just beginning to emerge within the museum world. But they wanted this to be set in a broad intellectual framework which reflected the new style of thinking. At the same time, this thinking was transforming the ways in which the generation of academics who were just beginning to bear responsibility for teaching and research understood their disciplines, the newly appointed staff in Museum Studies at Leicester, of course, among them. It was clear that the concept of museum studies teaching and research—museum studies research in an organized and sustained way was more-or-less a new idea in itself—needed root and branch renewal.

In October 1986, a completely newly-designed course came on stream. The full-time students and the in-service people were now taught together through a system of two-week-long modules, which were taught throughout the year. Almost all students from both groups went on to write a dissertation, now shortened (as most were at this time) to 20,000 words, so that everybody emerged with a Master's degree, seen, rightly or wrongly, as a much better qualification than the old Diploma, and worth the cost, which students increasingly had to fund themselves. There was a substantial summer period of work experience, which anchored the full-time students in the real museum world, and helped them to gain jobs.

The course was made up of ten separate modules, and each of these was organized around a Modular Pack which was sent to each student in advance. The packs were hard copy and substantial. Each described the intentions and structure of the module, gave session-by-session notes, analyses and questions, and book lists. There were also considerable quantities of photocopied articles, book chapters, and helpful material (for much of which copyright clearance had to be obtained), especially valuable to the part-time students for whom access to the literature had always been a problem. The literature parts of the packs were published as a series of hard-back anthology books by Routledge a few years later. The teaching within the modules was also re-structured from the ground up. There were still formal lectures, but the work was organized in blocks of whole days, and also involved workshops, discussions and presentations of all kinds, led by the students. You may smile, dear reader, but 30 years ago this was still revolutionary in university circles. Each module generated a piece of assessed written work. The Modular Packs

became very well known, and were copied, not to say pirated, elsewhere, and staff began to receive almost too many invitations to speak about the course and its contents.

Teaching the modules was divided between us. In the main course, Geoffrey Lewis and Geoffrey Stansfield, both now retired, taught what they had always done, Museum Management and Collection Management, respectively. Their teaching ensured that the continuing need in these areas was met. Eilean taught two modules, focussing on all the issues of Visitor Studies, and Gaynor was responsible for teaching on museum professionalism and its myriad implications. Special subjects continued, each with a pair of modules, although the range of subjects offered differed from time to time to include topics like Marketing and Conservation. But Geoff Stansfield continued to give Natural History, Gaynor History, Eilean Education, increasingly defined as Life-Long Learning, and I did Archaeology. In the main course, I also taught two modules, concentrating on the new thinking as it applied to the physical world of material culture, the actual stuff of museum holdings, which I have always passionately believed are, and must always be, the heart and soul of every museum service. This *material culture* teaching, like the teaching in the other modules, was being done for the first time, and I should like to dwell a little on what it involved.

The first module was (usually) entitled *Objects*, and concentrated on the nature and significance of each individual piece of material culture, defined as a part of the natural world to which human imagination had been applied; so, it included a pebble picked up on the beach, or a tree in a wood to which a species name has been attached, and the sessions began with a discussion of the relationship between words and things. They continued with analyses of the chief ways in which the various kinds of meanings objects can make have been understood in the past, including the methods of historians, of functional anthropologists, of behavioural psychologists, and of structuralists like Levi-Strauss, the poetic nature of whose thinking I found personally appealing, and who is now being seriously re-considered. The course then considered whether or not objects can be said to have, or to be able to acquire, any inherent meaning, and how this plays with the notion of individual human agency.

Finally, we moved to contemplate what happens when an object enters a museum collection, how it is chosen or accepted, described and identified, stored, and selected, or not, for exhibition, and how it is understood within all these states. This involved some fairly rugged epistemological work on how we create knowledge, and how a consensus of the value level of each piece is arrived at. The assessed work for the module was the Object Study, for which

each student picked a single object to discuss in depth. The choice of objects was very revealing, because some chose a special object with a depth of personally related symbols, while others wanted to explore how a very ordinary, mass-produced piece responded to the methods discussed. The general standard was very high, and the discussions genuinely illuminating.

The second module concentrated on *Collecting*. It was divided into three main themes. The first discussed the history of collecting practices, primarily in the European tradition although with inputs from students from other parts of the world, and considered themes in the Long Term, and the intimate connection between collecting and the creation of different kinds of knowledge upon which the cultural shifts which we call history have depended. It developed the idea of the 'shrine' which occurs in different incarnations throughout the long period from the classical world to the present day, and which has always housed collections of material which are sacred and set aside; the notion of holy relics is very important. With this went consideration of past perspectives in the study of collecting. It all prompted attempts to define what a collection is, and generally concluded that a collection is anything which the possessor is moved to call 'my collection'.

The second discussed the poetics of collecting, the nature of that inner drive which makes people gather material together. It was very important to include not merely the 'grand' collections, the owners of which are likely to look to a museum as their final destination, but also the much larger number of collections which consist of tea towels or beer mats; and to ask how museums should be approaching this material. During these years of teaching, the 'People's Show' phenomena took off in British museums, beginning in Walsall where the idea was incubated, in which people were asked to bring in their own collections to form an exhibition. The quantity of material brought into museums across the country was overwhelming in every sense, and the variety was immense, ranging from tractors to aircraft sick bags. Research work on what happened during the People's Show summer, and on collecting in contemporary Britain more generally has demonstrated just how widespread collecting is, involving some 80% of people at some stage in their adult lives, and so studying collecting is important for the broader social perspective as well as in connection with museums.

The acts of collecting structure people's relationships to time and space, to how they relate to their world, and how they create their identities. Collecting in relation to social class and gender emerged as especially interesting. It is one of the very rare areas in British life where the social class into which an individual is placed, based on education and occupation, makes absolutely no difference: doctors and dustmen both collect model cars, or bicycles, or early

cameras, and they do so in exactly the same ways. Their wives both collect blue and white jugs, or early seaside postcards, again in the same style. In gender terms, both collect as a stereotypical view might suppose. Men like machines from the world outside, women like things imbued with connected remembrance; make of this what we will, it stimulated interesting student discussion.

The third collecting theme focussed on the politics of collecting. It explored the relationship of gathering material to the operations of capitalism, to the vested interest in maintaining the value of certain types of material, within which museums are deeply implicated, and to the ways in which the collection of, for example the works of a neglected potter, can alter perceptions and create new value. It also considered the world of consumerism and the implications of shopping and individual consumption. The module generated an assessed Collection Study.

None of this, of course, existed in a vacuum. During the 1980s and 1990s, British culture was saturated with radio and television programmes discussing 'Small Objects of Desire' and similar topics, the broadsheet newspapers began to carry regular features on collecting and collectors, and novels and films focussing on the meanings of material culture and its accumulation proliferated. A good many novels about museums were drawn upon or written too: both Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* and Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* feature museums.

The concerted efforts of all the staff succeeded in raising the profile of the Department. Doctoral students began to gather, and by 1990 their numbers were in high double figures. They were developing a distinct culture of their own, eventually publishing in their own annual journal. Research programmes, backed by precious grants from the research councils, the Museums and Galleries Commission, and the funding agencies, started to flourish as the research culture grew. Books and papers began to flow as the staff started to publish the material they were developing in their teaching and research, much of it new Museum Studies series produced by Leicester University Press, Routledge, and also Ashgate and Sage. A yearly journal, *New Research in Museum Studies*, was brought out by Athlone Press. From 1985, the Department began to organize yearly conferences, which enabled new ideas to be aired, developed, and disseminated; the papers were always published, and audiences of over 70 gathered in Leicester every year. The conference series continues.

Over the years, the student demography has changed considerably. Originally, the students were almost all British, with a sprinkling of Americans, Indians, and continental Europeans. Through the 1990s and 2000s, the num-

bers rose to about 100, and in the 2015/16 intake, to about 150. A large proportion of these are Chinese, and the total included 80 PhD students, both full- and part-time, many of whom also come from outside the UK. The countries from which the non-UK people come differ greatly from year to year, which means constant renewal of courses and teaching on the part of the staff. The teaching style has shifted with the shifts in student demography, and now concentrates much more on small-group teaching.

I should like to point out two more contemporary developments, to which I like to think the 1980s and 1990s in the Department contributed. One is very close to home. In England, in the 1990s, all university departments were examined on the quality of their teaching by panels of senior academics; in 1997, Museum Studies scored a full house of 25 points out of 25. Also, every four years, each university department has to undergo a peer-assessed inquisition on the quality and quantity of its research, based on judgements made on each of its staff and on the culture overall; scores are given, which determine the level of government funding. In 2004, the Department, soon to be School, of Museum Studies came out top of all the university units of assessment in the country.

The other is much wider. A new term has entered the cultural vocabulary. Pundits and conference goers, researchers and magazines, now talk about 'the turn to curatorship', meaning that the processes of collecting, caring for, arranging, and presenting are now seen as fundamental to the creation of culture, and that 'curation' is the best way of describing this production. As I write, a book by David Balzer has just been published by Pluto Press. It is called *Curationism. How Curating took over the Art World and Everything Else*, and it is representative of the curatorship turn, which Balzer sees as emerging in the 1990s as the paradigm of understanding. The archive of our past is everything we have from which to create our present and our future; contemporary curators are 'charismatic, magical organizers' of exhibitions, and visible culture in general, they are 'subjects of romantic fixation'.<sup>1</sup> Balzer sees the exhibition *Live in your Head: When Attitudes become Form* curated by Harald Szeemann in 1969 as fundamental in the history of curating, with its sponsorship by the tobacco giant Philip Morris nicely pointing up the umbilical connection between material, museums, and capitalism. At the 2015 Venice Biennale, a central position was taken by a declamation of *Das Kapital*, an idea of the curator not the artists; indeed, exhibition becomes the

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<sup>1</sup> Balzer, D. (2015) *Curationism. How Curating took over the art world and everything else*. London: Pluto Press, 54, 37 (reference by the editors).

primary work of art, and the curator becomes the artist. These are fascinating ideas, which, among many other equally fascinating topics, present and future generations of Museum Studies lecturers and their students will explore.

And so, in the School of Museum Studies at Leicester, the story continues, but I am not the person to tell it. I look forward to reading, in due course, what my colleagues, now still working, will write.



# Practical and laborious: Museum Studies in the United States

*Marjorie Schwarzer*

## *Abstract*

In this chapter, I chronicle the origins of Museum Studies in the United States (US), citing key authors and studies that have been especially influential in the US. I discuss the evolution of museum studies' pragmatic orientation, raising questions about how one of the fundamental tenets of marketplace economics—competition—impacts museum studies' place within the American university. The pragmatic approach to museum studies in the US contrasts to the more theoretical discourse of 'new museology' that emerged in fields like literary theory and anthropology in European universities, and then became accessible to American museologists through British publications in the 1970s. New Museology critiqued museums, calling on them to examine their roles within larger systems of oppression, whereas the goal of the US version of museum studies has been to train future professionals for gainful employment within those systems. Museum studies has thus struggled within American universities to strike a balance between institutional critique and the marketplace.

**Keywords:** Museum Studies US, pragmatic approach, museum stakeholders, New Museology

## *The origins of museum studies in the United States*

Museums in the United States owe their origins to industrialists and other wealthy individuals who, to quote Joseph Choate, a late 19th-century founder of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, used their money-making talents to accumulate treasures to create institutions to 'humanize, to educate and refine a practical and laborious people'.<sup>1</sup> American museums' founders

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<sup>1</sup> 'Address of Joseph H. Choate: At the Opening of the Museum Building March 30, 1880'. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 12(6), 1917, 126-129. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3253830](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3253830). Accessed May 22, 2021.



looked to Europe for inspiration but focused their work on the realities of the marketplace economy in which they had made their fortunes. Financial matters, such as detailed records of the costs of collections, are prominent features of most early museum reports. Museum Studies emerged to address a related practical concern: the ongoing need for trained employees to care for collections.

After the American Civil War (1861 to 1865), America's economy grew, especially in northern cities like New York and Pittsburgh. Industrialists' wealth increased. Those who had amassed the most wealth—magnates like J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie—competed not only for business but in their drive to shape the culture of the nation. They amassed scientific specimens and artwork and influenced elected officials to grant public land for grand buildings to house these collections.

Most early American museums were run privately by their founders, their founders' relatives, or other volunteers who had personal financial cushions and could forgo a salary. A few wealthy individuals footed the bills. In museums around the nation, most staff listed their occupation as 'amateur archaeologist', using that self-declared status to justify digging up fossils, relics and specimens in the rural landscape and cramming them into urban museums. Amateur archaeologists doubled as benefactors, donating their own collections and inheritances to keep the museum afloat. In short, museums were largely the purview of hobbyists and wealthy families who controlled all decisions. No internal system or literature existed for training employees to manage or care for rapidly-expanding collections or to create public exhibitions or educational programmes.

This was a time when a sense of profession was emerging in the US. Lawyers, historians and librarians had begun to organize themselves through autonomous professional associations—for example, the American Bar Association (1878), the American Historical Association (1880), and the American Library Association (1881). In 1889, the world's first association of museum workers—the Great Britain Museums Association—was founded in York, England. American museum workers sailed to England to participate in meetings.

In 1891, G. Browne Goode, a curator at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC (which had been founded by a bequest of the wealthy British chemist Joseph Smithson), wrote the first American book to address the professional management and organization of museums. In *The Museums of the Future*, Goode opined that not just anyone could run a museum. Museums needed talented workers who possessed a 'museum sense', meaning that they needed to understand the unique qualities of collections and pub-

lic exhibitions.<sup>2</sup> In 1905 Smithsonian Institution museum workers who had been attending the meetings in England set forth a charter for an independent American museum professional association. The next year, in New York City, at the American Museum of Natural History, 71 individuals working in art, natural science, and history museums held the foundational conference of the American Association of Museums (AAM, now American Alliance of Museums). Within a year, AAM recruited 160 founding members. Their idea was straightforward. Museums, whether devoted to art, science, history, or a combination of all three disciplines, had common needs. Therefore, people working in them would benefit from a formal network through which to share practices. As the Smithsonian reported, ‘the importance of this movement so auspiciously inaugurated cannot be overestimated, since the opportunity for interchange of views will surely stimulate the activities of museums everywhere.’<sup>3</sup> A common theme discussed at the first two AAM convenings was the shortage of trained workers, including directors qualified to lead museums as they grew in number. But what kind of training was needed? A. R. Crook, curator of the Illinois State Museum of Natural History, surveyed AAM members and synthesized what they felt were the ideal qualifications needed to run a museum: ‘a knowledge of museum history and philosophy; a grasp of exhibit techniques; skill in soliciting materials and money; and good health.’<sup>4</sup>

In 1907, *The Nation*, a political journal, ran an editorial noting that despite the shortage of workers, business tycoons continued to found new museums. What was needed, the editorial suggested, was not more museums, but a specialized curriculum devoted to training young people to advance the work of American museums ‘beyond the mere storing of private collections.’<sup>5</sup> This curriculum should emphasize a thorough understanding of how to identify and organize classical antiquities, as well as an understanding of how European museums operate.<sup>6</sup> Thus, university professors created two courses covering the fundamentals of museum work, one in Iowa and the other in Pennsylvania. In 1907 in Iowa City, Homer Dill, an anthropologist and taxidermist, set up a Taxidermy and Plastic Art teaching lab and course at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. His students went on to direct large natural science museums in Colorado, Michigan and Minnesota. A year later in Philadelphia, Sara Yorke Stevenson, curator at the University

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<sup>2</sup> Brown Goode 1891, 445.

<sup>3</sup> See Smithsonian Institution archives 1905.

<sup>4</sup> Crook quoted in Cushman 1984, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Norton 1907, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Cushman 1984.

of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, taught a course in museum work at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts, now The University of the Arts. Her course emphasized the classification of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities as well as techniques for educating the public about them. The initial museum training courses were successful. ‘We cannot furnish enough graduates to supply the demand for curators and other workers’, Dill reported to the AAM.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, perhaps because they wanted to retain control of their collections, museum founders had little interest in sustaining these courses or paying liveable wages to their graduates. Dill’s, Stevenson’s, and others’ efforts were discontinued. As Richard Norton, the founder of a discontinued programme at the American Academy of Rome bemoaned: ‘the graduates of our schools can have but little hope of being valued at their true worth’.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in 1913, The American Federation of Arts devoted an entire issue of its magazine *Art and Progress* to articles from museum directors, all of whom pleaded for, in the words of one contributor, oversight, help and direction from ‘capable’ staff.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the next decades, seasoned museum workers remained in such scarce supply that, in its first code of ethics, AAM warned museums not to steal employees from another institution without the prior consent of the director: ‘A museum may not properly offer a position to an employee of another museum with which it has regular and intimate relations without having first notified the director of its intentions to do so’.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1920s, two charitable foundations—the Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller Family Foundations—advanced the training of a museum workforce. In face of accusations of the undue political influence of the elites on public institutions like libraries and museums, the benefactors of these foundations realized the value of an autonomous museum professional organization. In 1923, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation gave AAM its first grant, soon to be followed by support from the Carnegie Corporation. Five subsequent activities laid the groundwork for many of the professional practices embraced today by US museum studies programmes. They were: 1) a code of ethics; 2) a monthly publication; 3) a partnership with the US National Park Service (NPS) to establish trailside museums (nature centres) to teach visitors about flora, fauna, and geology; 4) training programmes; and 5) data gathering.

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<sup>7</sup> Schrimper 1992, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Norton 1907, 119.

<sup>9</sup> See The American Federation of Arts 1913, 1081.

<sup>10</sup> American Association of Museums 1925, not paginated.

AAM's 1925 code of ethics—the field's first such guidelines—emphasized the public function of museums, noting that 'the life of the museum worker, whether he be a humble labourer or a responsible trustee, is essentially one of service'.<sup>11</sup> *The Museum News*, edited by Harold Madison, director of the Park Museum in Rhode Island, printed short announcements about acquisitions, new kinds of public educational programmes offered by member museums, and announcements of available equipment such as cases, shelves, and collecting jars. *The Museum News* offered tips for providing better public service, including the advice to let visitors touch objects when possible, perhaps the first iteration of the interactive education movement that decades later would be examined by museum studies scholars.<sup>12</sup>

The NPS museum initiative represented the first coordinated effort between American museum workers to develop a cohesive group of organizations with similar styles of architecture, display, and educational interpretation. Lessons learned from establishing the trailside museums inspired the first widely-distributed museum exhibition design manual, published in the early 1940s, by Ned Burns, head of the NPS Museum Division, and distributed through the American Association of Museums to its members.<sup>13</sup> The Carnegie Corporation, headed by Frederick Keppel, a former dean at Columbia University, advanced efforts to train museum workers. Keppel was a proponent of adult education, in vogue because of non-English speaking immigrants streaming into American cities. Keppel believed that museums were ideal places to expose America's adult population to higher cultural values and promote citizenship. Keppel steered funds to the first sustained museum training course in the US, established in 1921 at Harvard University by Paul Joseph Sachs, son of Samuel Sachs, financier and founder of the banking firm Goldman/Sachs.

The Harvard curriculum emphasized materials, chemistry, application techniques, and new restoration technologies like x-ray equipment. Sachs' course *Museum Work and Museum Problems* covered not only art restoration, but connoisseurship. He stressed that his students needed to observe artwork closely in order to ferret out fakes and forgeries, important to sustaining the financial value and public trust around the practice of art collecting. Sachs forged alliances between his students, the AAM (he served on its

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<sup>11</sup> American Association of Museums 1925, 4.

<sup>12</sup> *The Museum News* later became the glossy bi-monthly magazine *Museum News* that featured more in-depth articles, and then shortened its title to *Museum*, the name it retains today.

<sup>13</sup> See Burns 1941.

board) and the inner circles of the art world. Sachs insisted that the museum must remain ‘firmly in the control of a trained elite, [which would] maintain standards of quality independent of the contingent values of daily life’.<sup>14</sup> Sachs’ illustrious disciples went on to run America’s best-known art museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri.

While the Harvard museum course focused on art connoisseurship, teaching the leaders of the nation’s elite art museums, three contemporaneous training courses emphasized public service. In 1923, at the Newark Museum in New Jersey, Louise Connolly initiated a programme that trained primarily young female apprentices in library work and museum education. Two members of the first graduating class of the Newark programme—Dorothy H. Dudley, registrar at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Irma Bezold Wilkinson, registrar at the Museum of Modern Art—went on to write the first manual of standard techniques in collections documentation.<sup>15</sup> From 1926 to 1929, Laura Bragg, director of South Carolina’s Charleston Museum (the nation’s oldest museum) worked closely with AAM to pioneer a summer course at Columbia University in New York that included an apprenticeship in Charleston. Its goal was to emphasize the community educational role of museums. Starting in 1929, with funds from the Rockefellers and leadership from Chauncey Hamlin, a member of AAM’s board, the Buffalo (New York) Museum of Science trained museum workers in the design and construction of natural science dioramas and exhibitions, including those at NPS trailside museums.<sup>16</sup>

As trained men and women began to influence museums, they gathered and analyzed data and published their work. Until the 1920s, the majority of written materials available to museum workers consisted of technical information on taxidermy techniques. Carnegie now began to fund research projects to cover other subjects, including the first studies of how to enliven the experience of visiting museums for the public. In 1928, Carnegie underwrote the first cross-comparative study of museums. Paul Marshall Rea, a former director of the Charleston Museum, studied 104 museums and compared attendance and population data for their locales. He produced a dense study with 150 pages of calculations and suggested such innovations as branch museums (urban institutions opening branches in outlying areas) and other cost

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<sup>14</sup> Tassel 2002, 50.

<sup>15</sup> See Dudley and Bezold 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Cummings 1940.

efficiencies.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Yale University psychology professors Arthur Melton and Edward Stevens Robinson studied how visitors used exhibits, with an eye to creating environments and buildings that would be more invigorating to the public. Their work influenced directors to advocate for less cluttered displays and more comfortable viewing galleries.<sup>18</sup>

University scholars did not fully embrace museum studies, advocating instead for rigorous study in a more traditional discipline. Robinson, for example, accused museum training courses of ‘mollycoddling’, that is, pampering students with facile courses of study. Writing in *The Museum News* in 1926, Robinson cautioned that museum studies was a disservice to the field because it invented a false credential which was not really needed to work in a museum.<sup>19</sup>

Museum training and research programmes were discontinued during World War II, when American museums, like the rest of the nation, focused on the war effort. These foundational efforts, however, framed the importance to American museum workers of sharing their work through professional conferences and networks, publication of data and information, and training courses.

### *Museum Studies in the second half of the 20th century*

After World War II, interest in training a museum workforce grew significantly. Through the Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments (housed at the newly-founded National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC), American museum specialists travelled to Europe to assess the damage war had levied on the continent’s monuments, masterworks, and archives. They included Paul Sachs and some of his former Harvard students. ‘If we must have museums at all in the post-war world’, declared Metropolitan Museum of Art director Francis Henry Taylor in 1945, they ‘desperately [. . .] need to be overhauled and reorganized’.<sup>20</sup> With fresh memories of World War II’s damage on Europe’s cultural landscape, museum directors from throughout the world united through international organizations like UNESCO and ICOM, dedicated to the protection and advanced public understanding of the world’s cultural and education heritage. The need for training museum personnel at all levels was a significant topic of

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<sup>17</sup> Rea 1932.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson 1928.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson 1926.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor 1945, 7.

discussion internationally.<sup>21</sup> One urgency was training personnel to reorganize, manage, care for and restore museum collections. These processes were becoming increasingly specialized as the art market was growing in the US. Collections documentation systems had existed since the 1910s, but the first coordinated collections management and care training efforts did not begin until the 1950s. In 1955, at the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, Paul Sachs' former students Sheldon Keck and Carolyn Kohn Keck taught America's first course in painting conservation. In 1959, Keck opened the first training programme for art conservators at New York University. Much of the impetus for delegating art care and conservation to a specialist came from the rising financial value of art in the US.

America's tourism economy also boomed during the post-war years, due to the expansion of the interstate highway system and a shift in work conditions that increased Americans' leisure time. Outdoor museums like Colonial Williamsburg began to develop educational programmes for the families who visited. The National Park Service produced manuals to instruct workers how to create these programmes. Freeman Tilden's practical guidelines for educational interpretation at historical sites, *Interpreting our Heritage*, was released in 1957 and became an instant classic.<sup>22</sup> Other new museum practices, especially trends in exhibition design and technologies, were described in the field's first independent journal, *Curator*, founded in 1958 and published by the American Museum of Natural History. In 1959, Edward P. Alexander, who would go on to author one of the most widely used American museum studies textbooks, founded the Seminar for Historical Administration at Colonial Williamsburg.<sup>23</sup> Echoing the pragmatic focus of earlier museum studies training programmes, the stated purpose of the summer-long seminar was to address the 'critical shortage of adequately trained personnel [. . .] to staff [museums]'.<sup>24</sup> Alexander's curriculum included courses in museum history, educational interpretation techniques, administration, and how to conduct research.

Simultaneous to the re-invigorated efforts in post-war America to train museum workers, UNESCO and ICOM hosted seminars throughout the world about the role and purpose of museums. Participants debated how and why to study museums, declaring them to be universally-important organizations with unique characteristics and needs. In these seminars and

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<sup>21</sup> Boylan 1987.

<sup>22</sup> Tilden 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Tramposch 1984, 9.

subsequent UNESCO publications, different terms—museology, museum science, museography and museum studies—were used to describe this new discourse. In the US, the term museology was defined as a general approach to ‘acquainting students with the various jobs in the museum: the museum curator, registrar, conservator, preparator, administrator’ and so on in order to differentiate it from more academic scholarship.<sup>25</sup> This definition again underlines the pragmatic focus of museum studies. No matter what term was used, the aim of museum studies in the US was clear: training a workforce for a growing field that was benefiting from an infusion of resources. In 1965, the US federal government created the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. This was the first time federal grants became available to American arts and cultural organizations. At the same time, the post-war baby boom and GI Bill for returning soldiers led to an expansion of universities. These factors in turn led to a boom in new museums in cities and on campuses, and increased interest in developing resources for those wishing to work within a growing sector. In 1965 the Smithsonian Center for Museum Studies was founded, along with new training programmes and conservation laboratories based at US universities including the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee (1963), Cooperstown Graduate Program (New York, 1964) and University of California, Davis (1964).

Yet the same questions raised earlier in the century remained: was museum studies a valid academic discipline? Or was the curriculum too vocational to be suitable for a university curriculum? Which theories and practices defined how museum studies would situate itself within American universities? In 1969, ICOM’s newly formed International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) held a symposium on the professional training needs of museum workers at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. Under the guidance of Smithsonian specialist Nancy Fuller, the initial ICOM Basic Syllabus for graduate-level Professional Museum Training was published in 1971. It echoed the original curriculum developed by Sachs at Harvard University, advocating a combination of courses in museum collections care, history and administration along with supervised on-site internships and a culminating project or thesis.<sup>26</sup>

The growing numbers of museum studies programmes within the US led to the founding of AAM’s Museum Studies Curriculum Committee in 1973. It later became the Committee on Museum Professional Training (COMPT)

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<sup>25</sup> Stout 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Boylan 1987.



and to this day its members continue to meet annually in order to discuss the attributes and needs of museum studies training offered at the university level. During the 1970s, there was still little agreement on museum studies. In the US, universities created museum studies training programmes largely to meet local and regional employment needs. Like the early individualistic museums controlled by their founders, these programmes were eclectic, reflecting the expertise and strengths of individual professors, as well as university priorities. The Museum Studies programme at Lone Mountain College (now University of San Francisco) was envisioned in 1974 by art conservator Roger Broussal and art historian Deborah Kirshman, supported by progressive university administrators as well as a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. Its graduates went on to become some of the first professional collections managers at local museums like the DeYoung and Asian Art Museum. The programme moved to John F. Kennedy University in 1979, when Lone Mountain went bankrupt and was absorbed by University of San Francisco (USF). At that time, USF did not believe that it was financially viable for a university to offer a degree in museum studies.<sup>27</sup> In 1976, the George Washington University (GWU)'s programme was founded in Washington, DC by a committee of professors in the Art History, Anthropology, and American Studies departments. They wished to make connections across their disciplines as well as draw on GWU's proximity to the Smithsonian Institution (SI) which was expanding due to an infusion of federal funding. Under the leadership of former SI counsel Marie Malaro, GWU distinguished itself in museum law. Malaro's *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections* is in its third edition and still used in American museum studies curricula.<sup>28</sup> Other notable museum studies programmes from this period were founded in New York City. In 1977, art historian Flora Kaplan created a programme for New York University (NYU) that emphasized art history, conservation, and exposure to museums throughout New York City. Bank Street College's programme (1978) embraced progressive educational and teaching techniques.

During this time, museum studies students and instructors benefited from new texts which addressed a range of subjects: from calls for accountability emerging from the growth in government funding, to modern architecture, to the future of museums in uncertain times (a recurring theme in museum studies). They included such seminal publications as Sherman Lee's edited volume titled *On Understanding Art Museums* and George Ellis Burcaw's *In-*

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<sup>27</sup> Riera 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Malaro 1985.

*roduction to Museum Work*.<sup>29</sup> Both were published in 1975. Lee, who assumed the directorship of the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1958, gathered essays about the move of art institutions in the US toward public service. Included is a chapter about ‘nuts and bolts’, which notes that ‘without some understanding of the practical working of the art museum, all of us, professional or layman, are without any guidelines for possible change’.<sup>30</sup> Burcaw, who had served in the US Marine Corps during World War II, founded the museum at the University of Idaho and in that capacity created a comprehensive introductory text which set about defining the role of the post-war museum. His book, like its predecessor by Goode, reads like a practical guide to the field, offering thought exercises at the end of each of its chapters and going so far as to advise readers on ‘how to prepare yourself’ to be ‘competitive in the job market’. He recommends that museum workers obtain a Master’s degree and salutes the development of museum studies as ‘a field of study in its own right’.<sup>31</sup> Museum studies as a terminal Master’s degree appealed to idealistic young people who were drawn to careers in mission-driven educational institutions and wanted to be part of an emerging and expanding base of institutions. Within this environment, museum studies continued to strive for legitimacy within both the halls of academia and the museum field. Government funders demanded that museums be more accountable, service-oriented, and professional. This called for codifying practices that today are second nature to most museum workers: recording the numbers of visitors coming through the doors, creating floor maps, documenting collections loans, auditing financial records, marketing offerings to as wide a public as possible. Thus museum studies programmes continued to strive to strengthen museums’ professional practices. Yet, could museum studies prove its worth to universities through encouraging scholarship that went one step further?

By 1980, the Smithsonian Institution Center for Museum Studies had published a core curriculum and syllabi. Although individual universities’ museum studies curricula were still largely eclectic, they had come a long way from turn-of-the-century taxidermy labs. Reports like *Museums for a New Century* (AAM, 1984), *The Uncertain Profession: Educators in American Art Museums* (Dobbs and Eisner, 1987), and ultimately the American Association of Museum’s *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (AAM, 1992) sparked museum practitioners and scholars alike to debate, position, create techniques for, and further legitimize the public-service role

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<sup>29</sup> Burcaw 1975; Lee 1975.

<sup>30</sup> Lee 1975, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Burcaw 1975, 217.

of museums. Similar to, but more sophisticated than Paul Rea's 1928 report, these publications analyzed industry data and practice, concluding that museums needed to pay more attention to societal trends and needs in order to remain vital and relevant. To accomplish this, museums needed to change internally. Museum studies programmes contributed by encouraging more research, dialogue and focused coursework on learning theory, museum education, evaluation, and teamwork. As Bank Street College faculty Nina Jensen and Mary Ellen Munley wrote in *Museum Education Journal* in 1985, 'training programmes cannot work successfully in isolation' from museums or their visitors.<sup>32</sup> In 1988, the Visitor Studies Association was founded at University of Alabama with the goal of developing and sharing more refined techniques for studying visitor behaviour amongst academics and practitioners.

### *The New Museology*

At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, and starting in universities in Europe, art historians, linguists, philosophers and cultural theorists were launching vigorous philosophical critiques of museums. At a 1987 conference held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Peter Vergo, Professor and Head of the Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex,<sup>33</sup> identified 'an attitude [around exhibitions and collections] that is both arrogant and uncompromising, which takes for granted a certain level of education and [...] make[s] no concessions to visitors from other social and cultural backgrounds'.<sup>34</sup> Vergo believed that by focusing on *methods* of museum practice rather than the larger *purpose* of museums, 'the old museology' perpetuated the divide between the ivory tower and the rest of the populace. This attitude needed to change or museums could risk obsolescence.<sup>35</sup> New Museology as understood in American academia called on museums to expose their historic biases. Theorists posed difficult ethical questions. What was the relationship between cultural displays and the cultural assumptions of the people who created those displays? How had the museum acquired its collections and who really owned those collections? Who was the museum really for?<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jensen and Munley 1985, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Retired 2010, currently an Emeritus Professor at the School of Philosophy, University of Essex. The reverberations of this seminal volume can still be felt, see for instance <https://mnk.pl/article/344>. Accessed January 17, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Vergo 1989, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Vergo 1989, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Spiess 1996.

In light of this dialog, vocationally-oriented museum studies programmes in the US faltered. For example, the programme at University of California Davis—which originated from a need for art conservators and technicians in its region—was terminated due to lack of support from within the university as well as competing philosophies among faculty as to how curriculum should be focused. In his extensive analysis of the demise of the Davis programme, Seth Adam Hindin observed:

Art history and conservation underwent profound yet divergent changes in North America [...] for art historians, problems of attribution and filiation as ends unto themselves lost urgency [as] art history reoriented itself toward the semiotic, symbolic, and social—the external world, rather than the internal physical life of the object.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, museum studies' newfound intersection with institutional critique, media, post-colonial and cultural studies and politics presented an opportunity to popularize museum studies within more traditional approaches to art history, anthropology and other humanities courses at universities. High-profile exhibition controversies during the early 1990s led to intensive analysis of museum ideology and values within academic circles and the classroom. With museums reeling from the Robert Mapplethorpe and Enola Gay scandals on one hand, and the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act on the other, American anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists analyzed the relationship between collections, displays and the authoritative voice of institutions. Influential titles in the United States included anthropologist Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine's edited volume *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (1991), sociologist Steven Dubin's *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum from the Enola Gay to Sensation* (1999) and political scientist Timothy Luke's *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition* (2002). These texts were integrated into introductory Museum Studies seminars at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Yet there remained a disconnect between the intellectual focus of the material covered in introductory museum studies courses, taught by PhD faculty in art history, history and anthropology departments, and the more technical courses in museum studies graduate-level curriculum delivered by adjunct practitioner faculty. Courses in collections care and business practices continued to cover standard methods for collections upkeep and financial sustainability, aimed at protecting a museum's tangible assets and business

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<sup>37</sup> Hindin 2015, 35.

interests. They did not question larger issues of ethics, marketplace inequities or other concerns related to the control of museums by an elite class.

Another area of disconnect was the training of museum educators who were increasingly turning to quantitative evaluation to inform their work. John Falk and Lynne Dierking's 1992 seminal text *The Museum Experience* used the results of visitor evaluations and studies. They called on museum professionals to think more deeply about museums as leisure-time destinations that compete for visitors and to 'ask why, of all the possible ways an individual or family could spend leisure time, millions of people freely choose to visit museums'.<sup>38</sup> With museums relying on quantitative studies and survey data to help them develop programmes to please their audiences and attract new visitors, some academicians accused museums of 'watering down' scholarship to create products that appealed to the marketplace instead of upholding the highest scholarly standards. Educators countered that they were creating programmes and exhibitions more meaningful to a larger general public, including new audiences who had previously felt excluded from museums. What was the balance between marketplace demands and institutional critique?

Add to this equation a museum building boom and the emergence of the internet. In the US alone, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new museum or building extension broke ground every fifteen days. The number of job openings grew, especially in the areas of project management, collections digitization, information technology and public programming. New skills were needed; so were more nuanced understandings of ethical decision-making and the role of the museum in its community. Within such an energetic intellectual and professional climate, the interest in museum studies surged. Humanities dissertations grew in number, as did conferences, symposia, and workshops.

In 1998 at ICOM's Triennial Meeting in Australia, ICTOP once again revised its Curriculum Guidelines for Professional Museum Training. Writing about this new curriculum, the Smithsonian's Nancy Fuller noted that museums were now operating in 'a radically different external environment' due to 'deep-seated, global forces—social attitudes, economic conditions and particularly technological innovations'. Thus trainers needed to shift their curriculum from its inward focus on static practices and toward an external focus on 'broader systems for understanding museums'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Falk and Dierking 1992, xv.

<sup>39</sup> Fuller 1999, 9.

Fuller also noted that American museums were now listing ‘computer skills’ among the requirements for employment. In the late 1990s, museum studies departments at John F. Kennedy University, The George Washington University, and Harvard University offered the first graduate-level courses that linked museum studies and technology, taught respectively by Richard Rinehart, Kym Rice, and Katherine Burton Jones. This area of study continues to grow, with attention paid to researching how to create more accessible online databases, benefit from digital asset management, communicate and market through online social networks, and develop technology in exhibitions.<sup>40</sup>

Another result of online technology was the spread of distance-learning and online courses in museum studies. This new form of training and education challenged American universities, as they faced stiff competition from for-profit and on-line entities for students. Suddenly, arguments that museum studies was a watered down academic pursuit dissipated. Universities developed new graduate-level courses and programmes designed to be more attractive to students than traditional disciplines—and that could bring in tuition dollars. Boutique offerings like museum studies were appealing. Because a built-in infrastructure of classrooms, technology, student services and accreditation already existed, direct costs were low (with the exception of conservation programmes which require specialized laboratories). Unlike schools of law, medicine, nursing and other kinds of professional training programmes, the fact that museum studies is not beholden to outside accrediting agencies and licensure added to their appeal. Many instructors are adjunct practitioner-faculty who can be compensated toward the bottom of an already-low pay scale. While the university collects tuition, museums host and train interns for free—in exchange for the intern’s free work. The unpaid internship model is alive and well today, even though it has been questioned repeatedly because it favours students who can afford to work without compensation, harkening to earlier practices in the field. Universities are clearly on the winning side of the museum studies financial equation.<sup>41</sup>

Thus it is no surprise that in 2003, when the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries hosted its first conference on Museum Studies Programs in Academia at Willamette College in Salem, Oregon, the room was filled beyond capacity with professors and university museum directors. They were charged with creating a new revenue-generating museum studies pro-

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<sup>40</sup> Schwarzer 1999.

<sup>41</sup> See Schwarzer 2012.

gramme for their university, often to financially support under-enrolment in other courses of study.<sup>42</sup> In 1980, about 20 museum studies degree-granting programmes existed in the United States. By 2005, this number had grown tenfold: to more than 200 such programmes. The surge meant that museum studies programmes —once fairly small in number—were now competing for students. Competitive pressures led to the temptation to lower admissions standards, weaken curriculum and be less transparent about sharing data and information.

The lack of centralized oversight by an accrediting body, agreed-upon best practices, or reliable data meant that museum studies was vulnerable to the agendas of college administrators facing market pressures. Within this climate of intense competition for students, how could museum studies continue to strive toward its original mandate to train a cadre of autonomous qualified professionals to serve the public? How could it introduce theoretical discussions that questioned this very model of favouring marketplace forces over public benefit? What was museum studies' mandate at the dawn of the 21st century?

These questions were very much on the minds of discussants at the May, 2009 gathering of the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The theme of the convening was 'The Museum Studies Experiment: What is it? Why do it? Who owns it?' Acknowledging that Museum Studies now had lustre within universities, attendants debated whether museum studies coursework really belonged 'with professional training schools like law, medicine, journalism and business' or if there even existed 'a field of inquiry called Museology, with distinct methodologies, a notable historiography, and an intellectual rigor that reached beyond the day-to-day activities and functions that [take] place within collecting institutions?'<sup>43</sup>

The Great Recession further exasperated the tension between museums and universities. By the end of 2009, nearly every museum in the US had cut budgets by between five and twenty percent, laid off or furloughed staff, cancelled or scaled back exhibition plans and/or delayed a capital project. The level of retrenchment was unprecedented in the history of the field and, in this author's view, the concurrent boom in university museum training programmes sent a false signal to students about the state of museums and their job prospects. Others agreed. In November 2018, panellists speaking on the

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<sup>42</sup> The author was a participant and keynote speaker at the conference.

<sup>43</sup> Association of Academic Museums and Galleries 2009: <https://www.aamg-us.org/2009-aamg-annual-conference/>. Accessed May 15, 2021.

future of career opportunities in the museum field at the New England Museums Association in Boston specifically called attention to the over-supply of museum studies training programmes in the nation. These concerns deepened in 2021, after the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic along with formal field-wide initiatives to address diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI) in the museum workplace.

### *Concluding thoughts*

This discussion raises the issue of what museum studies hopes to accomplish in the coming decades. If its goal is to train future museum professionals, then I believe that now is the time for museums to demand more from museum studies. After all, without museums, the museum studies programmes could not exist. With so many American universities competing to position museum studies in a crowded marketplace, the field has an unprecedented opportunity to push for more scrutiny of and rigor for professional training. If museum leaders truly care about attracting and retaining a talented workforce and want universities to be partners in preparing future employees, they need to demand more from the programmes, especially in terms of standards for graduates.

But what if the goal of museum studies is actually more in line with the new museology? What about questioning museums' motives and calling attention to the self-serving practices of collectors and other elites and inequities in how the workforce is treated? What about taking on how issues like decolonization, ownership and gender play out in museums? Then now is the time for museologists to demand more from museums. After all, without the flexible thinking and critique encouraged within the university sector, how can museums invent ways to prosper intellectually, within the reality of market forces? If museum studies scholars and students truly care about the future of critical thought and culture in our society and want museums to partner with them toward this higher purpose, they need to demand more from museums.

There is no reason why both goals cannot be pursued together. Why not integrate practical application within theoretic curriculum? Why not frame practical application within the context of theory and history? Why not articulate a cohesive vision for changing museum culture both intellectually and systematically?

It is time, especially in the post-COVID era, for museums, scholars and trainers to come together, as they did during the crucial growth years of the 1970s, and again in the 1990s, and widely communicate the core attributes of



an exemplary museum studies programme as well as an exemplary museum. Even the most pragmatic and idealistic among museologists may be able to agree here. Economic booms and busts come and go, as do pedagogies and professional practices. But the price of marketplace economics is high for the world's cultural institutions, as keepers of humanistic values and memories. Today in the US, the wealth disparity between rich and poor, between the moneyed classes and the professional workforce, is at its highest level since the days when the industrial robber-barons founded America's earliest museums. It behoves museologists, museum practitioners and all of us concerned with the viability of these precious public institutions to recognize what could happen if museums revert to past exclusionary practices. We need to come together to re-evaluate our work, bridge our differences, and articulate our true purpose: creating dynamic civic spaces that work for all of us.

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# The French museology

*Dominique Poulot*

## *Abstract*

The origin of the term ‘museology’ as we know it can be traced back to 18th century France, and its evolution is closely intertwined with different stages in the history of public museums, especially their Revolutionary and Republican foundations. The development of a French tradition in museum studies is subsequently linked to the early 20th century, through the works of writers, aesthetes and historians, as well as famous practitioners, who were commemorated on various occasions. This chapter will firstly present the various stages of museology’s history in French society. Next, it will look over different places and means of development and distribution of museological research, namely institutions, laboratories and scientific publications or popular scientific journals which disseminate museological reflections. Finally, the successive configurations of the discipline, in its diverse institutional and scholarly writings, will be outlined.

**Keywords:** French museology, history, museological research, curatorship

## *French museology*

The French theoretical approach to museology is deeply rooted in history: writers, curators, intellectuals, and administrators have been particularly influential in its development. The origin of the term ‘museology’ as we know it can be traced back to 18th century France, and its evolution is closely intertwined with different stages in the history of public museums, especially their Revolutionary and Republican foundations. French historiography of collections had started with the beginnings of ‘scholarly’ art history in the first half of the 19th century and experienced a remarkable scientific development later with the works of Edmond Bonnaffé (*Collectors of the old France: notes of an amateur*, 1873). The series of upheavals brought by the French Revolution and Napoleon’s Empire, the mark of vandalism and the reactions that those events provoked, notably the debates regarding the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of Republican museums, which stirred up political confrontations and conflicts over issues of memory during the 19th and 20th century, have left

their imprint on French heritage (*patrimoine*); French historiography embodies this turbulent history. Since most French museums had a Revolutionary origin, they were subject to more general polemics on the treatment of art and culture by the Republicans during the whole 19th century. Indeed, from the very beginning of the Revolutionary museums, we witnessed the emergence of a museophobia that accused them of promoting the uprooting of culture, or even its mortifying embalming, while on the contrary their supporters enthusiastically praised their usefulness. The museums at that time had determined enemies, who hoped if not to make them disappear, at least to restrict them to within narrow limits, those of necessity.<sup>1</sup>

The development of a French tradition in museum studies is subsequently linked to the early 20th century, through the works of writers, aesthetes and historians, as well as famous practitioners, personalities who were revisited on the occasion of commemorations and celebrations. Various intellectual and ideological movements took positions in favour of museums in the name of national heritage, and of the democratic potentialities of these institutions; such is the case of the progressive movements, especially at the time of the Popular Front during the Interwar period.<sup>2</sup> In the immediate postwar period, some curators worked to renew the broken links between contemporary creation and art museums, making museums, especially in Paris but not only, places that welcomed the 20th-century masters, often ignored or marginalized until then by institutions that were too academic.<sup>3</sup> The term *patrimoine* appeared approximately with André Malraux's Ministry of Cultural Affairs, but came into common use with the following generation, during the '*Patrimoine* years' (1980-2000). The notion coincided with new institutional terms and conditions as well as intellectual ones: the emergence of New Museology and the influence of the French Theory identified through several major authors of the social sciences and humanities.<sup>4</sup> Jean Baudrillard wrote about the Beaubourg effect, criticizing the construction of the Beaubourg Centre and the new Museum of Modern Art in the centre of Paris, so avidly promoted by President Georges Pompidou.<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault forged the concept of heterotopia in a 1967 lecture, published only in 1984, which would become commonplace in the world's museological literature after one or two genera-

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<sup>1</sup> Quatremère de Quincy 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Ory 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Cassou 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Cusset 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Baudrillard, Krauss and Michelson 1982.

tions.<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, through their philosophical concept of *rhizome* (1987), also influenced the reflection on the forms of archiving and heritage.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Jacques Derrida, through participating in exhibitions and deconstructing certain museum forms, published a rich commentary.<sup>8</sup> More broadly, a whole series of reflections on themes related to museology were developed in journals such as *Traverses*, published by the Centre Pompidou, which featured essays by Gilbert Lascault, Michel de Certeau and Louis Marin on utopian spaces, remnants and their patrimonialization, exhibitions, and art collections. Thus, reflection upon museums fits into an intellectual context marked by the persistence of intellectuals from a broad range of fields, and by the influence of journals and reviews.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the periodicals *Les Temps Modernes*, *Le Débat*, *Traverses*, *Art Press*, *Commentaire*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, *Médiologie*, *Hermès*, etc. often commented on the 'grand works' of the presidents of the Fifth Republic, but went beyond the circumstantial nature of the exercise, and deepened their analysis which was then frequently used in books and scholarly articles.

This chapter will firstly present the various stages of museology's history in French society. Afterwards, it will look over different places and means of development and distribution of museological research, namely institutions, laboratories and scientific publications or popular scientific journals which disseminate museological reflections. Finally, the successive configurations of the discipline, in its diverse institutional and scholarly writings, will be outlined.

### *The classical century of French museums, from the 1870s to the 1970s*

When it comes to museology, France represents one of the referential countries. Museology was defined as such at the crossroads of different intellectual influences, as well as within the specific context of museums in France, marked by the burden that the concept of the nation-state imposed on the definition of the institutions, their status, collections and curators. A review of the historical situation of museology requires, consequently, a consideration of the life of museums as a whole, and onwards, the more general debates about the notion of heritage (*patrimoine*) which characterized the subsequent periods.

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Derrida 1990; 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Batard 2018.



The foundation of the École du Louvre (School of Louvre) dates back to 1882, namely to Gambetta's government. It was intended to be a 'school for museum management', aiming to educate future curators, but also an '*école pratique* of archaeology and art history' whose objective was 'to place a practical, alongside theoretical and speculative, education about archaeology and art history, which is based on positive knowledge and could emerge from the study and understanding of the monuments preserved in the national collections'.<sup>10</sup> This idea of an *école pratique* was taken from the German university model, and was considered a means to reform the old French universities, which were mostly devoted to teaching history and art history for amateurs. Louis de Ronchaud (1816-1887), the founder and afterwards director of the school, suggested that 'education will give birth to conservation, as conservation was born from collection'.<sup>11</sup> The teaching of museography started in 1927, entrusted to Gaston Brière, and included the 'history of collections and of museums of modern art', the organization of museums, the role of their personnel, maintenance, restoration and protection of collections, construction of new buildings, social and educational factors, etc.<sup>12</sup> The Madrid conference on museology saw some French interventions in the field of ideal museum architecture, mostly by pre-eminent curators of the Louvre museum.<sup>13</sup> The term museology appeared in programmes in 1949: lecturing on museology was initiated by Germain Bazin, an assistant and later successor to René Huyghe (in 1951) as Head of the Louvre's Department of Paintings.<sup>14</sup> Bazin was interested in museology as a curator eager to reproduce the context of works, and also as an art historian attached to the history of his discipline—alongside his History of Museums, he gave courses in the History of Art History.<sup>15</sup>

The creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (*ministère des Affaires culturelles*), published in the *Journal officiel* on 4 February 1959, was, according to André Malraux, an important institutional turning point for French museums. His observations about museums are famous:

<sup>10</sup> Report by Ronchaud, 11 April 1882, quoted in Durey 2016 and by Durey in Desclaux 2020, 52-53. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are by the author.

<sup>11</sup> Report by Ronchaud, 11 April 1882, quoted in Durey 2016 and by Durey in Desclaux 2020, 52-53; see also Picot-Bocquillon 2005.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://agorha.inha.fr/inhaprod/ark:/54721/0023571> (page no longer available). More generally see Verne 1932 and Therrien 1998. On the professionalization of curators at this moment see Passini 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Jamin 2017. One famous contribution to the conference was Hautecoeur 1993 about ideal architectural types of museums.

<sup>14</sup> On terminology, see Aquilina 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Bazin 1967; 1986.

Our civilization is the first one to perceive a universal humanism, and to attempt to establish the universal notion of man. Not, as the Greeks had done it, through creation of heroic or divine models, but through research of the most profound element of the civilizations that succeeded. And I believe that the museum is one of the places on which this notion is created.<sup>16</sup>

However, museums were not a priority for the Administration. This paradox is emphasized by Jacques Sallois, in charge of French Museums during the 1980s: ‘Quite unexpectedly, Malraux, the author of the *Imaginary Museum*, is more passionate about the houses of culture and of living theatre than about museums, whose works, on the other hand, fascinate him’.<sup>17</sup> The new ministry took over parts of the administration and responsibilities that had previously belonged to other ministries, in particular the Ministry of Education, thus composing its new tasks on the basis of somewhat arbitrary divisions and suffering from a somewhat ridiculous budget. Christian Pattyn, the first *Directeur du Patrimoine* of the Ministry, a civil servant and historian of the Ministry, emphasizes that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was ‘established on the minimal basis: many honours, little resources’.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Ministry was highly fragile. In 1965, its budget corresponded to just 0.38% of the national budget. In 1972, this amount rose to 0.46%. Things only changed after 1981, with the arrival of the socialist Jack Lang on *rue de Valois*, the head office of the Ministry.

Nevertheless, in 1963, the new administrative status for national museum curators established that they be recruited at the level of a Bachelor’s degree, followed by an 18-month museum internship. Though a new frame of reference for their intellectual formation was created, the number of public employees remained limited, as French historian Loïc Vadelorge remarked: ‘Until 1964, the museums of France had only 131 official “curators” with different statuses [...], the numbers raising to 169 curators in 1969 [...], however without exceeding 200 members before 1983’.<sup>19</sup> But during the 1960s, French museology is certainly one of the most influential in the world, supported essentially by the education obtained at the *École du Louvre*, and by the book by Germain Bazin, the fruit of his teaching at the school, under the title *Le temps des musées* (1967, and simultaneously published in English as *The Museum Age*).<sup>20</sup> As Hans Huth wrote in 1968, ‘the *École du Louvre* [is] the only

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<sup>16</sup> Malraux 1955.

<sup>17</sup> Sallois 1988. Sallois was director of the French Museums during the 1980s, see Cornu et al. 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by Poirrier 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Vadelorge 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Bazin 1967.

school offering an all-around curriculum for the education of students in the field of museology'.<sup>21</sup>

The other characteristic is that France, or rather some of its curators, had numerous responsibilities within the directorship of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and particularly in its sections related to museum theory, or museology, as Georges-Henri Rivière called it.<sup>22</sup> In ICOM, an organization located in Paris, the French presence was well-known. Let us remember, as Sluga notes, of the 557 posts available in UNESCO's secretariat in 1947, 514 were held by either English or French nationals.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the 1960s represents the golden age of the *École du Louvre* in French museology, based mainly on traditional historical knowledge regarding national collections and on education about different museographic techniques, both of them related to a specific professional tradition.<sup>24</sup> The price of such a narrow focus was the marginality of the discipline in the general framework of academic education and research.

During the 1970's, the administrative organization of the *Réunion des Musées nationaux* (Union of National Museums) improved, particularly with the foundation of the Department for Exhibitions. The foundation of new museums and the reconstruction of several others continued in the context of the 'strong involvement of President Georges Pompidou', even if, after 1974, the budget of the Ministry decreased again with President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. In the framework of decentralization, growing consideration was given to the local level in cultural administration, and the *Directions régionales des Affaires culturelles* (Regional Offices of Cultural Affairs) were created in 1977.<sup>25</sup>

### *The museal turn of the post-1968 era*

The most remarkable achievement of this period is without doubt the creation of the National Centre of Art and Culture in the Beaubourg Quarter, Paris.

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<sup>21</sup> Huth 1968. We see for example young Brazilian art museum curators or experts coming to Paris for the *École du Louvre* during their European tours of museological training: Ruoso 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Rivière 1989, 51ff. This book is composed of the personal notes from students attending Rivière's lectures and classes, as well as previously published material. French museology of these decades was often only elaborated and transmitted orally, such as the lectures on museology at the *École du Louvre* by Michel Colardelle and by other professional curators.

<sup>23</sup> Sluga 2013, esp. 106.

<sup>24</sup> See Benoist 1960, and a new edition 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Bodiguel 2000. See also Laurent 2003, 26.

Decided in 1969, the Centre was inaugurated in 1976, managed by Pontus Hulten who had been called in 1973 from the Modern Museet of Stockholm. Defined by the architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers as an information and entertainment centre, initially slightly reminiscent of Times Square, the Centre offered an important new tool for curators. Its priorities were the support of living French artists, the constitution of a contemporary art heritage in order to surpass the delay with important foreign institutions, and finally, the issue of democratization through a set of innovations, sometimes copied from theatres and festivals (subscriptions, different loyalty plans, diversification of the public). The Centre's cultural project—its multidisciplinary nature, its accessibility to the public and the priority given to contemporary art—influenced the conception of museums in France and even abroad: we are talking about a 'post-Pompidou age'. Under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a five-year legislation framework related to museums, established on 11 July 1978, tended to reconcile the imperatives of museums' valorization, conservation of heritage and rationalization, and the profitability of cultural and artistic activities. The decision was taken to found a museum of the 19th century on the premises of the Orsay railway station (1977) and the Cité des Sciences (City of Sciences) at the Villette.<sup>26</sup> The size and complexity of these new cultural institutions led the French administration to give them a certain autonomy and to define a particular status for them in the cultural administration, as had already been the case for the Beaubourg Centre in 1974.

In museological terms, this decade corresponds to the period of George-Henry Rivière's classes at the Sorbonne (1970-1982). This period is marked by new propositions, stemming from the intellectual and institutional changes that occurred in May 1968. On the one hand, the foundation of the Beaubourg Centre inaugurated a new era for the notion of multidisciplinary exhibition. Articles and works related to the Centre established a new way of thinking (but also strong criticism) which led to an intellectual debate, significant both nationally and internationally. On the other hand, spreading the ATP (Musée des arts et traditions populaires) model through the reinvented regional museums all over provincial France made Rivière's museology an

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<sup>26</sup> As part of the International Exhibition in Paris, the Palace of Discovery opened in May 1937, and on March 13, 1986, the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie was opened in the Parc de la Villette. These two institutions, the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie and the Palais de la Découverte, were grouped together in 2009 as *Universcience*. In 2016, the double anniversary of 30 and 80 years provided the opportunity for a conference on the museology of science (<https://www.cite-sciences.fr/fr/ressources/conferences-en-ligne/saisons/la-museologie-scientifique-toute-une-histoire/>. Accessed June 6, 2021).

essential element of the new museal landscape. The invention of the ecomuseum and its first successes, and finally, the international echo of these experiences, led to a strong French influence in the so-called New Museology.<sup>27</sup> On a strictly intellectual level, the success was related to three intellectual contributions: firstly, Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of the museum, secondly Michel Foucault's writings on museums as heterotopias and on the relations between power and knowledge, and finally, Jean Baudrillard's comments on the 'Beaubourg effect' (1977). All three had started to influence the critical research of museology around the world. Moreover, this period of French museology could be qualified, in the more general sense, as the 'Beaubourg age', due to how much the museological and philosophical questions seem to have been bound, at that time, to this institution, to its activities and to the reactions that it provoked among French intelligentsia.

The influence of French philosophical reflection—the French Theory—is, indeed, important in the field of museum studies and it seems to have been even crucial for some contemporary authors. The radical critique of what Laurajane Smith called 'the authorized discourse'<sup>28</sup> in the contemporary Critical Heritage Studies movement resembles the critique by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser of the 'Ideological State Apparatuses', named AIE, in the 1970s. Furthermore, Tony Bennett imagined the concept of what he called 'the Exhibitionary Complex' based on Michel Foucault's books about knowledge and power, and elaborated his own sociology of culture from Pierre Bourdieu's sociology.<sup>29</sup> The work of Jacques Derrida also inspired some studies by archivists and curators all over the world regarding their institutional practices.

### *The socialist agenda for museums: the big bang of 1981*

An unprecedented growth in the number and quality of museums in France occurred over the years 1980-2000, a period marked by a new generation of grand presidential projects (Orsay, Grand Louvre, Museum of Natural History, City of Sciences), and an increase in regional projects due to the multiplication of investments within the Ministry of Culture. The election

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<sup>27</sup> André Desvallées, a student and friend of Georges-Henri Rivière, thought that the true écomusée had been forgotten in the new institutions of the 1980s onwards and tried to maintain the ideal type of New Museology in papers and conferences. See Desvallées 1987; de Varine 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Smith 2006, 29 (editors' note).

<sup>29</sup> Bennett 1995, 59-86 (editors' note).

of François Mitterrand in 1981, led, with Minister of Culture Jack Lang, to a new era of state cultural action: the missions of the Ministry of Culture were redefined in the decree of 10 March 1982.<sup>30</sup> Contemporary creation was accentuated, with the National Foundation for Contemporary Art (FNAC) and Regional Foundations for Contemporary Art (FRAC), although not true museums, put in charge of buying and collecting contemporary art in the different regions of the country.<sup>31</sup> Artistic centres were developed and supported by the State, and the Ministry paid particular attention to public and cultural practices. The budget for culture was nearly doubled, increasing from 0.50% of the national budget in 1980 to 0.93% in 1986. Another important political decision was the decentralization of State services, which changed the framework for the relations between territorial collectivities and the State. In 1991, the Ministry gave an overview of its interventions during the decade 1981-1991, marked by the opening of four national museums: the Orangery Museum of Tuileries in 1983; the Picasso Museum in the old Hôtel Salé in 1985; the Orsay Museum in 1986; and the Pyramid of the Louvre and its new reception spaces in 1989. In ten years, the State provided financial support to more than 258 construction sites.<sup>32</sup> However, the rules conceived in 1945, which were supposed to organize the administration of French museums for a short period of time, were not reformed. It would take a generation or so to see a change in the body of museum curators, in favour of homogenization of professionals, today sanctioned by the opening of the association of curators of French public collections to all museum workers, on the eve of its centenary. The new conditions of membership state that 'all professionals working for the inventory, study, conservation, development and dissemination of public collections and cultural, scientific, technical and natural heritage may be members'.<sup>33</sup>

The opening of the Auditorium of the Louvre Museum and the development of an ambitious scientific and cultural programme made the museological reflections on the actuality of museums (the so-called *Musée-musées* programme of lectures and conferences set up in April 1989)<sup>34</sup> and their history available to a wider Parisian public. Jacques Sallois, then General Director of French Museums, created a committee to study the history of museums, but it was never officially set up. The commemorative context of those days, with

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<sup>30</sup> Ballé 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Urfalino and Vilkas 1995.

<sup>32</sup> 'Les musées en 1988: nature des collections et fréquentation' 1991.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.agccpf.com/adherer>. Accessed August 29, 2022. See Hénaut and Poulard 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Bellaigue 1994.

the celebration of the Bicentenary of the French Revolution, fostered new thinking about the questions of historical consciousness. Pierre Nora, introducing the concept of 'realms of memory',<sup>35</sup> renewed research methods within the new history. His idea was modelled after Maurice Halbwachs' notion of the topography of remembrance, which Nora employed to think about heritage through an extended analysis of collective memory. Historians and art historians could no longer claim a naïve heritage-ization: the relation of any historian to a museum was now marked by a new distance, even if he or she still contributed, inevitably, to create the museum, to enrich it, if not to legitimize it. Even though the French case did not offer anything exceptional within the critical analysis of memory institutions by the common *intelligentia*, some of its initiatives were crucial.

Between 1990 and 2000, the expansion of museums continued, particularly due to the project of the *Grand Louvre* entrusted to the architect Ieoh Ming Pei. The Direction des Musées de France and the local communities became involved in several renovations in the provinces as well: Lyon, Lille, Strasbourg, Carré d'Art in Nîmes. However, this sequence is marked by a return to order that can be perceived through the vicissitudes of the display of art in Orsay and the Grand Louvre: although the lessons from Beaubourg bore fruit in terms of pluridisciplinarity and visitor policies, some conservative choices were nevertheless ultimately taken in relation to museography, as an outcome of debates that were very vivid at times. The dispute between a new, historical, contextualization of works of art versus the traditions of art history was concluded in the Orsay museum with the defeat of the propositions for its renewal. Simultaneously, national museums experienced aggressive commercial politics, which turned out to be challenging, based on the promotion of commercial products for sale in museum shops: French expertise in the domain of museum and exhibition profitability was exported to other countries, like Italy. Quite paradoxically, if we consider that the socialist party enjoyed two presidential terms under François Mitterrand and that the intellectuals in his party championed a 'new heritage' and 'museums of society', traditional museology and its managerial model triumphed in the public sphere and in the education of museum professionals.

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<sup>35</sup> Nora 1997.

*The managerial turn in curatorship: the foundation of a new school of museums*

This development came along with a series of decisive transformations regarding the *École nationale du patrimoine* (National School of Heritage) created in 1990, which became in 2006 the *Institut national du patrimoine* (National Institute of Heritage, INP). In fact, the INP is neither a school, in an academic sense, nor an institute in the sense of the *Institut national d'histoire de l'art* (National Institute for the History of Art) which was created more or less at the same time (in 2001). The INP organizes some teaching for the future curators of national museums who enter the institute after a *concours* but the teaching is in management, law, and administrative matters, in a very practical way. Entrance into the INP comes after the completion of one's academic curriculum; over the course of nearly two years, students are sent as interns to different administrations and museums throughout France for some months each time, to learn how to deal with local municipal authorities, administrators and other colleagues. So the new INP is tasked with training the new generations of curators (at least the small *élite* of national museums, the curators of other museums being hired directly by the municipality without any training at the INP) after they have completed their studies, either at university or the *École du Louvre*, with no time for museology in the short months of Parisian training before going 'out in the field' (*sur le terrain*).

Changes can also be observed at the *École du Louvre*, which became more and more like a specialized school of the Ministry of Culture with the reforms of 1994—a mandatory admission test was set up for first-year students. Four years later, the *École* was renovated with new auditoria and a building much more satisfactory than those of Parisian universities, situated in the Louvre's Flore wing. Most importantly, the *École* became an independent public institution, and was given the right to grant an MA in Museology equivalent to that conferred by the universities, and then a PhD in Art History. Simultaneously, and for the first time, Museology was introduced in numerous universities for different diplomas: Art History, Information and Communication Sciences, Mediation or Cultural Management, etc. Due to the growing number of students, it was possible, also for the first time, to publish Museology textbooks.<sup>36</sup>

The first decade of the 21st century inherited the previous transforma-

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<sup>36</sup> See Poulot 2005. A second edition of the book, published in 2009 has been translated into Italian, Spanish, Brazilian and Korean.



tions, but a new law regarding museums in 2002 changed their administrative situation, which had remained untouched since 1945. The law established, in the first place, a Museum of France label, to harmonize the status of the museums recognized by the State, with respect to their specific characteristics. For the first time, following the definition of ICOM and the examples of other international policies in this regard, the law applied to all museums recognized by the State. Regardless of the administrative supervision, the *Haut Conseil des musées de France* (Council of the Museums of France) now represented all different types of institutions. Protection of collections was an essential element: their inalienability<sup>37</sup> was conceived as part of public property in a very constraining way, while the preliminary discussions rather planned to rely on the de-accessioning model, typical of North American museums. The law followed the logic of decentralization, organizing the transfer of the property of the so-called *dépôts* of the State made before 1910 to local authorities, namely, several tens of thousands of artworks. This was considered the beginning of numerous reorganizations conceived as part of intercommunal cooperation, and that authorized, for example, the dividing up of a museum (or its parts) among other public entities.

Finally, the reorganization of the museum landscape was made according to three basic conditions: a) the status of the museum; b) the existence of an inventory of its collection; c) the definition of a Scientific and Cultural Project.<sup>38</sup> Validation, or not, of such a project, proposed by each museum, remained an effective tool of intervention by the Direction of the Museums of France. It is exactly on that level that the museological competence of the curator was considered important. The requirement of such projects by the museums is the result of a policy initiated by Jacques Sallois, then Director of the Museums of France, which was implemented from 1992 onwards, and which has gradually been put into practice. It was first and foremost the result of ten years of experience with architectural projects: it was realized that the practice of commissioning an architect without specifying what was going to be done in the space was a bad method (as soon as the requirements reached a minimum level of complexity). The other source was a strong desire to promote activities aimed at the public, at a time when many professionals still felt more like curators of collections than cultural facilitators. The ambition was to confirm a movement that was already underway and to make it irre-

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<sup>37</sup> Editors' note: *inalienability* is a legal term that refers to the principle of non-transferability, in this case that collections are not transferable and are non-contested public goods. See Cornu et al. 2021, especially the chapter 'inaliénabilité' by M. Cornu and D. Poulot.

<sup>38</sup> Cornu et al. 2021.

versible, to make the museum no longer a simple conservatory but a cultural player. In addition, the evolution of the cultural context, competition and the marketing approach, the need to professionalize museums, and the obligation to move from a management culture to a project culture were all taken into account.

The law of 2002 requires museums applying for the ‘Musée de France’ designation to present an orientation document ‘specifying the scientific and cultural objectives of the museum as well as the conditions and means envisaged for their implementation, particularly in terms of collections, personnel, museography, education, dissemination and research’.<sup>39</sup> This ‘orientation document’ is nothing more than a simplified project, which makes it possible to verify, not only as before in the control procedure, the interest and quality of the collections, but also the viability of the project and the relevance of all the activities that the future designated museum proposes to carry out. At the same time, the State has been able to carry out long-term activities relating to information, training, raising awareness, advice and support, which have allowed many museum managers to learn the approach, that has become one of the fundamentals of the curatorial profession over the years.

### *The new conditions of museology: teaching and research*

With this in mind, the development of museology responded to an increasing professional demand, since these Scientific and Cultural Projects, or else actual museum reports, allowed the acquisition of financial aid. Curators were encouraged to think about the meaning of the exhibited collection, but equally about the relation of museums to their environment, in order to fight against the criticism stemming from Edouard Pommier’s dictum on the ‘proliferation of museums’ which was considered stereotypical.<sup>40</sup> In relation to the post-Liberation perspective outlined by Georges Salles, once Director of Museums, the question became to rely on a museum’s particular features as proof of originality and a factor of attractiveness.

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<sup>39</sup> See the texts in <http://mediatheque-numerique.inp.fr/Dossiers-de-formation/Creation-et-renovation-du-musee-du-projet-scientifique-et-culturel-a-l-etude-de-programmation>. Accessed November 20, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> Pommier 1991. Pommier, who served as Honorary Inspector General of Museums, provoked a dispute with the curators of ethnological museums, such as the Musée Dauphinois, who protested against the contempt for their collections and politics. For the situation in museums of ethnology and heritage, see Poulot 2016.

From that moment on, French universities adopted Museology as a discipline. It started to appear as part of the mandatory educational programme to the extent that a Bachelor's degree in Art History, in particular, could not be obtained without initiation into the subject. The research subjects related to Master's degrees usually focused on the monographs of museums, presenting the history of collections. This was also the case for dissertations written at universities and in erudite programmes such as the *École de Chartes*. Simultaneously, visitation and study practices represented the new preoccupation of Museum Studies, and even a new subject for Cultural and Literary History.<sup>41</sup> A set of phenomena related to the appropriation of museums received significant new attention from the social sciences—Geography and Tourism Studies included.<sup>42</sup> Finally, the comparative analysis of mechanisms mobilized in museums, exhibitions and theme parks all became new scholarly themes.

Numerous challenges related to the institutional division of disciplines influenced museology. The *École du Louvre* has been increasingly assimilated into an institution of higher education, in accordance with the regulations adopted at Bologna, since its education system has been adapted (in 2002) to fit the European academic framework known as LMD (licence, master, doctorat). The National Institute of Heritage remains a unique institution in the European, or even more so, global landscape related to the training of museum curators but without teaching museology as such.<sup>43</sup> Museology is taught everywhere in France at a Master's level only—which is the level achieved at the *École du Louvre* from 2006 by a quarter of its 1500 students. One of the most remarkable traits of the evolution of museology is its multidisciplinary nature, which responds to the growing diversity of types of museums and collections, but also to the diversity of challenges that these institutions encounter (social, anthropological, economic, technical, etc.)

The intellectual models of French museology experienced, during the last decades, an internationalization in several stages. The museological team gathered around Jean Davallon at the University of Avignon built a specific international PhD in collaboration with the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM). This association produced numerous PhD theses related to topics of Museum Studies and articles that were, nearly exclusively, published in *Culture et Musées*. In spite of its incontestable success, the Avignon team was

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<sup>41</sup> Galard 1993.

<sup>42</sup> For an up-to-date survey of the activities of French social sciences regarding heritage and museums today see *Patrimoines. Enjeux contemporains de la recherche* 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Ballé and Poulot 2020.

not able to gain recognition beyond a small circle of specialists, distant from the largest universities and institutions of professional education. Museological education at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (National Museum of Natural History)<sup>44</sup> suffers from the same troubles, and has produced fewer dissertations.

Finally, the appearance of two journals made research in museology available to the scientific community within the humanities and social sciences. *Publics et Musées* was financed by the French Ministry of Culture, specifically the section for museums (*Musées de France / Département de la politique des publics*) and published by Lyon University Press between 1992 and 2002.<sup>45</sup> The other publication was the first version of the *Lettre de l'Ocim*, which related to museums belonging to the Ministry of National Education, not Culture, and was published in Dijon (1988-2003).<sup>46</sup> It was designed to disseminate the results of inquiries in academic museology among the curators of these institutions. This geography of journals vis-à-vis French museology seems curiously provincial according to the norms of academic and cultural centralization and thus somehow testifies to the marginal nature of Museology in academia, in comparison with the École du Louvre and the National Institute of Heritage. During this period then, French museology was characterized by the *Louvre effect*, a triumph of the museum and of the École of the same name, which managed to impose its choices as the legitimate ones, with the expertise of some innovative curators, and of museologists who were newcomers to the academic scene.

Nevertheless, the opening of the Quai Branly Museum (MQB) introduced new perspectives to the museological community, especially through the choices made by its research department under the guidance of Anne-Christine Taylor, a brilliant anthropologist. Double tutelage by the Ministry for Higher Education and Research on one hand, and of Culture on the other, was certainly an advantage for the MQB, comparable to the former collaboration between CNRS and the Museum of ATP (Musée des arts et traditions populaires), even if, in the everyday life of the institution and professions, this collaboration is not evident. Particularly, seminars and symposiums of MQB were related to the actuality and richness of international research crossing anthropology and museology.

This situation falls within the long intellectual history of folklore studies

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.mnhn.fr/en>. Accessed June 4, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Sites-thematiques/Connaissance-des-patrimoines/Connaissance-des-publics>. Accessed May 11, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>46</sup> See <https://journals.openedition.org/ocim/>. Accessed May 11, 2021 (editors' note).

on the one hand, and on the other, the particular administrative framework, namely the Mission du patrimoine ethnologique (Mission of Ethnological Heritage), which over the last generation promoted research and publications about museology and identity. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture initiated a vivid dialogue with the different museological approaches developed in Quebec, in search of a know-how regarding the inventory of intangible heritage: this proves the richness of the Francophone *milieux* in museology.

### *Museology as a by-product of political and institutional changes*

Ever since the launching of the Beaubourg Centre under President Pompidou, all grand presidential projects were scrutinized vis-à-vis their museological choices, in the broadest sense of the term, and became caught in the political and ideological confrontations of the time. Museum curators could not participate in these discussions because of their obligation to confidentiality that was sometimes clearly formulated by the State, and at others, a simple precaution. In any case, it was only under a pseudonym, like 'Jean Clair', that curators could intervene in the public debate in a willingly polemical manner. On the other hand—and these two aspects are surely not coincidental—the debates largely exceeded museology, often *de facto* identified with museography, in other words, the discussion about the technical aspects of museum work. Indeed, it was in relation to the Beaubourg Centre as a whole rather than regarding this or that programme at the Musée National d' Art Moderne (National Museum of Modern Art), which was part of Beaubourg / Centre Georges Pompidou, that the debate started to appear in the intellectual journals. Interventions by Jean Baudrillard, who became famous through his reflections upon the 'system of objects' and the philosophy of collection—therefore, a field approaching that of museums—were remarkable in this regard.<sup>47</sup> Afterwards, the journal *Traverses*, issued by the Beaubourg Centre of Industrial Creation (*Centre de Création Industrielle*, or CCI), dedicated issues or articles to the reflection on heritage and museums. At the same time, the analysis by Eliseo Verón on the activities of the visitors to the library of the Beaubourg Centre (BPI or *Bibliothèque public d'information*) represented an important moment in the upcoming trend of visitor studies concerning exhibitions and museums.

Collections and museums not concerned with art or art history fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education rather than that of

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<sup>47</sup> Baudrillard 1968.

the Ministry of Culture. In 1983-1984, the Direction des Bibliothèques, des Musées et de l'Information Scientifique et Technique (Directory of Libraries, Museums and Scientific and Technical Information, DBMIST), within the ministry in charge of higher education, planned a cooperative technical centre to serve all museums connected with national education. This was named Office de Coopération et d'Information Muséographiques (Office of Museographic Cooperation and Information, OCIM). Its goal was 'to find a solution to the technical isolation of numerous museums and sections of natural history of the provinces and to support their development through intertwining among them, when needed, on three levels, of formation, of technical assistance and of documentation'.<sup>48</sup> Created in January 1985 at the University of Montpellier to be at the service of the provincial museums, OCIM was subsequently transferred to the University of Bourgogne in Dijon in 1988, where it published a journal, *La Lettre de l'OCIM*, with 300 copies distributed every two months.<sup>49</sup> The First International Exhibition of Museographical Techniques (*Salon International des Techniques Muséographiques*, SITEM) was also organized in Dijon on behalf of the ministry in charge of higher education. It now takes place in the Louvre Carrousel in Paris, organizing lectures and colloquia about new museums or those under renovation.

The Quai Branly Museum (now Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum) decided to publish its own journal, *Gradhiva*, which claims to be a journal dedicated to the history of anthropology, with a close relation to history, if not art history, or at least to museum visual culture. A part of *Gradhiva* is devoted to the history of exhibitions and ethnographical museums, with issues related to 'difficult pasts' in regards to museology. In the academic field, apart from some journals dedicated to communication studies (*Hermès*, in particular) that publish articles on museology from time to time, the journal *Publics et Musées* mentioned above claimed to be 'the first scientific Francophone journal of museology'.<sup>50</sup> This journal testifies to North American influence, such as the importation of principles and techniques of evaluation in the studies of French museums; the first idea of the founders was in fact to make it a French version of *ILVS Review: A Journal of Visitor Behavior* (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee). An orientation towards science muse-

<sup>48</sup> See the website of the institution for a chronology [https://ocim.fr/cles-de-lecture/chronologie/#:~:text=En%201985%20voit%20%C3%A9galement%20le,d%27information%20et%20de%20ressources](https://ocim.fr/cles-de-lecture/chronologie/#:~:text=En%201985%20voit%20%C3%A9galement%20le,d%27information%20et%20de%20ressources;); and the study by Catherine Cuenca (2018).

<sup>49</sup> See <https://journals.openedition.org/ocim/>. Accessed May 11, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>50</sup> See <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Sites-thematiques/Connaissance-des-patrimoines/Connaissance-des-publics>. Accessed May 11, 2021 (editors' note).

ums was very clear, indicated by the presence of Bernard Schiele, the French team's Canadian correspondent.<sup>51</sup> Today, the readership has dwindled, while its museological identity has become a bit blurred.

It is difficult to consider the collective initiative of the Dictionary of Museology (*Dictionnaire de muséologie*) as French museology, because it was the initiative of André Desvallées in the context of ICOFOM, the section of ICOM dedicated to theoretical reflection and to the questions of education within the organization. Therefore, the book was, originally, an international glossary of museological terms, adapted to the needs of ICOM's working meetings, conferences and symposia.<sup>52</sup> The museology produced by this group testifies to the vitality of the Francophone part of this non-governmental organization, without being proof of the originality of a French museology.

### *The two paradoxes of French museology*

At this point, we must ask: is there a museological discipline in France today, or was there at one time, having now changed into an interdisciplinary subject? French museology was famous since the time of the opening of ATP (*Musée national des arts et traditions populaires*) by Georges-Henri Rivière in 1937 and museology continued to be famous after 1968, with the parallel invention of ecomuseums, or New Museology. On the other hand, the opening of Beaubourg was a decisive turn for art museology, producing some cutting-edge exhibitions of multiple artistic forms, from painting and sculpture to literature, architecture, music, even dance, during the decade from 1970 to 1980. At the Louvre, Régis Michel, a curator at the museum, organized over two decades provocative exhibitions from the writings of Derrida, Foucault, or Lacan, in order to propose a very new manner of looking at works of art.<sup>53</sup>

Simultaneously, the so-called French Theory entered the museological preoccupations of the English-speaking world, and had an important influence on global museology during the last decades, given its academization within the universities. If André Malraux was very influential in the field of aesthetics with his *Museum without walls* (*Musée imaginaire*),<sup>54</sup> and if the

<sup>51</sup> See Schiele 1989 and Davallon et al. 1992.

<sup>52</sup> Desvallées and Mairesse 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Exhibitions curated by Régis Michel include: *Posséder et détruire. Stratégies sexuelles dans l'art d'Occident*, Louvre, 2000; *La peinture comme crime ou 'la part maudite' de la modernité*, Louvre, 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Malraux 1947. The *Musée Imaginaire* is, he says, 'all the knowledge that, in addition to museums, reproductions and albums bring us'.

Louvre curator Germain Bazin's book of lectures from the École du Louvre was regularly quoted in the 1960s,<sup>55</sup> the social scientists of the 1970s replaced them quickly. Pierre Bourdieu, with his renowned visitor study,<sup>56</sup> as well as Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard were considered to be, directly or indirectly, important in the field. For example, Foucault coined the term 'heterotopia', one of the concepts most used and discussed in the global literature on museology.<sup>57</sup> The international circulation of a French-speaking museology, among France, Quebec, Switzerland, and Belgium, is obviously a legacy of this collective renewal of museography and museology. A generation later, it would be difficult to find such critical proposals in the French museums and exhibitions, as well as in the field of museology—even though there are more museums, more exhibitions, and more visitors than thirty years ago.

The other paradox is between oral teaching or communication and written museology. In the academic world, a whole group of university professors and researchers has emerged over these past thirty years, and museology now exists as a sub-discipline. But one must say that this movement has not really benefited from institutional help, from official institutions of the Ministry of Culture, so powerful in the museum field in France. A striking demonstration of this situation is the fact that the last overview by the Ministry of Culture, in its official journal on research in the cultural field titled *Culture et Recherche*, does not mention museology.<sup>58</sup> In fact, at the École du Louvre and for most of the professional training, teaching is without any written production. For example, Michel Colardelle's lectures on exhibitions, displays and social museology at the École du Louvre were very influential, but like Rivière's, were never produced as publications. On the contrary, the French participation in the collective elaboration of museology within ICOM, especially the numerous publications of the ICOFOM group, however important it was, had very few echoes within the national borders, and hardly affected museum professionals. Likewise, the place of French museology in the initiatives for a renovation of Critical Museology, and within the new Association of Critical Heritage Studies, which testifies to the maturation of an international field of research, is quasi insignificant.<sup>59</sup> In some respect, French curators, at least in

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<sup>55</sup> Bazin 1967.

<sup>56</sup> Bourdieu and Darbel 1969.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault 1967.

<sup>58</sup> See *Patrimoines. Enjeux contemporains de la recherche* 2016.

<sup>59</sup> There is a Francophone Network for Critical Heritage Studies, which, according to its website, 'seeks to promote and disseminate French-language research on heritage and herita-



their relation to museology, have always been like the art dealers of the 1960s described by the French sociologist Raymonde Moulin: they know museums as the peasant knows his field<sup>60</sup>—and they consider specialized literature in this respect only valid for social scientists.

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gization to allow for the existence of different epistemological approaches within ACHS and to bring together researchers interested in these studies' (<https://www.criticalheritage-studies.org/francophone-network-rseau-francophone>. Accessed November 20, 2021). But the French presence in terms of university courses in museology is almost insignificant on the site, clear proof of the marginality of French training in this field on an international scale:

See <http://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/post-graduate-courses>. Accessed November 20, 2021. One can compare with the view of training in museology given ten years earlier in a French-language book by Allard and Lefebvre 2001.

<sup>60</sup> Moulin 1967.

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# **Brno museology: the context of museological thinking in the second half of the 20th century**

*Otakar Kirsch, Lenka Mrázová and Lucie Jagošová*

## ***Abstract***

The External Chair of Museology/Department of Museology in Brno (former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, today Czech Republic), founded in 1963, is known to the professional community mainly for its specific and original concept of museology. Researchers engaged in museology regarded and still regard museology as an autonomous scientific discipline, for which they defined its particular object of study based on social and anthropological aspects, with its own system, terminology and methodology. As far as the so-called Brno School of Museology is concerned, its most significant representatives were Jan Jelínek (1926-2004), Chairman of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in the 1970s, and Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský (1926-2016). Stránský was the main author of the general concept; he saw the primary objectives of the discipline in the establishment of theoretical foundations for the professionalization and higher functional quality of Czechoslovakian museums and the related education of museum workers. His ideas went in many regards beyond the boundaries of ideologized science in former Eastern Bloc countries, and also reacted to topical social problems. It was also for these reasons that these ideas met with a wide international response, which was supported to a considerable extent by the founding of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) in 1976 with the active participation of the Brno academic department, and since 1987 also by the International Summer School of Museology (ISSOM) courses organized by the above-mentioned department. The curriculum and professional profile of the present-day museology department in Brno in many regards builds on some of Stránský's ideas by addressing mainly the problems of historical museology, museum exhibitions and museum pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Czechoslovakian museology, Chair of Museology, Brno, Stránský, ICOFOM



## *Introduction*

The present chapter deals with the origins of the Brno Chair of Museology resulting from the development and traditions of museums in the Czech lands (institutionalized in an academic environment already in the 1920s with the foundation of the Lectorate in Museum Studies) and the cultural situation in former Czechoslovakia, considerably influenced by communist ideology. Then, it analyzes the founding process itself and further development tightly associated with the Moravian Museum in Brno, and outlines the specialization of the institution under review in the context of national (Centre for Museology Tuition, Cabinet of Museum and Local History Work – Prague) and foreign (Zagreb, Leipzig, Moscow, Amsterdam) museological centres. It also pays attention to two most significant personalities, namely Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský and Jan Jelínek, who gave the institution a clear and quite specific character. It will mainly assess their role in building museological theory based on a specific human relation to reality,<sup>1</sup> which even today fundamentally influences the attitude to the museum phenomenon. The article also discusses the participation of the Brno School of Museology in international professional associations and its active involvement in the management of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and in the founding of its sub-committee, the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), within which museological questions became the topic of many debates and polemics. Furthermore, the chapter examines specific actions of international significance, which include the publishing of a professional periodical *Muzeologické sešity* (Museological papers), and the establishment of the Summer School of Museology and the UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage, which were closely linked to Brno museology. The educational activities of the Chair of Museology and the Centre of Museology at Brno are outlined, analysing the cultural changes in their curricula during the 1960s and 1990s by following the distinct political and cultural changes in contemporaneous society.

## *Beginnings of museological thinking in the Czech lands*

The innovative and still valid conception of the discipline implemented by the Brno School of Museology was based to a considerable extent on a mixture of earlier opinions about the museum phenomenon in the Czech lands. Its

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<sup>1</sup> This main concept of the Brno School of Museology will be discussed below.

creators, led by Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský (1926-2016), who were still mostly formed by the academic milieu of the democratic regime of the Czechoslovak Republic, intentionally followed the legacy of their predecessors (e.g. John Amos Comenius, František Palacký, Kliment Čermák, Jiří Neustupný).<sup>2</sup> Their work, which focused on the problem of private and museum collections, echoed not only domestic motifs but also the traditional openness towards ideas and trends coming from abroad. Particularly active in this regard was Jaroslav Helfert, who in the years 1921-1951 (with a short break during World War II) headed the so-called *Lektorát muzejnictví* (Lectorate in Museum Studies) at the Faculty of Arts in Brno, where he regularly offered lectures and tutorials to his students on theoretical as well as practical topics from the field of museology.<sup>3</sup>

However, in the early 1960s, the society-wide release from tight restraints in former Czechoslovakia played a fundamental role in the emergence and subsequent implementation of ideas which are characteristic of the Brno School. The ruling Communist Party's previous restrictive policy in the field of culture and museums was ruffled with increasing intensity by closer contacts with colleagues from Western Europe and North America, realized in the form of joint sub-committee meetings within ICOM,<sup>4</sup> but the traditional forms of cooperation with representatives of socialist countries (above all USSR, GDR, Poland) were still maintained. The state authorities themselves gradually created a larger milieu, even though in full accordance with the ideological doctrine, for a more intensive development and professionalization of museum work. Several crucial points occurred in quick succession: the establishment of a methodical centre for museums after a Soviet model called *Kabinet muzejní a vlastivědné práce* (Cabinet of Museums and Local History Work, 1956); implementation of a museum law (1959); and the emergence of three developmental conceptions of the discipline which mainly emphasized public education in museums in the years 1959-1964.<sup>5</sup> In this way it was possible to put into practice some theoretical approaches that had been partly suppressed by the totalitarian regime after the publication of Neustupný's fundamental work reflecting the problem of general and special

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<sup>2</sup> These personalities have often been contrasted with the general situation within museums in the Czech lands, which for a long time relied on a non-professional and dilettante base. University tuition was intended to enhance the qualifications of museum workers and raise the general level of the discipline. See e.g. Jelínek 1966, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Kirsch and Jagošová 2013, 3-16.

<sup>4</sup> Douša 2005, 144-146.

<sup>5</sup> Douša 2005, 126.

museologies.<sup>6</sup> Approximately at that time the editorial series *Muzejní práce* (Museum Work)<sup>7</sup> and the periodical *Muzejní a vlastivědná práce* (Museum and Local History Work), which provided new information and approaches with regard to museums, started to be published. Also in the early 1960s, regular meetings were organized on the topic of visitor studies.<sup>8</sup> Museum workers were gradually becoming aware of museology,<sup>9</sup> but the question remained how to organize and coordinate these efforts in the best possible way and how to give them direction.

### *Founding and initial activities of the external Chair*

In this quite unclear situation it was the Moravian Museum in Brno (hereinafter MM) which vigorously took the initiative. Of crucial importance was the establishment of the Museological Department at the Museum on 1 January 1963, upon a previous proposal by Stránský. He and Museum Director Jan Jelínek conceived it from the very beginning as a centre whose intent was to significantly influence Czechoslovakian museums in both theoretical and methodological aspects. One of the crucial aspirations of the Department already from the beginning was to educate and train new museum workers at Brno University. The elaborated plan for establishing an external Chair of Museology was unanimously approved, with Jelínek appointed the first Chair, in a meeting of the Scientific Board of the Faculty of Arts at Brno on 5 December 1963. It was oriented towards postgraduate students. Tuition eventually began in the 1964/65 academic year, but even before this, an intensive discussion had been held on its profile and specialization, which proved to be of key importance to the later concept of *man's specific relation to reality*—and the pursuit of museology as an independent and autonomous scientific discipline.

The research activities of the Chair and the closely related Museological Department exhibited an effort to refine individual ideas and at the same

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<sup>6</sup> Neustupný 1950, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Published since 1957 by the Cabinet of Museums and Local History Work in cooperation with the National Museum Society. Up to 1968, a total of 13 volumes were published, which dealt for example, with the curation of museum collections (1957), the relationship between museum and school (1958), museum libraries (1965), museum conservation (1967) and contemporary documentation (1968).

<sup>8</sup> The seminars were held in Zlín beginning in 1965, and stopped in the 2nd half of the 1970s. They were revived after the November upheaval, in 2003.

<sup>9</sup> 'The awareness of museology penetrates into the thinking of museum workers as an important factor of their work and education', Douša 2005, 125. All translations from the Czech are by the authors unless otherwise noted.

time promote the new museological concept which, besides an extended tuition, also supposed additional outcomes in the form of seminars and publications.<sup>10</sup> Entirely fundamental in this regard became the Museological Symposium at Brno in March 1965, which, having been initiated by the newly-established Chair, tried to open a professional discussion on the character and subject of museology, demonstrate the topicality of the issue, familiarize as many museum workers as possible with the topics treated by the Chair, and create a base for activities of the Chair which would be open to a wider and deeper engagement of museologists and museum workers.<sup>11</sup> The symposium was mainly intended to open a discussion on the two basic questions posed by Jan Jelínek in his opening speech, namely: What is the essence of museology? And which is currently the best and most suitable form of museology tuition? Jelínek also commented on the objections constantly brought by the Czech museum and academic community against museology tuition at universities, which referred to the fact that museology was not yet generally recognized as a true scientific discipline. These objections often complicated the professional discussions on museology and, as it turned out later despite the considerable professional success and functional viability of the Chair, hindered the possibilities of development of the discipline for several subsequent decades until the very end of Stránský's activity at the Faculty of Arts at Brno. At the symposium, among others, Stránský presented a crucial paper where he generated the basic starting points from which he built up and later refined his conception of museology as a science. Stránský addressed the essence of museology, its subject, system, methods and the questions of its classification, as well as the problems of museology tuition on the basis of a reflection of the current situation and the analysis of teaching systems used at that time by individual educational centres around the world in comparison with the current first curriculum of the Brno Chair.<sup>12</sup> The Chair's staff thus very clearly declared in the symposium their effort 'to build up this Chair as a true centre of scientific, research and educational work in the field of museology at the level of analogous Chairs in other disciplines'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the given problem see Rutar 2014, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Jelínek 1966, 7; Stránský 1966a, 3. Cf. note 67.

<sup>12</sup> Stránský developed and elaborated all the starting points appearing later in the repeatedly published and always thoroughly revised work *Úvod do muzeologie* (Introduction to museology) or *Úvod do studia muzeologie* (Introduction to museological studies) (1972, 1979, 1984, 1995, 2000); this text pays further attention to these starting points. Stránský 1966b, 10-17.

<sup>13</sup> Stránský 1972, 13.

Even though the consolidation and refinement of museological theory had mainly taken place within an academic milieu, it was formed for other purposes and other needs of the Museological Department, which had to influence (also ideologically) the activities of the museum institutions subordinate to the MM.<sup>14</sup> The theory was not intended to be closed in the academic community, but to represent a starting point and at the same time a standard for museum practice. Corresponding to this purpose, after all, was the original composition of the curriculum of the external Chair, at that time the only Chair of Museology in Central Europe.<sup>15</sup> The content of the four-term postgraduate programme addressed the problems of the subject and essence of museology and its relationship to related disciplines, the theory of museum documentation and thesaurisation,<sup>16</sup> and theoretical questions of museum presentation and museum exhibitions. It also reflected on museology in relation to individual disciplines employed in museums, the issues of conservation and preservation of collections, etc.<sup>17</sup> The concept of postgraduate studies thus represented a certain developmental shift from the practically-oriented Lectorate in Museum Studies, the legacy of which was advocated by Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, to museology as a science.<sup>18</sup> The structure of the postgraduate curriculum consisted of general theoretical themes, followed by a number of specific ones (i.e. special museologies).

Stránský's conception of museology was formed by his multi-spectral education (philosophy, history, musicology) and original professional orientation and was very tightly associated with the build-up of the educational concept of museological studies at Brno. It was based on a profound knowledge of previous development, an extensive study of thematic literature, and a detailed critical comparative analysis of all contemporary training programmes in museology.<sup>19</sup> His approach to the formation of museological theory proceeded from considerations about the tasks and definition of museology in comparison with the other disciplines commonly associated with museum institutions. He declared that museology does not want and cannot replace the cognitive benefit of individual scientific disciplines, but offers its own theoretical background with original knowledge (meaning that it is not, and should not be a mere generalization of experiences from museum practice).

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<sup>14</sup> Kirsch 2014, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Stránský 1972, 13.

<sup>16</sup> See below note 54

<sup>17</sup> Špét 1988, 201-202.

<sup>18</sup> Špét 1988, 201-202.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Stránský 1972.

He reacted to the contemporary perception of the problem of museum work, remarking that despite distinct progress in the discipline in the past years, 'it was not yet possible to assert the general recognition of museology as a taught subject and to set the rule that the completion of these studies is a precondition of professional work in museums'.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to the abovementioned intention to advocate museology as an independent science conditioning museum practice, Stránský drew from the beginning a clear distinction between the museological and the museographic level, where museographic knowledge (in the sense of methods and techniques of museum work) only supplements the tuition, while the focal point rests in the museological system. He understood this concept as a condition of the qualitative change of museum work as a whole.<sup>21</sup> With his system he defined the terms 'museum' and 'museology' so that they share a mutual relation, even though he derived the formation of museology from the analysis of the historical development of museums, putting the main emphasis on the philosophical dimension of the activity of collecting. Stránský found the essence of museological thinking in a thorough examination of the *specific museum relationship of man to reality*, that is, a targeted and structured effort to preserve objects, despite the nature of change and demise, as evidence of a temporal context conditioned by the moment of object authenticity vis-à-vis its value as a quality bearer. Of crucial importance, however, is not only the preservation but mainly the implementation of these values within society.<sup>22</sup> He thus generated an entirely new term, 'museality' and defined it as an aspect of reality which 'sufficiently justifies that its bearer [i.e. an object bearing attributes of museality] is preserved despite the nature of demise, and is used for further scientific and cultural purposes'.<sup>23</sup> These objects, that is, a collection of items, are defined as museum objects and the recognition of museality is related to the cognitive integration of gnoseological and axiological methodology. At the time, Stránský postulated a system of museology with three basic aspects: 1) a genetic aspect, which contains the history of museums; 2) a theoretical aspect, which was subdivided into the theory of selection, the theory of thesaurisation and the theory of communication; and 3) a practical aspect, the content of which is museography.

State representatives also displayed an interest in Stránský's specific concept. As early as the first half of 1965, the Chair became involved

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<sup>20</sup> Stránský 1972, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Stránský 1972, 23-26.

<sup>22</sup> Stránský 1972, 38-41.

<sup>23</sup> Stránský 1972, 67.

in the solution of one of the state tasks—the issue of theory of museum work.<sup>24</sup> Being partly accepted on a state level, the concept of museology represented by Brno nevertheless did not hold an exclusive position within Czechoslovakia, and it had to cope with the traditional concept represented by Jiří Neustupný and the so-called Prague School of Museology, which since 1967 acquired its organizational base in the newly-established Centre for Museology Tuition at the Charles University in Prague. The proponents of each concept, Stránský and Neustupný, who also had international followers, were rivals to a certain extent. This competitive relationship is discernible in Stránský's critical texts, published in *Časopis Moravského muzea* (Journal of the Moravian Museum) and later in *Muzeologické sešity*. The fundamental contradiction between Stránský's and Neustupný's (and also partly Josef Beneš's) conceptions of museology is mainly evident in their views regarding the subject of museology and the general conception of the discipline. Stránský completely rejected the opinion that the subject of museology would be the museum.<sup>25</sup> He targeted Neustupný's concept and definition, first formulated in 1950,<sup>26</sup> of museology as a relation of key disciplines of general and special museologies.<sup>27</sup> He disagreed with accentuating the importance of special museologies and its determining role, where general museology, according to Neustupný, emerges on the basis of special museologies by generalization of several common attributes.<sup>28</sup> Neustupný's opinions correlate with the idea which sees the base of museology tuition at universities just in special

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<sup>24</sup> Archive of the Moravian Museum, file *Moravské zemské muzeum*, kart. 282 (partly classified). Zápis ze zasedání katedry muzeologie konaného dne 25. června 1965 na muzeologickém oddělení Moravského muzea v Brně.

<sup>25</sup> According to Stránský, the perception of the subject of museology in institutional terms hinders Neustupný and Beneš from gaining deeper access to the interpretation of the relationship between museum work and, for example, the activity of archives, libraries, monument preservation as well as the present information-documentary service. Stránský 1968/69, 238-240.

<sup>26</sup> According to Jiří Neustupný, special museologies of individual disciplines (such as archaeology, philosophy, history, anthropology and others) employed in museums generate knowledge which is common to all disciplines applied to museums. This common base forms the foundations of general museology. General museology itself (similar to museology as such) is thus no science, but a theory and technique derived from the scientific work in museums. General museology is then influenced and determined by the individual special museologies and exhibits a generally normative character. Neustupný 1950, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Stránský 1968/69, 219.

<sup>28</sup> According to Neustupný 'the basis of museums consists in specialized collections and specialized activity, and that is why special museologies forms the basic breeding ground, which is able to give rise to general museology', Stránský 1968/69, 229.

museologies. The perception of the relationship and accentuation of general versus special museologies held by both authors might be best demonstrated by comparing the original curriculum of museological studies at Brno University, which strongly reflected the concept by Neustupný, to subsequent modifications made to the curriculum after Stránský.

Despite this often quite polemic discussion, these two approaches and their representatives often cooperated, particularly within the organization of museological studies. Stránský himself wrote later to Neustupný that his critical evaluation ought to be seen in favour of the discipline and should have promoted its development, and he remarked that he would regard Neustupný's work as 'a significant contribution towards solving fundamental problems of our museology'.<sup>29</sup> Stránský respected Neustupný for being the first to scientifically assess the possibilities of forming a museology, fully aware of the problem, and at the same time present his own conception, all under the local conditions of the time. This, according to Stránský, played an important role in the process of defining the theory of museum work and rightly received wide international recognition.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, the activities of Brno museologists always reached audiences abroad, where they sparked considerable interest. The reason for the successful dissemination of the Brno School's ideas was that the School actively followed the international trends and published respective articles in the worldwide museological production, which was entirely unique in the era of socialist countries. The Museological Department provided translations of crucial foreign articles from the specialized literature, particularly museological periodicals—e.g. *Curator*, *Revista Muzeelor* (Museum Journal), *Neue Museumskunde* (New Museum Work), *Muzeologija* (Museology)—and other texts from international conferences and seminars. Important to overcoming the cultural isolation of the Eastern Bloc at that time was also the fact that Jan Jelínek was active in the executive bodies of ICOM,<sup>31</sup> which not only provided the inflow of necessary literature, but also helped to establish personal contacts. These resulted, mainly in the second half of the 1960s, in the organization of several events. Among them was a meeting with museum workers from the German Democratic Republic in 1967, which mainly addressed the

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<sup>29</sup> Stránský also invited Neustupný to express his opinion on the positive and negative critiques of his work *Muzeum a věda*. Archive of the National Museum, file *Středisko pro výuku muzeologie* (partly classified), kart. 3 – Agenda 1967-1970, folder agenda 1970. Letter from Z. Z. Stránský to J. Neustupný from 18 May 1970.

<sup>30</sup> Stránský 1976, 190.

<sup>31</sup> Lehmannová 2015, 82-83.



problem of the relationship between museology and contemporary science, and more importantly, the first meeting of museology professors which took place at Brno that same year.<sup>32</sup> The conference, whose chairman was the founder of Museology Studies at Leicester, Raymond Singleton, also provided the impetus to establish an international committee for museology tuition at ICOM – International Committee for the Training of Personnel.<sup>33</sup> The last grand event in the golden 1960s was the seminar titled Introduction to Museology, with the active participation of many foreign experts. It was conceived as a scholarly debate with German chosen as the seminar language.<sup>34</sup>

*Under the 'protective wings' of archaeology towards the development of the discipline at home and abroad*

Brno museology underwent quite difficult times full of contradictions in the 1970s. Jan Jelínek was mainly occupied with his function as Chairman of ICOM, but even in this top position he still actively promoted the activities of the Chair of Museology. During the late 1960s, in the short period of political liberalization known as the Prague Spring, which ended with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact, the main author of the whole museological conception, Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, was removed for some time from his position as Head of the Museological (at that time already Methodical-Museological) Department.<sup>35</sup> The main conflicts, however, arose in its relationship to the founding body of the Moravian Museum, that is, the South Moravian Regional People's Committee,<sup>36</sup> which, in the critical 1970s strived to considerably strengthen its activities in terms of method and also exert control through the totalitarian regime. The concept of museology itself, which had been criticized for its non-Marxist origins and positions,<sup>37</sup> got into a defensive position at the University. This process resulted in its being

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<sup>32</sup> Rutar 2014, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Stránský 1974a, 19.

<sup>34</sup> The proceedings of the seminar were published in Vašíček 1971. Publishing the periodical in this world language significantly helped to disseminate the theoretical ideas of the Brno School to central European countries.

<sup>35</sup> *Methodics* means creating and communicating the best procedures and their implementation into 'good practice'. The reason for the existence of these centres is to support the practice (not the theory and methodology).

<sup>36</sup> State administrative body in the then higher-level territorial self-governing unit, the South Moravian Region, which had its centre in Brno.

<sup>37</sup> Stránský himself remembered that the term 'non-Marxist idealist' had been wielded by many with pleasure as the 'proper club' to silence his opinions, Stránský 2001, 2759-2760.

merged with the Chair of Archaeology, to become the Chair of Archaeology and Museology in 1977.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, however, the concept of museology preferred at Brno became more and more recognized abroad. Contacts were established with institutes in former Yugoslavia, Finland, Austria, but also Japan and India. In this period the first publications appeared, comprehensively outlining the conclusions of the Brno School of Museology and summing up the developments over the past decade. Nevertheless, the basic platform for publication of views and opinions by the Brno School became the journal *Muzeologické sešity* (1969-1986)—a true professional museological periodical which reflected the local and currently discussed problems of the discipline, such as the theoretical basis of the discipline and terminology (museological discourse), education in museology, documentation of the present, historical museology, and museum presentation. The pages of the periodical reflected to a considerable extent the then personalities linked with the discipline and the Brno University milieu (Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, Jan Jelínek, Vilém Hank, Ladislav Págo, Vladimír Jůva Sr., Evžen Schneider, Oskar Brůža, Petr Šuleř, Věra Schubertová, and others).

The efforts to maintain contacts abroad continued even in this complicated period. Jelínek's prominent position at ICOM during two electoral terms ensured him sufficient contacts which, together with those established earlier, were utilized to found ICOFOM. This body, in whose origins and management Czechoslovakian museum experts (Jan Jelínek, Vinoš Sofka) played an important role, acted as a platform for theoretical museology recognized by experts in the discipline, and contributed to the consolidation and refinement of museum research. Its programme and conception were also significantly influenced by Stránský.<sup>39</sup> Besides traditional symposia, the *Museological Working Papers* also became a forum for Stránský's ideas, presenting in its second issue his vision of museology as an independent and autonomous discipline.<sup>40</sup> Another periodical, *ICOFOM Study Series*,<sup>41</sup> which published the

<sup>38</sup> Kirsch 2014, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Preserved are, for example, his proposals and plans for future activities of ICOM from the mid-1980s. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (Department of Archaeology and Museology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic) (unclassified), folder: ICOM, ICOFOM. Návrh další činnosti International Committee for Museology – ICOM na léta 1983-1986.

<sup>40</sup> <http://icofom.mini.icom.museum/publications-2/museological-working-papers>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> <http://icofom.mini.icom.museum/publications-2/icofom-study-series-archive>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

latest knowledge in the field of museology and opinions by significant representatives of the discipline, contained essays not only by Stránský but also by other representatives of Brno museology. Edited for many years by Vinoš Sofka who emigrated when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the armies of the Warsaw Pact, this periodical published texts written by other Czech museologists, such as Josef Beneš, Petr Šuleř, Vladimír Tkáč, Evžen Schneider, and Jan Jelínek during the 1980s and 1990s. In monothematic issues, they joined the professional museological discussion on problems such as methodology of museology and professional training, museum, territory and society, museum collecting, originals and copies in museums, museology and identity, museology and museums, museology and developing countries, language of exhibitions, object-document, etc.

Another significant international activity carried out within ICOM was Stránský's participation in the multilingual *Dictionarium museologicum*, a compendium whose publication in 1986 contained entries in a total of twenty languages. The international community was more and more awakened to the ideas of the Brno School and above all of Stránský himself. These ideas found their way not only to museologists in socialist countries but frequently also to colleagues in Austria, West Germany, Netherlands and Sweden (e.g. Waidacher, van Mensch).<sup>42</sup> They also gradually began to penetrate into the Anglo-Saxon milieu, which had until then been quite inaccessible. Even though they mostly gained appreciation, Stránský's concepts encountered a polemic wave which arose primarily in the traditional and at the same time conservative bastion of museology—German Democratic Republic. The Czechoslovakian researcher was very sharply critiqued especially by the 'crown prince' of East German museology, Klaus Schreiner, even though the latter maintained lively work contacts with Stránský for many years. On the one hand Schreiner appreciated the benefit of Stránský's work, but on the other criticized his general conception, which he supposed would lead Stránský 'to a dubious closeness of bourgeoisie-idealistic moral values and therewith in the end to non-Marxist and unscientific opinions'.<sup>43</sup>

Over the years, Stránský gradually refined his system in accordance with the newest museological and general philosophical knowledge.<sup>44</sup> In his inau-

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<sup>42</sup> Most recently on the reception of Stránský's concepts abroad see *Museologica Brunensia* 2016.

<sup>43</sup> The critique appears in Schreiner 1983, 4. For the subsequent discussion by East German museologists regarding Stránský's ideas see Hanslok 2008, 109-119.

<sup>44</sup> This development can be followed in the revisions to the repeatedly published *Introduction to museological studies (Úvod do studia muzeologie)*, but the whole genesis of Stránský's

gural dissertation<sup>45</sup> from 1992 he defines ‘metamuseology’ as a precondition of this system and understands it as an inevitable substance which provides an organic interconnection between museology and contemporary philosophical and scientific thinking, mediates a penetration of these factors into the structure of museology and at the same time enables a critical reflection of itself.<sup>46</sup> ‘Metamuseology precedes museology as an inspirer of its forming, but acts also in reverse direction as a corrector. This of course does not mean that it stands apart from museology: it permeates through it but is not identical with it.’<sup>47</sup> In postulating metamuseology, Stránský develops not only the philosophical and historical context of museology and refines the relationship between museology and museography which was outlined earlier, but, above all, addresses its logical composition (the subject of museology, its methodology, terminology, structure and position in the system of sciences) as well as the definition of a museological profession and the process of education and training in this profession.<sup>48</sup>

He derives the system of museology from the paradigm outlined and supports it with a detailed knowledge of the museum phenomenon. He formulates it as a model which is based on museum practice and returns to it, being enriched with basic philosophical and theoretical starting points, and only in this practice does it come to its fulfilment. The earlier outlined concept of museology as a specific ‘learning of natural and social reality in a museum semantic shift and the means and forms by which we achieve it’<sup>49</sup> is followed by two basic levels—diachronic and synchronic—which form the gnoseological base for the distinction of component disciplines studying the structure of museology. The diachronic level is covered by historical museology, the synchronic level then by social/structural, later also contemporary

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conception resulted in a shift and refinement of the system in his inaugural dissertation *De Museologia* (Stránský 1992).

<sup>45</sup> According to the academic system in the Czech Republic, the lowest level in the hierarchy of postgraduate titles is Dr (holding a PhD), next is Doc (Docent, awarded after habilitation work and the evaluation of other academic work), and the top is Prof (Professor, which is awarded by the President and usually refers to heads of universities, faculties or departments). To become a professor one must hold the academic title Professor, and to become a docent one must hold the academic title of Docent; it is not enough simply to hold a PhD. Stránský never became a professor, but with this inaugural dissertation, he became a docent.

<sup>46</sup> Stránský 1992, 9-10.

<sup>47</sup> Stránský 1992, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Stránský 1992, 11-156.

<sup>49</sup> Stránský 1992, 160.

museology. The core of the cognitive system consists of theoretical museology which has its counterpart in practical/applied museology. These four disciplines are considered by Stránský the true content of general museology, with the remark that it is necessary to add to these the special (later he calls them specialized) museologies because they permeate through all four areas.<sup>50</sup> For better illustration, Stránský orders his system in a numerical format: 0) metamuseology; 1) historical museology; 2) social museology; 3) theoretical museology; 4) applied museology; and 5) special museology/ies. However, he emphasizes that metamuseology is not an organic museology; they are only related. He also points to the dynamism and mutual relations of all components in this system, which should remain open to new philosophical, scientific and social impulses.<sup>51</sup>

Besides a thorough definition of the subject, methods and the subsystem common to all of the four basic areas, Stránský refines his view on their further specific aspects. For example, he pays attention to the periodization of historical museology or the problem of awareness of museality and objectification within social museology, where Stránský, having already defined museality as a value, also works with the term ‘musealization’.<sup>52</sup> His preference for this term resulted from his ever-more profound work with the term ‘museality’, from becoming aware of this museality and from the characteristic of a special type of documentation which is conditioned by the moment of museality.<sup>53</sup> In his inaugural dissertation he then regards the musealization of reality (and its means and forms) as the true subject of museology.<sup>54</sup> As regards theoretical museology, he divides its system into the theory of selection, theory of thesaurization, and in comparison with the original theory of communication he shifts theoretically to a more typical theory of presentation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Stránský refers in brief to a terminological problem with special museologies, which might either signify special issues in museology as such, or it might be a term of special museology used in plural and reflecting museological disciplines associated with scientific branches involved in museum work. He also deals with the often disputably understood term general museology, where he remarks that using this attribute is merely a terminological distinction from these special museologies in order to emphasize the generality of the cognitive approach; under this term we thus understand museology as such. See Stránský 1992, 160-163, cf. Stránský 2000a.

<sup>51</sup> Stránský 1992, 163-164.

<sup>52</sup> The process of musealization is regarded by Stránský as the acquisition of museality in discussions with W. Ennenbach, later H. Lübbe, cf. Ennenbach 1979, 1-8; Lübbe 1990, 40-49.

<sup>53</sup> For example Stránský 1974b, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Stránský 1992, 121; cf. Rutar 2014, 4-11, as well as van Mensch 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Stránský’s theory of selection and that of thesaurization cover the more common term of col-

Similarly, he also focuses on the system of museography, and in the context of contemporaneous museology he divides museography into museum management, museum marketing, museum architecture, museum conservation, museum documentation, museum exhibitions, museum public relations and museum promotion.<sup>56</sup> As to the question of the assignment of special museologies, he continues to rationalize their existence as particular scientific branches employed in museums: 'The tendency to distinguish special museology, or special museologies, is based on a contraposition of the abstract and concrete, general and special'.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, in his system Stránský respects this category as well-established but refines its substance in relation to previous categories. Openness and flexibility of the system is shown by the fact that in later texts he divides these special museologies according to disciplines into concrete museologies, that is those which are dealing with the musealization of particular components of natural or human reality, and integrated museologies, that is a true application of knowledge and methods of social sciences to the museological sphere (e.g. museum pedagogy, museum sociology, etc.) Stránský appreciates the benefit of these sub-disciplines, but refers to risks in the perception of their content<sup>58</sup> and remarks that it should always be a mutual interdisciplinary relationship. At that time he also began to deal with the problem of ecomuseology, which he further developed during his employment at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, working from its branch campus at Banská Štiavnica.<sup>59</sup>

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lecting, namely how to choose and select as well as how to make a professional thesaurus. His theory of presentation covers the terms museum exhibition and museum education (as an interpretative approach to audiences) with museum communication at an informative level.

<sup>56</sup> Later, Stránský narrows the division from eight to six sub-disciplines: museum management; museum environment; museum information; museum conservation; museum exhibitions; and museum public relations, see Stránský and Stránská 2000. At approximately the same time, he modifies it terminologically into the following sub-disciplines: organization and management; environment; information; conservation; exhibitions; and public relations, see Stránský and Stránská 2000, 89-94.

<sup>57</sup> Stránský 1992, 241; cf. Stránský 2000b, 104-108, as well as Stránský 2000c, 131-134.

<sup>58</sup> For example museum pedagogy, which is still rather regarded as specialized pedagogy instead of specialized museology, sometimes even only as pedagogy employed in museums, see Stránský 2000a, 78-91.

<sup>59</sup> For example Stránský and Stránská 2000, 97-101.

### *On two fronts towards social change*

The ongoing domestic and foreign professional contacts of the Brno School of Museology were intensively utilized in the project of the International Summer School of Museology (ISSOM). Under the organizational management of Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský (who was later replaced as Director of ISSOM by Krasimír Damjanov and subsequently, after the integration of ISSOM into the UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage,<sup>60</sup> by Vינוš Sofka) and some other pedagogues of the Brno Museological Department, ISSOM gradually gained both the respect of foreign experts and the interest of participants. The realization of the project (1987-1999) represents the next significant step in the participation of Czech museology in the international scene,<sup>61</sup> and it also enhanced the University curriculum by adding regular short-term courses taught by prominent personalities of international museology (e.g. Bernard Deloche, André Desvallées, Wilhelm Ennenbach, Wojciech Gluziński, Marc Maure, Peter van Mensch, Martin R. Schärer, Tereza Scheiner, Tomislav Šola, Hildegard Viereg, Friedrich Waidacher and many others). Besides the basic module A – General Museology (outlined as metamuseology, historical museology, sociomuseology, theoretical museology, museography), further modules were gradually specified: module B – Collections: Collecting, Selection, Thesaurisation (collecting, selection, thesaurisation, the future of museum collections); module C – Museum Communication and Education (the importance of communication, museum communication, communication by means of presentation, creation of museum exhibitions, evaluation and feedback, communication without presentation, the future of museum communication);<sup>62</sup> and finally a specialized module D

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<sup>60</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file 1999 ISSOM, subfile Návrh reorganizace.

<sup>61</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Kolegium děkana – zápisy z kolegia, subfile Děkanát 1993. Profilování oboru muzeologie pro doktorandská studia na VŠ (z 20. ledna 1993; Zbyněk Z. Stránský), 1-2. Cf. Podborský 2008, 16. The preparation of ISSOM was also mentioned in a television programme, popularising the museological discipline. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), Klíče k minulosti: Muzeologie [CD-ROM]. Brno: ČST Brno, ve spolupráci s Moravským muzeem Brno, Muzeem města Brna a Filozofickou fakultou UJEP Brno, 1985, 00:40:22–01:22:32. The guests on the TV show hosted by Dušan Uhlíř were Josef Kuba, Radko, M. Pernička, and Zbyněk Z. Stránský.

<sup>62</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Studijní texty. International Summer School of Museology/École Internationale D'Été de Museologie. Brno: Masaryk University, The Moravian Museum (no date), p. 18.

focusing on the collection-building strategies of museums at the threshold of the new millennium.<sup>63</sup>

A detailed view of the first ten years of ISSOM courses since the beginning of module A is presented in a comprehensive analytical study, which interprets the quantitative data on individual lectures, lecturers and participants and includes the results of a questionnaire survey carried out among the participants.<sup>64</sup> Besides its main aim, that is the summer courses, ISSOM also carried out other activities, for example the co-organization of international conferences and symposia.<sup>65</sup> During the period of its activities, ISSOM managed to establish itself and hold its position in the field of international education in museology, thus honourably meeting the demand of the time (until the end of the 1990s). For the organizers and interested parties, ISSOM gradually opened a spectrum of new forms and possibilities for international professional meetings.

In the course of its development, the Brno Chair of Museology was by no means a project of only a few outstanding individuals working on a marginal issue, even though its function relied on external teachers.<sup>66</sup> In the beginning it was mainly associated with employees of the Museological Department at the Moravian Museum (Jan Jelínek, Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, Vilém Hank) and the National Museum in Prague (Jiří Neustupný, Zoroslava Drobná). During the existence of postgraduate museology studies, dozens of personalities from among theoreticians, academics and representatives of museum practice, including graduates from these studies, have played the role of teacher.<sup>67</sup> The connecting link and unifying line of study was the original specific concept of museology put forth by Stránský.

Besides the impact on postgraduate students, the Brno School of Museology also continued to influence its graduates and the wider professional community. By organising museological seminars in the course of the 1980s it nurtured professional discussion on key questions of museology and museo-

<sup>63</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file 1999 ISSOM, subfile Mezirezortní pracovní skupina. Zpráva o činnosti Mezinárodní letní školy muzeologie UNESCO při MU v Brně z 4. 2. 1999 (Krasimír Damjanov).

<sup>64</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file ISSOM Study report of courses on general museology 1987-1996. SOFKA, Vиноš. Study report: ten years of courses on general museology at the International Summer School of Museology at Masaryk University 1987-1996: Analytical study. Directory of lecturers and participants. Participants' replies to questionnaires. Brno: Masaryk University, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> e.g. Stránský 1997, 143-151.

<sup>66</sup> Schneider 1985, 90-91.

<sup>67</sup> Mrázová and Jagošová 2014, 28-42.



logical education (1983);<sup>68</sup> development of museology and museological studies, museum documentation, and the cultural-educational role of museums (1985);<sup>69</sup> museum presentation, particularly museum exhibitions (1987);<sup>70</sup> and museum pedagogy (1990).<sup>71</sup> This series of seminars was followed in the mid-1990s by museological seminars in Hodonín, associated with the newly established (under new social conditions) Czech Association of Museums and Galleries and its Museological Committee. These seminars, which have been held from 1995 to the present,<sup>72</sup> are addressed to both museologists and the wider professional museum community and focus on questions of present-day museums, mostly the general issue of museums and the public.

### *Brno museology under the democratic regime*

After 1989, along with broad societal changes, Brno museology began to write a new chapter in its development. The altered social situation caused a gradual attenuation of postgraduate studies in museology, which had not been offered since the academic year 2001/2002 due to lack of interest, in favour of the newly-established regular university studies in museology<sup>73</sup> in both the full-time (1994) and the distance (2000) study mode.<sup>74</sup> Students interested in

<sup>68</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), subfile Muzeologický seminář Cikháj 1983. Muzeologický seminář 1983: Program.

<sup>69</sup> The opening papers, focused on the development of museology and museological studies, were presented by A. M. Razgon, A. Bauer, Z. Z. Stránský. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), subfile Muzeologický seminář Cikháj 1985. Muzeologický seminář 1985: Program.

<sup>70</sup> Museological university department, at that time organized as part of the Department of Archaeology and Museology and integrated into the Chair of History of USSR, Socialist Countries and Archaeology. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), subfile Muzeologický seminář Kroměříž 1987. Seminář pro posluchače a absolventy postgraduálního studia muzeologie ve dnech 10.-11. 11. 1987: Program.

<sup>71</sup> Besides Stránský, the seminar programme also contained lectures by H. Kräutler and M. van Praët. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), subfile Muzeologický seminář Opava 1989 (1990). Muzeologický seminář pro absolventy a posluchače postgraduálního studia muzeologie: Program.

<sup>72</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Korespondence 1994, 1995, subfile Došlá korespondence 1994, 1995 (leden – duben). Oznámení o přípravě prvního hodonínského semináře Muzea a návštěvníci aneb Jsou návštěvníci v muzeích vítáni či na obtíž? (7. 2. 1995, I. Chovančíková).

<sup>73</sup> Podborský 2008, 15.

<sup>74</sup> For the curriculum of regular museological studies see *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Muzeologie hlavní dokumenty, subfile Studium muzeologie (všeo-

museology thus had the option to acquire full university qualification in the field of museology, first by attending the Bachelor's and then the Master's degree programmes.<sup>75</sup>

Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, together with several colleagues, also prepared the supporting documents for the accreditation of combined studies in museology and the natural sciences, which were subsequently put into practice, unlike the studies in museum conservation. Similarly, Stránský's effort to implement museology as an academic discipline existing independently at the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University was only partly accomplished. The contentual system, or the system of different academic degrees, on which the discipline is based was confirmed by the successful habilitation of Stránský on the basis of his comprehensive inaugural dissertation *De museologia. Meta-teoretická studie k základům muzeologie jako vědy* (De museologia. Meta-theoretical study on the basics of museology as a science, 1993).<sup>76</sup> The discipline was organized for a short time as an autonomous Chair of Museology.<sup>77</sup> Despite considerable effort, however, the concept of doctoral studies in museology could not be successfully put into practice 'due to the absence of qualified guarantors of the discipline, who cannot be generated because museology is not yet recognized as an independent scientific branch and so it is not included in the official nomenclature of scientific disciplines in the Czech Republic'.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the repeated attempts to appoint Stránský as a profes-

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becně). Studijní program: denní a specializační studium muzeologie (Brno 1994; Katedra muzeologie FF MU), 4.

<sup>75</sup> *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Muzeologie hlavní dokumenty, subfile Studium muzeologie (všeobecně). Perspektiva Katedry muzeologie Filozofické fakulty MU (leden 1995, Zbyněk Z. Stránský), 3; cf. *Ibid.* Studium muzeologie: možnosti a formy studia a uplatnění absolventů (Brno 1994).

<sup>76</sup> *Habilitation* is a highly acknowledged academic qualification within the German university system (note by the editors; see also note 44 above).

<sup>77</sup> On the establishment of a separate Chair see *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Muzeologie hlavní dokumenty, subfile Studium muzeologie (všeobecně). Studijní program: denní a specializační studium muzeologie (Brno 1994; Katedra muzeologie FF MU), p; cf. Podborský 2008, 18.

<sup>78</sup> Podborský 2008, 18. Cf. the developmental project by the applicant Zbyněk Z. Stránský and co-applicants Vиноš Sofka and Peter van Mensch for the development of newly established study branches within doctoral studies. *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Kolegium děkana – zápisy z kolegia, subfile Děkanát 1993. Profilování oboru muzeologie pro doktorandská studia na VŠ (z 20. ledna 1993; Zbyněk Z. Stránský), 1-3. Cf. the earlier effort to constitute doctoral studies in *Archive of DAM, Centre of Museology* (unclassified), file Muzeologie – postgraduální studium, seznam absolventů, organizace,

sor in museology also failed (with similar arguments).<sup>79</sup> Despite the above obstacles, Stránský remains a key personality of the Brno School of Museology. He worked in the Chair until his retirement and his concept still represents the basis of the system of museological studies in Brno. The conception and activities of the Department and its system of studies were designed and co-formed over the years by many other experts as well, among them graduates of postgraduate programmes and later, also, of undergraduate studies in museology at Brno. The ability to enthuse the audience vis-à-vis the discipline and upgrade the quality of the Czech museum environment towards local trends is also evident in the subsequent activities of the graduate students. Besides actively participating in museum practice and various forms of further professional education, many of the graduates in the following years continued to commit themselves to museology, whether through pedagogical work or participation in professional institutions and associations.

The development of the Brno museology curriculum in the background of the formal changes in the study programmes is parallel to the development of the discipline itself. The initial postgraduate programme was focused on supporting the professionalization of museum and gallery workers who had already completed their university studies. As far as the content is con-

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učitelé, 4.–7. běh, subfile 5. běh do roku 1977/78. Návrh na zavedení rigorózních zkoušek na filozofické fakultě UJEP v Brně ve vztahu k muzeologii (z února 1980).

<sup>79</sup> 'In 1993, Dr Z. Z. Stránský on the basis of a comprehensive treatise *De museologia. Meta-teoretická studie k základům muzeologie jako vědy* (Brno 1992) habilitated at the Faculty of Arts MU and gained the academic title of Senior Lecturer in the field of museology. The following appointment of Docent Stránský as a professor in 1996 already was not so unproblematic. [...] The proposal for appointment of Doc Stránský as a professor in the field of museology, supported by assessments from four foreign (Bernard Deloche, France; Friedrich Waidacher, Austria; Ivo Maroevič, Croatia; Ladislav Kováč, Slovakia) and one Czech (Petr Piřha) professors, was approved by the Scientific Board of the Faculty of Arts and submitted for further examination to the Scientific Board of MU. The proposal, however, was not accepted on the premise that museology is not included in the nomenclature of scientific disciplines in the Czech Republic. At the request of the Czech ex-minister of education Dr Petr Piřha, the professorship procedure of Z. Z. Stránský should have been reopened for the subject Theory and History of Culture with focus on Museology. The Chair of Museology should have been transformed for this purpose into the Department of History and Theory of Culture. Doc Stránský promptly elaborated a proposal for establishment of such a department inclusive of its content, structure, vision, etc.' The proposed department, however, was not established. 'Another two attempts to reopen the professorship procedure of Doc Stránský took place in the years 1998 and 1999 under the deans Doc Ivan Seidl and Prof Jana Nechutová—but unfortunately both of them in vain.' Podborský 2008, 17-18.

cerned, the programme represented a shift from the original conception of museology as a service science for an optimal museum practice towards a well-elaborated system of museology as science including sub-disciplines and interdisciplinary overlaps. After the ground-breaking social events in 1989, the Chair offered full-time Bachelor and Master's studies in regular and combined mode thereby offering the chance for complete university qualification in the field of museology.

### *Conclusion*

The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of various opinion trends worldwide regarding the further development of museum work. Among the specific and original approaches of that time was, already from the beginning of the 1960s, the well-articulated concept of museology at Brno, which was based on an elaboration of the theoretical foundations needed to solve the given problem. Above all, this effort consisted of the constitution of an autonomous discipline of science (museology), which would react to impulses from the museum sphere in order to find relevant solutions. Apart from defining its object of interest, system, terminology, and methodology, it was to be put into practice by postgraduate education in an academic sphere, focused on museum workers. The main figures of the Brno School of Museology became Jan Jelínek (ICOM chairman) and Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, author of many theoretical publications and papers dealing with the museum phenomenon. Despite considerable isolation from the information exchange within the then bipolar world, the ideas of the representatives of the Brno School of Museology (particularly Stránský) gradually became known to many significant, mainly European, museologists, who considered them the point of departure for their own reflection on museological problems. However, the concept of the Brno School, based on the specific relationship of humans to reality discussed earlier in this chapter, remains an integral part of current discourse. This fact is also reflected in today's museological production.

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## EASTERN THINKING IN THE WEST





## Looking for a rationale behind museum practice: building bridges at the Reinwardt Academie

*Peter van Mensch*

### *Abstract*

The chapter focuses on curriculum development at the Reinwardt Academie (Amsterdam) and the role of (theoretical) museology in it. The Academie, founded in 1976, developed its curriculum from a new understanding of professionalism, referred to as the emancipation of museography, with Museology as the binding rationale behind the curriculum instead of a collection-related subject-matter discipline. Museology was seen as a genuine discipline, with its own lecturers, not as an applied science. The Academie's first director, Giljam Dusée, was also lecturer of Museology. He had studied in Paris at the École du Louvre and was a follower of the ideas of Georges Henri Rivière. As his successor, the present author developed a different approach to museology, very much influenced by Zbyněk Stránský, Ivo Maroević and other Central European museologists, in which a structured approach towards the object as data carrier was key. Throughout the 1990s, new ideas on value assessment, social inclusion, participation, and learning were introduced in the curriculum, being a mixture of British New Museology and Portuguese/Brazilian Sociomuseology.

In 2001 the existence of the Academie was threatened. The leadership of the Amsterdam School of the Arts, of which the Reinwardt Academie was part, was not convinced of the viability of its programme. The staff of the Reinwardt Academie opposed the decision and proposed to re-define the study programme as Heritage Studies, emphasising a new relevancy in view of current integrating tendencies in the heritage field. The leadership of the Amsterdam School of the Arts accepted the proposal and the Academie remained independent, but now as the Faculty of Cultural Heritage. In line with this integrative thinking, a spatial turn became visible in the curriculum focusing on the concepts of *lieu de mémoire*, cultural biography, and heritage community.

**Keywords:** Reinwardt Academie, theoretical museology, Museum Studies, liquid museum

### *An exercise in auto-ethnography*

This chapter focuses on curriculum development at the Reinwardt Academie (Amsterdam)<sup>1</sup> and the role of (theoretical) museology in it, from my own personal perspective. I will argue that this development mirrors the general discourse on museum work and museology at that time. The time frame extends from 1982, when I became full-time lecturer of Museology, till 2011, when I retired.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis will be on how at the Reinwardt Academie international discourses were being identified, discussed and adopted (or rejected). To what extent the Academie was able to influence these discourses will be left to other researchers to discuss.

As such, my contribution is an exercise in auto-ethnography with all its advantages and limitations.<sup>3</sup> It allows us to profit from a wealth of data to which others may have little-to-no access, such as memories of meetings, letters and emails, unpublished texts, internal policy papers. On the other hand, memory inevitably selects, shapes, and distorts. In the following, these limitations will not be compensated by extensive references to publications of others. The other chapters in the present volume may (partly) serve the purpose. Many of the Reinwardt Academie's internal policy documents are kept at the Academie and are available for further research.<sup>4</sup>

### *Creating a unique study programme*

The Reinwardt Academie started in autumn 1976 in Leiden.<sup>5</sup> In 1992 it moved to Amsterdam. Academie is a denomination frequently used in the Netherlands for institutes in the field of higher vocational education. Acad-

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper the Dutch version of the name will be used.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1978 and 1982 I was already part-time lecturer of Natural Sciences and Natural Science Museums, combining this with my main occupation as Head of Education and Exhibitions at the National Museum of Natural History (later renamed Naturalis) in Leiden.

<sup>3</sup> Chang 2016; Holmes Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, this archive is incomplete as it basically consists of material kept by the author and handed over to his successors in 2011. The present paper is the first attempt to provide a general framework for interpretation, as a first 'authoritative' description of discourses and the decisions made. It is only fair to state that throughout the chapter, most of the time 'Reinwardt Academie' should be understood as 'the Reinwardt Academie as perceived by Peter van Mensch'. The relation between the author and his former colleagues remains underrepresented.

<sup>5</sup> The early history of the Academie is described in Beeftink, Meeter and Croiset van Uchelen 1986 (in Dutch).

emies such as the Reinwardt Academie differ from universities by focusing on preparing students for rather well-defined jobs (in this case, in museums and comparable institutes). The Reinwardt Academie explicitly responded to a need by Dutch museums for specialists in the fields of registration/documentation, collections management, conservation, exhibitions, education, and marketing. Although students were introduced to collection-related subject-matter fields, such as Art History, History, Anthropology, Natural History, they were not trained as curators, this being considered the exclusive domain of university training programmes. The Reinwardt Academie thus developed its curriculum from a new understanding of professionalism, sometimes referred to as the emancipation of museography, i.e. the increased professional emphasis on collections management and communication.<sup>6</sup>

As compared to other museum training programmes, the Academie created a unique situation with Museology as the binding rationale behind the curriculum instead of a collection-related subject-matter discipline. Museology was seen as a genuine discipline, with its own lecturers, not as an applied science. This was rather new in the Netherlands. Museology as an academic field of interest was introduced by Professor Peter Pott (Director of the Ethnological Museum, Leiden) at the University of Leiden in 1973,<sup>7</sup> but the notion of Museology as academic discipline was not generally accepted, and there was no discourse on the state of museology, neither on the position of museology as museum theory in relation to museum practice, nor on museology as a disciplinary field distinct from other (academic) fields. Thus, the first lecturers of Museology had literally to start from scratch.

Specifically, the programme of the Reinwardt Academie takes four years; after the Bologna Declaration (1999), the programme awarded a Bachelor's degree upon completion. As to the museology course, there was a gradual shift in perspective from the first study year to the last, keeping in mind that the period under discussion is from 1982-2011. During years 1 and 2 the course aimed to create a common basis for all museographical disciplines (i.e. conservation, documentation, exhibition, education) with lectures and practical exercise introducing a systematic approach to the understanding of objects under the concept of the object as data carrier. In years 3 and 4 the social role of museums was discussed. As an example, an overview is given of the 1990-1991 study programme:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> van Mensch 1992; 2004.

<sup>7</sup> van Mensch and Maurits 1982.

<sup>8</sup> The study programme was frequently adapted during the following years; this is not the subject of the present article.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
museology	200	160	100	100
museography*	320	1280***	1480***	1480***
management	160	160	—	—
support disciplines**	1000	80	100	100

General overview, study programme 1990-1991. Every year has 1680 study hours consisting of units of 40 study hours (one week). Study hours represent the amount of time students are supposed to spend on their studies. This does not refer to the actual hours of lectures, etc.

\* conservation, registration/documentation, education, exhibition design

\*\* Cultural History, Art History, languages, informatics

\*\*\* including internship

The table shows the emphasis on the museographic disciplines. In years 3 and 4 students could specialize in either preservation (conservation, registration/documentation) or communication (education, exhibition design). The number of study hours includes internships in years 2-4, and writing a thesis in year 4.

### *From Rivière to Stránský*

When the Academie started, there were few study programmes that could offer some guidance. Actually, there were initially two programmes that served as sources of inspiration: the Museum Studies Programme at the University of Leicester (founded in 1966), and the Fachschule für Museumsassistenten (founded in 1954 at Köthen, and moved to Leipzig, GDR in 1966)<sup>9</sup> with the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel as the overarching framework for international exchange. The approach of the Academie came closer to the professional perspective of the Leipzig programme, which was mostly a vocational programme preparing students for non-curatorial positions in museums, while the Leicester programme was an academic programme focusing on curatorial positions.

The Academie's first director, Giljam Dusée, was also lecturer of Museology. He had studied in Paris at the École du Louvre and was a follower of the ideas of Georges Henri Rivière.<sup>10</sup> However, he did not develop a consis-

<sup>9</sup> After 1966 Fachschule für Museologen, Leipzig and since 1992 Studiengang Museologie at the Hochschule für Technik, Wirtschaft und Kultur Leipzig.

<sup>10</sup> Dusée 1986. See also Poulot, this volume (editors' note).

tent programme for the theoretical museology course. His lectures and workshops demonstrated a rather intuitive approach, critically reflecting on the social role of museums in the French *muséologie nouvelle* tradition. When I took over his position as lecturer of Museology in 1982, I was not familiar with this thinking, and having no elaborate study programme to build on, I was challenged to invent a rationale not just for the museology course, but also as a binding force for all other courses, from conservation to exhibition design. I had studied Biology and Archaeology, and I had worked in a variety of museums in different positions.<sup>11</sup> This made me eager to look for connecting principles beyond the collection-related subject-matter disciplines.

My study in archaeology and subsequent (unfinished) PhD research project on archaeozoology had introduced me to New Archaeology and its new ways of looking at objects. This became the basis of an object-oriented museology, the outline of which was presented at the ICOFOM-ICTOP meeting in London in 1983.<sup>12</sup> This theoretical approach was very much influenced by Michael Schiffer's *Behavioral Archaeology* (1976)<sup>13</sup> and the American 'school' of material culture studies (Edward McClung Fleming, James Deetz, David Kingery, Jules Prown),<sup>14</sup> and informed by Stránský's concept of museality, Maroević/Tudjman's IN-DOC approach,<sup>15</sup> and Susan Pearce's semiotic approach. Key to this approach was Kenneth Hudson's dictum: 'A tiger in a museum is a tiger in a museum and not a tiger'.<sup>16</sup> Having been active in the world of environmental education,<sup>17</sup> my views on the social role of museums were very much influenced by the discussions on the educational significance of natural history museums, visitor centres, botanic gardens and zoos in a post-*Limits to Growth* society.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Museums of history (Muiderslot, Muiden), decorative art (Kasteel-museum Sypsteyn, Loosdrecht), anatomy (Museum Vrolijk, Amsterdam), and natural history (Zoologisch Museum, Amsterdam and Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden), where I worked as a guide, assistant curator, researcher, exhibition maker.

<sup>12</sup> van Mensch, Pouw and Schouten 1983; van Mensch 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Especially because Schiffer's flow models, analysing how artefacts pass through numerous social contexts of procurement, manufacture, use, recycling and disposal, could be connected with conceptualising musealization as a cultural formation process.

<sup>14</sup> See Schlereth 1982.

<sup>15</sup> Editors' note: for Tudjman's Information-Documentation (IN-DOC) system of museological analysis, see Maroević, I. (1998) *Introduction to Museology. The European approach*. Munich: Verlag Dr. Christian Müller-Straten, 139-142.

<sup>16</sup> Hudson 1977, 7.

<sup>17</sup> For example, as member of the National Commission on Environmental Education.

<sup>18</sup> *Limits to Growth*, the 1972 report commissioned by the Club of Rome, showing the dangers of exponential economic and population growth with finite resource supplies.

At this point, I must admit that, contrary to many other Museum Studies programmes, art and art museums did not play an important role in my approach to museology. It often seems as if art museums and the other museums belong to two separate, parallel worlds, which to some extent is reflected in the British distinction between galleries and museums. At the Reinwardt Academie my deficiency in this respect was compensated by the lecturer of Art History who extended the scope of her lectures from art history to art museums. However, the Academie was never an active participant in discourses on the identity of art museums, which certainly has not been beneficial for its public profile.

Throughout the years, there were other lecturers of Museology. The most important of them was Harrie Leyten, former curator of the Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam). After the Academie's first director, Leyten was the first 'real' curator to join the regular staff of the Reinwardt Academie, curators otherwise having only been invited as guest lecturers. Being an active member of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography (ICME), he was the first to make a connection between the Academie and the curatorial, collection-related committees within ICOM. Hitherto, Reinwardt lecturers had mainly been active in function-related committees, such as the international committees for conservation (ICOM-CC), documentation (CIDOC), education (CECA), exhibition design (ICAMT), and public relations (MPR). As an anthropologist, curator and ICME member, Leyten not only brought expertise concerning ethnographical museums, but also made important contributions to the role of ethics. In the early 1990s, he was the first to address the issue of cultural diversity in the programme.

As lecturer of Museology, Harrie Leyten was preceded by Gosewijn van Beek, researcher at the Ethnological Museum (Leiden). It is significant that three lecturers of museology at the Academie (Dusée, Van Beek, Leyten) were experienced anthropologists, which might explain the sensitivity towards issues such as cultural dynamics, cross-cultural dialogue, intangible heritage, illicit trade, and restitution/return.

On my side, I had already developed an interest in Central European museology, in particular the work of Zbyněk Stránský.<sup>19</sup> Soon it became clear to me that Stránský's approach, and the discourse in Central Europe in general, appealed to me much more than Rivière's approach as adopted by my predecessor Giljam Dusée. This feeling was strengthened when I started to become active in the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) in

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<sup>19</sup> van Mensch 2016c.

1982. With ICTOP (the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel) being dominated by British and North American museologists, ICOFOM was in fact created on the basis of an opportunity for collaboration between French and Central European museologists. Since the new Director of the Reinwardt Academie, Piet Pouw, was active in ICTOP, it was obvious that I should become a member of ICOFOM.

In retrospect, the period 1975-1990 may be considered as the heyday of the international museology discourse.<sup>20</sup> ICOFOM played a key role in this as a meeting place for representatives of many different traditions in museological thinking.<sup>21</sup> It was a fortunate coincidence that, thanks to the generosity of the committee's new President, Vinoš Sofka, I could become a member of a group of dedicated experts and become involved in a fruitful exchange of ideas. This network served as a catalyst to visit museological centres in different parts of the world, such as Brno, Berlin, Zagreb, Jyväskylä, Leicester, Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, Beijing, Tokyo, etc. to meet colleagues, talk to students, and visit museums. These experiences enriched the study programme at the Reinwardt Academie.

An advantage was that I was able to read English, German and French. Unfortunately, I was not able to read Spanish or Portuguese. Language barriers were, and still are, important constraints in the international exchange of ideas. The first generations of Dutch Reinwardt students also had a basic understanding of English, German and French, but due to changes in the Dutch educational system, the competency to understand German and French gradually disappeared, which limited the exposure to a variety of museological traditions.

### *Embracing the world in Amsterdam*

In 1992 the Academie moved to Amsterdam to become part of the Amsterdam School of the Arts.<sup>22</sup> In 1994 the Academie founded an International Master's Degree Programme (IMDP), originally conceived as an organizational structure for projects in Latin America (Costa Rica), Africa (Mozambique, Egypt), and Asia (Indonesia, China, Vietnam). The experiences of a substantial number of Reinwardt lecturers in these countries, and the input from students from all over the world, contributed to the pragmatic and

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<sup>20</sup> van Mensch 2016b.

<sup>21</sup> Editors' note: See Brulon, this volume.

<sup>22</sup> Now Amsterdam University of the Arts (<https://www.ahk.nl/en>. Accessed, April 1, 2021).



eclectic approach which already had become a key characteristic of the Academie's programme. This was supported by some important developments in the international professional discourse.

After 1989, Central European museology—which had been so crucial in the early development of museology at the Reinwardt Academie—lost momentum, also because of the retirement and death of some of its key theoreticians (Schreiner, Stránský, Maroević).<sup>23</sup> In the last decade of the 20th century, British museologists lost interest in ICTOP but dominated the international discourse, particularly exemplified by the Leicester School of Museum Studies. In the first decade of the 21st century, the role of Australian and New Zealand museologists became important; they were instrumental in the creation of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies which, in fact, replaced the initially British-based New Museology movement. The leading role of French *muséologie nouvelle* was replaced by the increasing influence of Latin American, especially Brazilian, museological practice. This version of New Museology is sometimes referred to as Sociomuseology.<sup>24</sup>

The developments at the Reinwardt Academie which, among others, resulted in the stronger position of theoretical museology in the curriculum, made it possible to involve more lecturers in the museology courses, while also giving them the opportunity to conduct research in order to bring new views to the Academie. One new lecturer was Paula Assunção dos Santos. As a Brazilian museologist trained in the French-Portuguese-Brazilian *muséologie nouvelle* tradition, she introduced sociomuseology into the programme.<sup>25</sup> Another was Ruben Smit, a Dutch museologist who had studied at Leicester. He drew from his knowledge of the concepts that were so important at the Leicester School of Museology, such as social inclusion, inspired especially by Stephen Weil and Richard Sandell. Last but not least of the museological triumvirate was Léontine Meijer, a Dutch historian and museologist who had studied at Frankfurt/Oder. She had absorbed German and Central European thinking on museums and heritage, with a special interest in memory culture.

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to observe a current revival of this thinking in St Petersburg (Vitaly Ananiev), Brno (for example in the Muzeo 50 conference, 2014), and Graz (Karl-Franzens-Universität), and even a new interest in the work of Stránský in Rio de Janeiro (e.g. the conference *Stránský: uma ponte Brno-Brasil*, 13-16 October 2015).

<sup>24</sup> See also Storino, Primo and Chagas, this volume.

<sup>25</sup> She became president of MINOM (the International Movement for a New Museology). She also became board member of ICTOP, thus continuing relations between the Academie and the international discourse on training and curriculum development.

All of this affected curriculum development of the Bachelor as well as Master's programme. Ethics has always been a cornerstone in the curriculum,<sup>26</sup> but with the new focus on the aforementioned topics, the cross-disciplinary significance of ethics became even more important. The approach developed very much in the direction of New Museum Ethics, as described by Janet Marstine in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics* (2011).<sup>27</sup> A stronger emphasis was placed on the relevancy of museum work with special focus on the concept of social inclusion; of the three principles of social inclusion (access, representation, participation),<sup>28</sup> participation became increasingly important. In addition, we reflected on the conceptualization of output and outcome.<sup>29</sup> The British concept of General Learning Outcome (and General Social Learning Outcome) gained in significance in our thinking. One of the earlier research projects was on the application of this concept in the Dutch museum context. The focus of the conceptualization of the museum object as data carrier shifted to the methodology of value assessment, but always with Stránský's concept of museality in the back of my mind.<sup>30</sup> The Australian *Significance* method played an important role.<sup>31</sup> Shortly after its first publication (2001), the method was introduced as a cornerstone in the curriculum. Reinwardt Academie lecturers were actively involved in the development of a Dutch version, which was eventually published by the Cultural Heritage Agency as *Op de museale weegschaal* in May 2013.<sup>32</sup>

The implementation of new ideas on value assessment, social inclusion, participation, and learning, being a mixture of British New Museology and Portuguese/Brazilian Sociomuseology, brought new energies into the curriculum and re-enforced the interaction between the museology courses and those of museography. However, the introduction of Paula Assunção dos Santos, Ruben Smit, and Léontine Meijer as my *dream team* met with some reservation on the side of a group of colleagues. Behind this was not just discord about the hierarchy of disciplines, but also a different vision of professional responsibility. The position often held was that it was the profession-

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<sup>26</sup> On the occasion of its fifth anniversary, the Reinwardt Academie organized a conference on museum ethics (1982). It was the first general conference on museum ethics in the Netherlands. The Academie's Director, Piet Pouw, was a longstanding member of ICOM's Ethics Committee.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Meijer-van Mensch 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Sandell 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Weil 2005.

<sup>30</sup> van Mensch 2016c.

<sup>31</sup> Russell and Winkworth 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Versloot 2014.

al's task to make the museum function properly, and less regard was given to what was the ultimate social purpose of museum work.

Nevertheless, after long discussions, parts of the contents of the Museology study programme became integrated in the study programmes on conservation, registration/documentation, education, and exhibition design. As a consequence, the study programme of museology had to be reconsidered. This resulted in a stronger emphasis on the theory of collection development, i.e. an approach to collecting and collections beyond the traditional subject-matter disciplines. This approach embraced the new ideas on value assessment, provenance research and participation, and focused on new discourses, such as the discourses on de-accessioning, collection mobility, and documenting the present.<sup>33</sup> Given this emphasis in the programme, it is no coincidence that Léontine Meijer and I joined forces with Eva Fägerborg of the Swedish SAM-DOK project, to establish a new committee on collecting within the ICOM framework (2009). After a probationary period, the International Committee on Collecting (COMCOL) was accepted as a regular international committee (2013). ICOFOM and ICTOP had ceased to be a source of inspiration.

Even though the *Significance* method and the General Learning Outcome methodology were published in the early 21st century and accordingly adopted by the Reinwardt Academie, the 1990s already witnessed a paradigmatic shift that prepared for these new methodologies. This paradigmatic shift seems to be part of the broader change in the museum field. In 2012, Gail Anderson published a second edition of her *Reinventing the museum*, originally published in 2004. The subtitle of the first edition is 'Historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift'; that of the second edition is 'The evolving conversation on the paradigm shift'. What the author means by 'reinventing' and 'paradigm shift' is explained in the introduction: 'Reinventing the museum is not just adding a program, reinstalling a gallery, or increasing financial reserves—it is a systemic shift in attitude, purpose, alignment, and execution'.<sup>34</sup> In the Reinwardt Academie's case, this paradigmatic shift also concerned the broadening of the curriculum from museums to heritage.

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<sup>33</sup> The outline of this 'new' theoretical approach on collecting and collections was already given in van Mensch 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson 2012, 2. In the 2012 edition of the book, Anderson brought together 44 texts that substantiate this systemic shift. Three texts were originally published before 1990, 13 in the 1990s and 28 in the 2000s.

### *From museum to heritage*

In 2001 the existence of the Academie was threatened. The leadership of the Amsterdam School of the Arts, of which the Reinwardt Academie was part, was not convinced of the viability of its programme. It prepared a merger of the Academie with the Faculty of Fine Art in Education (now Breitner Academie). In view of the public profile of art museums it would have been an opportunistic choice. The staff of the Reinwardt Academie opposed the decision and proposed to re-define the study programme as Heritage Studies emphasising a new relevancy of the programme in view of current integrating tendencies in the heritage field (referred to as Heritage 3.0). The leadership of the Amsterdam School of the Arts accepted the proposal and the Academie remained independent, but now as the Faculty of Cultural Heritage.<sup>35</sup>

A major step toward a heritage-oriented curriculum was the adoption of an Archival Studies programme. Instrumental in this extension of the Reinwardt programme was the appointment of Theo Thomassen as Director (2002-2009). As previous Director of the Dutch Archives School, he added his knowledge about archives to our knowledge about museums, thus deepening a common understanding of heritage and heritage institutions.

Actually, I had always perceived museology as more than just the study of museums. Initially, I adopted the point of view of museologists from the German Democratic Republic with a focus on the functions rather than on the museum as an institution. This made it possible to include a broader range of initiatives in my museology; something which my GDR colleagues refused to do. My basic assumption was that all heritage institutions share the same (or at least similar) basic functions, and I invested much effort to find a rationale behind the integration of heritage disciplines. With the help of General Systems Theory, we developed a model which could be applied to the broader heritage field. I also worked towards an integrated perspective on heritage ethics by comparing codes from all heritage fields. But most important, for me, was the attempt to develop a General Heritage Theory echoing Tomislav Šola's proposal for a *heritology* (1982).<sup>36</sup> In this respect, I welcomed the emergence of Critical Heritage Studies, and it was no coincidence that Laurajane Smith was the main guest speaker at my farewell symposium on May 26,

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<sup>35</sup> Part of the argument of the leadership of the Amsterdam School of the Arts was the steady decrease in the number of first-year students, from 80 in 1984 to 42 in 1999. Since then there has been a steady increase, reaching 184 in 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Later re-baptized as *mnemosophy* (Šola 1997, 228-243).

2011.<sup>37</sup> But on the other hand, there was a general reluctance at the Reinwardt Academie to identify with Critical Heritage Studies since it was considered too academic. Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze, and Latour had never been cornerstones in the curriculum.

In 2006 a professorship was created to support this process and I was appointed as the Academie's first Professor of Cultural Heritage. The new approach at the Reinwardt Academie manifested itself in a spatial (topographical) turn.<sup>38</sup> In this, we followed the line of thinking as expressed, for example, by the Canadian museologist Pierre Mayrand. Mayrand once predicted the transition of the museum through post-museological into trans-museological structures.<sup>39</sup> These new structures, according to Mayrand, would redefine the dynamics of people and place, i.e. place as a context for the interaction between people, groups and individuals alike. This is not just about the place being an exhibition room, it is about the process of signification.

In line with this integrative thinking, the concept of *lieu de mémoire* became predominant.<sup>40</sup> *Lieux de mémoire* are places of memory, or more precisely, anchorage places of collective memory, but not all sites, objects, and concepts that function as trigger mechanisms for recollection processes have become part of our institutionalized heritage (historical memory). As Marie-Louise von Plessen says: 'We are surrounded by no-man's lands between memory and oblivion: one level of memory replaces and overwrites the other'.<sup>41</sup> Every group of people within a given society has its own network of *lieux de mémoire*, its own

reservoir of knowledge about the past on which the creators of history can draw and select time and time again. In that sense, the collective memory is a meta-reservoir unaffected by the vicissitudes of actuality and whole pre-selective positions enable it to protect the past against constant curtailment by historical images, which shield history from scientific or social bias.<sup>42</sup>

Within the Reinwardt Academie study programme, the spatial turn was implemented in different ways. First, through lectures within the framework of the Museology study programme, where initially, the concept of urban

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<sup>37</sup> Smith 2011.

<sup>38</sup> van Mensch 2012.

<sup>39</sup> van Mensch 2005.

<sup>40</sup> Nora 1984.

<sup>41</sup> van Plessen 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Frijhoff 1999.

heritage interpretation was used as a stepping-stone.<sup>43</sup> Later on, the concept of cultural biography served that purpose. Second, the spatial turn was introduced in the international excursion programmes. As part of the study programme, Reinwardt students visited Paris, Berlin and London. Traditionally the focus was on visiting museums. City walks were introduced in the academic year 1995-1996 as a way to explore the cultural biography of the cities and some of their neighbourhoods. Later, city walks in Amsterdam became an integral part of both the Bachelor's and Master's programmes. The city walks thus filled the envisaged disciplinary integration with an integrated perspective on heritage. In the preparatory course for college on the Berlin excursion in 2003, the walk was explicitly introduced as an expression of the new paradigm in museology.

The adoption of walking as methodology in our programme, as a 'peripatetic sense of place'<sup>44</sup> went back to Tilden's *Interpreting our heritage*, and was influenced by Walter Benjamin's *Das Passagen-Werk* and Michel de Certeau's *L'invention du quotidien*.<sup>45</sup> In the 1930s, walking was given a scientific basis in Germany through the work of Emil Schulten (1871-1938). His *Deutsche Wanderkunde* (1931) led to the academic field of *Wanderforschung* or *Promenadologie*.<sup>46</sup> The interest in such peripheral academic disciplines may be an example of an intrinsic curiosity resulting in the eclectic approach to museology.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from this spatial turn, we adopted the concept of heritage community as introduced by the European Council in its *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (also called *Faro Convention*) of 2005. A heritage community is deemed to consist of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations. Crucially,

the familiar parameters defining the respective value of a heritage as it relates to territory and space are not included [in this definition], and there is no reference to local, regional, national or global importance. Also noteworthy is the absence of predefined societal parameters, national, ethnic, religious, professional or based on class. A heritage community can thus be built up across territories and social groups. It is defined neither in terms of the place where the heritage

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<sup>43</sup> Tilden's classic *Interpreting our heritage* (1954) was a useful connection between environmental education and urban heritage interpretation.

<sup>44</sup> Adams 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin 1982; de Certeau 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Or *Spaziergangswissenschaft* (Lucius Burckhardt and Martin Schmitz, Kassel).

<sup>47</sup> Meijer-van Mensch 2017, 62.

is situated, nor in terms of the social status of its members, who may participate from elsewhere, even from a long way away: one can be a member of a heritage community simply by valuing a cultural heritage or wishing to pass it on.<sup>48</sup>

The European convention was implemented by the Flemish Community of Belgium in its *Erfgoeddecreet (Heritage Act)* of 2008. The Flemish *Act* also adopted the concept of a heritage community, albeit with a small—but relevant—amendment. In its definition, the term ‘people’ is extended to ‘organizations and people’. The *Act* thus emphasizes what is implicit in the *Convention*: the co-operation between a range of public, private, and voluntary partners, transcending the traditional boundaries among heritage disciplines.<sup>49</sup>

In many different Reinwardt projects, these ideas were being discussed and tested. After my retirement, Léontine Meijer (since 2006, Meijer-van Mensch) and I adopted the concept of liquid museum as a merger of the spatial turn and the concept of heritage community.<sup>50</sup> The concept was introduced by the Australian museologist Fiona Cameron, using Zygmunt Bauman’s notion of liquid modernity.<sup>51</sup> A liquid museum is ‘no longer solely conceived as hierarchical, closed, or fixed to a physical location’ which involves

the dissolution of [the museum’s] existing institutional structures and boundaries [...] Because liquid institutions are dispersed, the nature of their relational complexity makes change iterative and non-linear with unintended consequences and multiple effects. The notion of museums as change agents is also reworked in a liquid museum frame through the dynamical interactions between various elements as iterative processes within larger confederations rather than as expression of large-scale change.<sup>52</sup>

It is one of the newer ideas on the transformation from museums to heritage.

### *Into the future*

Throughout the years, the Reinwardt Academie has reflected on new national and international developments in the professional museum and heritage field, and played a role in introducing new ideas and practices (especially on

<sup>48</sup> Dolff-Bonekämper 2009, 71.

<sup>49</sup> van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2015, 55-56.

<sup>50</sup> van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2015, 84. This creates an interesting paradox since as noted before, the concept of heritage community was deliberately conceived as not related to the place where the heritage is situated (see note 48).

<sup>51</sup> Cameron 2010; 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Cameron 2015, 358.

a national level). Examples of such successful interactions between the Academie and the professional field are the discourses on ethics, preventive conservation, documentation, de-accessioning, documenting the present, value and valuation, participation, learning, visitor research, project management, social media, cultural diversity, and heritage communities. To what extent the liquid museum idea will play a role as a sustainable element in the curriculum development at the Reinwardt Academie remains to be seen; this will very much depend on how the idea is adopted by the Dutch museum and heritage field. But it is another example of how the Academie is eager to identify, explore, and eventually adopt new ideas and to share these not just with students but with the professional field as a whole. The structure of the Academie does not favour the publication of handbooks, and only by exception are lecturers given time to conduct research and to publish; this is a major difference between institutes of higher vocational training and universities. The publication *New trends in museology* is an attempt to synthesize some accumulated knowledge, but as stated in the introduction, it is not conceived as handbook.<sup>53</sup> In internet terms, it might be considered as a portal. The intention was to raise questions, to point at practices and ideas that are relevant to contemporary developments, and to make connections between tendencies, in order to guide the reader—students and professionals alike—towards a multitude of resources reflecting the present-day professional discourse. From 1982 onwards, this vision has always been the guiding principle behind the (theoretical) museology courses at the Reinwardt Academie.

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<sup>53</sup> van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2015. The book, resulting from a series of courses given at Celje, was published by the Museum of Recent History at Celje (Slovenia). The first edition was published in 2011; a second edition was published in 2015.



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# Towards a reflexive museology: the history of ICOFOM and the creation of a contemporary discipline for museum theory

*Bruno Brulon Soares*

## *Abstract*

The term 'museology' has been perceived, in different global contexts, as a field of studies formed by actors organized in specific positions with particular goals. In the 1960s, attempts were made to give museology academic legitimacy in countries from Czechoslovakia to Brazil. In the existing courses of museology, the goal was to achieve improvements in the training and thinking of museology, providing the necessary bases for museum work. Since the 1970s and during the 1980s, the term acquired a more specific meaning for museologists who wished to develop a theory of museology, referring to what some call a *science* in the making. Those museum professionals and scholars were collaborating in an international committee created in 1977 by ICOM President Jan Jelínek from Czechoslovakia. The International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) was conceived as a platform for challenging persistent geopolitical divisions in this field of knowledge. Fundamental in those first decades was the work of the committee's first president, Vinoš Sofka, who built significant bridges between museologies and museologists, and Zbyněk Stránský, who created a theoretical base. Because of their work, museology has been configured as an evolving discipline, which can be confirmed by the history of several existing courses and training programmes that would become university courses, leaving the museums that originally housed them. At the same time, the committee's first texts and publications were responsible for the construction and circulation of a theoretical corpus which came to be known as the Theory of Museology, encompassing what is today called Museum Theory. This chapter proposes to revisit ICOFOM history from 1977 to 2000, mapping the configuration of a cross-cultural field of knowledge that still today bears the traces of the bridges built in the past.

**Keywords:** museology, museum theory, ICOFOM, cross-cultural knowledge

*Towards a reflexive museology: the history of ICOFOM and the creation of a contemporary discipline for Museum Theory*

As a field of theories that are not inexorably bound to museums, museology has gained academic acceptance in several parts of the world over the last four decades. However, the discipline is still fighting to find legitimation in the halls of contemporary sciences. Some of the most prominent museologists of our time have engaged in re-defining their own area of interest, working towards the construction of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), building a network for the cross-cultural production of museological knowledge.

From the initial reflections that inaugurated this forum for museological debates, a more or less organized theoretical corpus of museology was drawn up internationally, defined as the Theory of Museology and fundamentally encompassing museum theory. Some of the authors contributing to the theoretical exchanges had to challenge the geopolitical frontiers that limited the circulation of knowledge in the last decades of the 20th century, as Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain.<sup>1</sup> ICOFOM was born challenging the walls that compartmentalized museology inside the European continent and beyond.

Promoting cross-cultural encounters between museum professionals and academics, ICOFOM became the main platform for a non-belligerent duel between different actors and lines of thought. Museology would be recognized in the theoretical work based on local practices in Czechoslovakia, Russia, (West and East) Germany, Croatia, France, the UK, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, the United States, Canada, and Mali, to name only some of the countries represented in the first annual meetings of this committee. In this chapter, we consider the plurality of actors and perspectives forming the base of museology as it has been conceived within ICOFOM. Based on the social analysis of its geopolitical roots and lines of thinking we will argue that this academic discipline and body of knowledge does not have one hegemonic centre, despite an initial phase of systematization and normalization. Hence, the ICOFOM voice has never been uniform; although unified in purpose, it was diverse on principle. Some of the reasons for this decentralization were somehow determined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

When ICOFOM was created in 1977, from a 1976 initiative of the Advisory Committee of ICOM,<sup>2</sup> it was the result of a long-standing need for

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<sup>1</sup> See contributions by Ananiev, Waltz, and Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume (editors' note).

<sup>2</sup> Sofka 1995, 12.

the development of specific concepts and normalization of knowledge in the museum field. In its inaugural meeting at the Musée du Louvre in Paris, November 1946, ICOM's founding members stated their mission to 'further the exchange of cultural information across frontiers' by means of 'loans, gifts and exchanges of museum publications' as well as the 'international exchange of museum personnel'.<sup>3</sup> Due to its global scope, involving professionals and institutions from different continents, this new international organization would express the necessity for the normalization of museum concepts and rules.

Some years later, in September 1958, UNESCO and ICOM organized a training course in Rio de Janeiro with selected Brazilian authorities and specialists, on the theme 'The educative function of museums'. Wanting to identify the terms and concepts of the museum field, ICOM director Georges-Henri Rivière (1897-1985) defined 'museology' as 'the science that studies the mission and organization of the museum' and 'museography' as 'the set of techniques in relation to museology'.<sup>4</sup> This conceptual separation between science and technique, according to Rivière's initial definitions, would be followed by professionals and scholars in several training courses around the world, in some cases until the beginning of the 21st century.<sup>5</sup>

Such a drastic breach between 'study' and 'practice' was not, however, at the core of other early interpretations of museology. In the conception of some Eastern European authors, since the 1950s, the study of museology would be highly dependent on museum practice. In Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1962, when a Department of Museology was created at the Philosophical Faculty of the J. E. Purkyně University,<sup>6</sup> Zbyněk Z. Stránský (1926-2016), as Head of the Department, also presented his conception of museology—first to his students, and then later, through other theorists, his work was recognized within ICOFOM. For this thinker, museology as a field of study 'seems to be born right in the museum, or rather in museum work'.<sup>7</sup> In the percep-

<sup>3</sup> ICOM 1948, 1.

<sup>4</sup> In the original report: 'La muséologie est la science ayant pour but d'étudier la mission et l'organisation des musées. La muséographie est l'ensemble des techniques en relation avec la muséologie' (translated by the author). Rivière 1960, 12.

<sup>5</sup> See, for the case of Brazilian museology and the school of Rio de Janeiro, this persistent influence from Rivière's conceptions in Brulon Soares et al. 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The Masaryk University was founded in Brno in 1919 and is currently the second largest university in the Czech Republic. In 1960, the university was renamed Jan Evangelista Purkyně University, taking the name of the Czech biologist. In 1990, following the Velvet Revolution it regained its original name. See also Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume.

<sup>7</sup> Stránský 1987, 287.

tion explored by Stránský in his museological writings, the theory of museology was not divorced from museum practice. In his understanding, as a theoretician and a professor, at the same time that museology should prove to be theoretically based, its training should present practical results for museums.

Nevertheless, because ICOFOM was created as a museology committee, some of its members and even non-members interpreted it as a theoretical committee. In order to confirm or deny such an idea, it is necessary to examine what was being accepted as 'museology' by the Czech thinkers who founded ICOFOM, such as Jan Jelínek (1926-2004) and Vinoš Sofka (1929-2016).

When created, ICOFOM reflected much of the Czech thinking on the status of museology. When invited to speak on the topic of 'Possibilities and limits in scientific research typical for the museums' at the ICOFOM second annual meeting in Poland in 1978, Vinoš Sofka defended the statute of museology by arguing that no other 'science' would be concerned with research dealing with museum problems, and that 'other branches of science know next to nothing about the role, work and problems of the museum'.<sup>8</sup> In a meeting where most presenters were speaking of research in the museum and in the different areas not related to museology, Sofka would advocate, in his paper, for the need for a specific 'theory as a basis for practical museum work'.<sup>9</sup>

Museology, then, was being reinterpreted based on a latent need for theory and research specifically oriented to the museum field. A definition of the term, however, was far from being achieved, which according to Sofka was one of the reasons that made ICOFOM necessary, that it should be committed to finding a definition of the concept. 'What was museology? What was a museology committee for? And what is our aim?'<sup>10</sup> To pose these somehow existential questions was, in fact, the very purpose of this committee (something that was only going to be noticed many years later).

Museology, as it has been interpreted and debated in the scope of ICOFOM, is a conscious systematized reflection on the theory of the museum—a reflection that has challenged the limits of the museum as a central subject for this supposed science. ICOFOM has recomposed and redefined museum theory by exploring the potential of different museological theories and concepts at a moment when an academic discipline was being developed and adopted in some universities and research centres around the world.

As a field built by specialized actors of the museum, who were both theorists and practitioners, museology configures today a specific platform for

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<sup>8</sup> Sofka 1978, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Sofka 1978, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Sofka 1995.

disputes over the definition of its own terms, concepts and paradigms, based on academic research. In the present work, it is not our intention to search for a 'true origin' of the term, as many other researchers have done before us. Our purpose, instead, is to explore its different uses by the particular actors who make up this so-called social science or branch of knowledge, and who have defined over the past decades multiple approaches to the study of museums and their intrinsic processes and connections.

### *Between museum theory and museology*

During the Interwar period, the need for a shared knowledge in the museum field was latent in many countries of the Northern and Southern hemispheres. At the same time, certain European organizations with an international scope were trying to impose ideas and a cultural viewpoint on the rest of the world. In 1926, the Office International des Musées (OIM) was formalized, bound to the League of Nations,<sup>11</sup> as the first attempt to create an international entity gathering the museums of the world and their professionals. The OIM, with its most disseminated publication, the review *Mouseion*,<sup>12</sup> tried to approach themes of central importance for the museums of the world in this period.

The end of World War II and the creation of ICOM in 1946 caused a new transformation in the museum field. Until that moment, only art, history, or ethnographic museums were included in the discussions and publications of the OIM, but within ICOM, museums of science would be integrated as well. In the domain of these museums, the term that prevailed was 'museology', and the use of 'museography', understood then as the museum description,<sup>13</sup> was considered to be incongruent. The terms museography and museology were, then, used simultaneously for a certain period of time, with very fuzzy contours.

However, the terminology adopted by ICOM was not employed in some parts of the world outside Europe. In the United States, where the notion of 'museum work' was majorly disseminated from the 1920s, John Cotton Dana would use the word 'museumology', reclaimed later by Laurence Vail Coleman and by the American Association of Museums.<sup>14</sup> In North America, despite the continued resistance towards a field dedicated to the study of mu-

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<sup>11</sup> Created in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles.

<sup>12</sup> The review *Mouseion* was published from 1927 to 1946 (for fifteen years, with a gap during the war) by the OIM.

<sup>13</sup> Desvallées and Mairesse 2011, 324-325.

<sup>14</sup> Currently, the American Alliance of Museums.



seums—whether it was called museology or museum studies—the increased use of the ‘language of museology’<sup>15</sup> over the last 30 years would show some considerable approximations to the conception of European museum professionals. The term museology would appear with a consensus on its fundamental meaning, understood as the study or the theory of museums.<sup>16</sup>

From more vague conceptions found during the 19th and 20th century, museology would evolve accordingly to the development of museums, but with different interpretations in different parts of the world. The idea of museology as science was more easily accepted in France and in other countries of Latin tradition, rather than in anglophone countries, for instance. As Janick Daniel Aquilina notes, while the French version of the report on the UNESCO seminar of 1958 uses the word ‘science’ to define museology, the English version of the same report uses ‘branch of knowledge’.<sup>17</sup> This change, not at all subtle, highlights a conceptual difference between the English and the French perspectives.

The notion of museology as science, mentioned since the 19th century by some authors who studied the museum and its processes, would motivate numerous debates in the decades to come. Without any consensus, the contradictory views presented in the scope of ICOFOM were trying to answer the first fundamental museological question—i.e., what is museology? This topic was particularly interesting to Eastern European authors such as Jiří Neustupný and Stránský, but also to some of their followers, like Vиноš Sofka and Avram Razgon, as the ‘early advocates of a museology guided by theory’,<sup>18</sup> and whose subject of study could even challenge the centrality given to the museum.

In the museological knowledge that reaches our time, through different documents, testimonies and research products, we can envision at least three trends that have marked contemporary museology, here described as *normative museology*, *theoretical museology* and *reflexive museology*, each with their own historicity although not necessarily understood in chronological order, as will be shown in the present chapter.

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<sup>15</sup> Teather 1991, esp. 403.

<sup>16</sup> Teather (1991, 404) states that in the North American context, there is a clear and increasing marginalization of museology as a profession and an academic discipline.

<sup>17</sup> Aquilina 2011, 14-15.

<sup>18</sup> Aquilina 2011, 14-15.

### *Normative museology: ICOM and the creation of standards for the museum field*

Until the third quarter of the 20th century, museology, more commonly understood as a set of rules to organize and describe museum work, acquired a prescriptive and normative character that would be followed to some extent over the years. A number of international events involving experts from around the world but mostly Europeans, helped consolidate the place of museology in the vocabulary of museum professionals around Europe, and later in some specific parts of the non-European world.

When ICOM was created, a wider international project for the field of museums was put into action. One of the first tasks, in 1946, was to invite 'a selected list of leaders in the field of museums' to create national committees for each country. Each national committee was limited to a maximum of 15 members, who would be 'as widely representative as possible of the museum interests in their respective countries'.<sup>19</sup> A true elite of museum workers was being established in order to set the rules for other professionals around the globe who were not part of this restricted organization. Meanwhile, this is the moment when professional training was being established in the academic domain in several countries represented within the organization, which helped to define more strict parameters for museum workers. At the ICOM General Conference of 1965 in New York, the first meeting to be held outside Europe, Jean Chatelain, directeur des Musées de France, stated, for example, that the specific training for the conservator, a distinguished museum professional, was to follow a very strict path, only available to those who had already completed university studies and wished to achieve further training in a museum.<sup>20</sup> This, however, was not the case in many other contexts of the world.

In the 1970s, envisaging the continuous training of museum professionals, ICOM developed two specialized journals that were the only established publications about museum knowledge until that time. The first was the revue *Museum*, the descendent of OIM's *Mouseion*,<sup>21</sup> that served as a guideline to shape museum practice internationally. The second was *ICOM News*, a

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<sup>19</sup> ICOM 1948, 1.

<sup>20</sup> When speaking on specific training for museum personnel, Chatelain (1965, 1) defined that ICOM refers 'only to agents of elevated rank, having a specific activity proper to museums', and stated that the notion was not extended to 'workers, guards, secretaries, cloak room ladies or restorers'.

<sup>21</sup> Mairesse 1998.

bulletin for specific news and reports from the ICOM organization. These publications were insufficient for the desired academic discussion on specific terms and on setting the rules for museum work.

In order to be normalized, the museum field should, firstly, speak a common language and operate according to a standardized practice. This specific project of knowledge production was not going to stay within ICOM and its members only. The year 1970 marks the first time a course in museology was given at the Université de Paris, within the Institute of Art and Archaeology, under the charge of Georges-Henri Rivière, then former Director and Permanent Adviser of ICOM.<sup>22</sup> The syllabus of this course shows a central orientation towards the definition of museums, their purpose and their functional structure.

Aiming to create a terminology for museum professionals, ICOM urgently proposed the publication of a Treaty of Museology. The project that intended to produce the first definition of museology terminology involved, during the 1970s, primarily the International Committee for Documentation (CIDOC) and the UNESCO Centre of Documentation, but also the International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP), and, finally, ICOFOM, created in 1977. The organization of manuals based on 'current museological research' was one of ICOM's goals, which assembled a team of 'experts' for that purpose.<sup>23</sup> The result was to be a publication of terms related to both museum theory and practice, strictly based on the professional vocabulary used in certain European countries.

During this period, ICOM was prioritising the production of specialized publications to foster the training of personnel to work in museums. Dealing with aspects of professional training and the 'gaps existent' in the specialized bibliography,<sup>24</sup> ICOM responded to a need that would be progressively taken on by ICOFOM. Later, the Treaty project became a *Dictionarium Museologicum* published in 1986 by CIDOC, along with other manuals for documentation, initially intended to be translated in to up to 20 languages.

This 'dictionarization' of museum knowledge would mark normative museology in its early years, when museology was still ill-defined and frequently connected to museum practice. Over the years, this need for definitions would remain a constant trend within ICOFOM, leading to a set of theories and several special projects. The concerns behind these concepts, specifically in the work of francophone authors, were mainly practical and root-

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<sup>22</sup> ICOM 1970, 63.

<sup>23</sup> ICOM 1970, 60.

<sup>24</sup> ICOM 1977, 25.

ed in French museum tradition, but they were dependent on a considerable amount of theoretical work that was, so far, scarce.

*Theoretical museology: the birth of an international school of thought*

In 1987, in an introductory text to one of ICOFOM's publications, Vinoš Sofka, the chair of that committee, posed the question: 'museology or museums—what was first?'<sup>25</sup> This provocative question, which made readers contemplate the place of museology in museum work, was a starting point for a debate that led ICOFOM thinkers to take on the task of developing a theory—i.e. a way of thinking—of their own. Later called theoretical museology, this theory was determined to prove that there was more than museums (as institutions) in the discipline that was created from museums.

In its international scope and with the aim of formulating a theoretical base for museology, the committee for museology sensibly, since its initial debates, incorporated different voices and demands. But an autonomous committee discussing museological matters in its own terms, or according to the voices of its particular members, was not, in the first stage, easily accepted by the central organization.

The will to foster an open and democratic forum for museological debates was the main force driving ICOFOM in its early years, under the guidance of former ICOM President Jan Jalínek. He intended to introduce Czech thinkers and museologists to the discussion held by ICOM members and directors regarding the definition of museology, tracing its main theoretical lines. Holding its first constitutive meeting in Moscow in 1977, and the second in Poland in 1978, ICOFOM challenged the so-called Iron Curtain by promoting free exchange of ideas on museology among members from different sides of the divided world.

When Sofka, exiled from Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring, decided to join ICOFOM in 1978, he had no idea of how Jelínek, a Czech colleague still living on the other side of the curtain, would see the membership of a political refugee. A secret meeting had to be arranged between himself and Jelínek in Paris in 1978, with the purpose, as Sofka put it, 'to hear from one another that we both wished to collaborate'.<sup>26</sup> Sofka joined ICOFOM that same year as a 'Swedish representative', taking on the identity of his new country, and was incorporated into a heterogenous network for museology. Thanks to the

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<sup>25</sup> Sofka 1987.

<sup>26</sup> Sofka 1995, 13.

ICOFOM platform, he engaged in a debate that involved other thinkers from Eastern Europe with different theoretical and political conceptions.

The Iron Curtain was not the only museological divide that was bridged. Since the meeting in Poland, Sofka would become acquainted with several museologists from different countries, such as Irina Antonova and Avram M. Razgon from Russia and Villy T. Jensen from Denmark, at a meeting that gathered around 20 persons.<sup>27</sup> At this event, Sofka proposed a document on the committee's aims and policy and an international journal for discussion about museology.<sup>28</sup> With his progressive ideas regarding museology, and constantly stressing 'the urgent need for museological research and training based on its results', Sofka quickly became one of the main voices of ICOFOM throughout the world.

In the years to come, the new committee took on the necessary task of developing a theoretical base for museology, and, in an attempt to prove wrong some existing attacks on the 'scientific argumentation', Sofka and his supporters engaged in the highly improbable job of proving that museology was science. The contrast between a diverse practice organized according to institutional needs and the possibility of creating a new science with strong foundations is directly addressed in the first issue of the *Museological Working Papers (MuWoP)*, edited by Sofka, in 1980. The conclusion presented in this issue by Jensen, considering the opinions of several museum professionals, was that 'a simple common museology does not exist'.<sup>29</sup> The difference of perspectives on museums confronted by the early international claim for a unified theory generated, in a first instance, an increasing uncertainty as to what museology could become beyond museum practice.

It was Zbyněk Stránský from the already-mentioned Department of Museology in Brno who raised structural questions on the subject of study of museology, denying, for the first time, the *museum* as scientific subject-matter.<sup>30</sup> Stránský alleged that an institution that serves a certain end could not be the subject of a supposed science.<sup>31</sup> He considered that the contemporary museum 'is only one of the possibilities of materializing the specific relation of

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<sup>27</sup> Sofka 1995, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Jensen and Sofka 1983.

<sup>29</sup> Jensen (1981, 9) summarized the results of a survey on museology undertaken among some European museum professionals during 1975 and presented it in the *Museological Working Papers* in 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Stránský 1965. See also Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume, for more on Stránský and museology at Brno (editors' note).

<sup>31</sup> Stránský 1965, 33.

man to reality', which he would designate 'museality'.<sup>32</sup> This new assumption provoked an intriguing museological debate among several thinkers who wished to express a particular opinion on the scientific nature of museology.

Stránský declared that 'the museum phenomenon is truly the expression of a specific relation of man to reality',<sup>33</sup> and that such a relationship, to be studied and properly understood, demands specific knowledge that is not provided by other existent sciences. His idea, explored in the 1980s and 1990s and embraced by many of his followers such as Anna Gregorová, Waldisa Rússio, Ivo Maroević, Peter van Mensch and others, shared with ICOFOM a common aim: to define museology in theoretical terms and to have it recognized as an academic discipline.

Due to the use of concepts unknown to the majority of thinkers from other regions, the terminology employed in Stránský's first papers and in his classes was much criticized, mainly by anglophone authors.<sup>34</sup> The use of what George Ellis Burcaw called the 'lexicon of Brno'<sup>35</sup> did not facilitate a full comprehension of the museological themes for those who were not familiar with it. Terms such as 'musealia', 'museality', 'museistic', among others, were unknown in the West, and did not have an equivalent in the English language.<sup>36</sup> Accused of fabricating a philosophical theory of the museum only taught in Brno, Stránský was in fact talking about changes in the conception of the museum that were being noticed around the world. Theorists who followed his ideas helped to establish a large part of what would become, in the following decades, the theory of museology mostly disseminated within ICOFOM.

To be truly inclusive of the diversity of theoretical propositions, the committee adopted a democratic methodology for its meetings: holding one meeting a year with open presentations and a symposium with some lecturers. By publishing, immediately after the meetings, the symposium papers and conclusions in separate volumes, the *ICOFOM Study Series* (ISS), and starting a parallel research based journal, the already mentioned *MuWoP*,<sup>37</sup> while also distributing printed minutes from the meetings to members, ICO-

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<sup>32</sup> Stránský 1987, 290.

<sup>33</sup> Stránský 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Burcaw 1981.

<sup>35</sup> Burcaw 1981, 83.

<sup>36</sup> Cerávolo 2004, 125.

<sup>37</sup> The wide dissemination of the first issue in 1980, on both sides of a politically divided Europe, resulted in the organization of a second issue in 1981. The Editorial Board received twenty new articles for the second issue of the *Museological Working Papers*. A third issue was planned, intended to discuss the theme of 'the object/subject of museology'. However, for lack of financial resources, it could not be organized (Sofka 1981).

FOM built a well-connected international school of thought engaging people with different backgrounds in the development of theoretical museology.

Recognizing that museology could be interpreted differently in various parts of the world, ranging from theoretical-philosophical thinking to practical work in museums, Sofka sought to ensure that all points of view were respected and that the committee's driving force would be to find theoretical unity in the diversity of museology definitions. He created a dynamic editorial policy with no restrictions on accepting articles, in order to establish a benchmark for the different positions on worldwide museology.

In 1982, with Jelínek's resignation, Sofka was elected Chair of ICOFOM. His years in this position led ICOFOM to exponential growth, beyond political borders and theoretical resistance. Sofka's chairmanship helped to create new bridges between different points of view on museology. On the occasion of the ICOFOM annual meeting of 1983 held in London, a symposium on museological topics was organized. It had been decided in the previous year that two symposia were to be arranged with two different directions: one museological-theoretical and the other ecomuseological. This was a period when ecomuseums were being created in France but also in other parts of the world, posing new museological questions in general. At the same meeting, two topics were debated, originating a double volume of ISS: one, on *Methodology of museology and professional training*, and the other on *Museum-Territory-Society: New tendencies-New practices*.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1980s, while ICOFOM theorists were discussing conceptual ideas proposed by Stránský at a philosophical and epistemological level, the French movement of *nouvelle muséologie*, defined and theorized by Rivière's pupil André Desvallées, became an attractive trend for museological thinking internationally. What Stránský and Desvallées had in common, though, was a vision of a unified theory for museology. Stránský wanted to draw a museological system with a theoretical base, and Desvallées, in parallel, defended that 'in the committee of museology, there could only exist one single museology, neither old nor new'.<sup>39</sup> This merging of different perspectives was at the core of ICOFOM studies during this period.

In the second half of the 1980s, the new political atmosphere helped to open possibilities in ICOM for more intensive international collaboration. At Masaryk University in Brno, the International Summer School of Museology (ISSOM) was established in 1987 as a UNESCO participation programme,

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<sup>38</sup> *ICOFOM Study Series*, 1-2, London, 1983.

<sup>39</sup> Desvallées 1985, 69.

most of its international lecturers being from among ICOFOM thinkers. We may say that the teaching of theoretical museology in Brno<sup>40</sup> became a model to be followed by other teaching programmes in the world, and it helped to systematize theoretical museology produced within ICOFOM.

In the 1990s, ICOFOM pursued the development of a specific lexicon for museology. Since the initial project of the *Dictionarium Museologicum*, Stránský and other Eastern European members who shared his theoretical views were engaged in creating a terminology for the museum field. Later, during the ICOFOM annual symposium of 1993 in Athens, Greece, a permanent research project entitled Terminology of Museology was created, aiming to develop basic terms and concepts. The project evolved into the idea of creating a *Thesaurus Museologicus*, coordinated by André Desvallées.

In 1997, the first results of this project were presented to ICOFOM members in two separate sections: the first, a selection of terms organized by Desvallées, prioritising the history of fundamental terms and concepts for museology; the second, coordinated by Stránský, was presented in the form of an encyclopaedical dictionary, which the author called ‘a preliminary version of a *Museological Encyclopedia*’.<sup>41</sup> The document proposed by Desvallées was widely accepted, while Stránský’s version of a possible dictionary was rejected, since it was considered by most of the members to be ‘incompatible with contemporary epistemology’.<sup>42</sup> The need for an integrated theory of museology in great part influenced by Stránský’s thinking, though, remained at the centre of the committee’s debates over the next years.<sup>43</sup>

This new school of thought had one central purpose, synthesized in the words of Stránský: ‘to make museum work directly dependent on museological efforts’.<sup>44</sup> This was, in fact, the desire of several generations of ICOFOM museologists—and maybe still is—expressed in years of debates and published theoretical essays. For Peter van Mensch and many others, the future of museology as an academic discipline lies in the reciprocal relation between

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<sup>40</sup> Later, in 1994, the Director General of UNESCO and the Rector of Masaryk University would decide to establish the UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage in Brno, Czech Republic, as the first Chair with this specific orientation in the world, marking the recognition by this organization of Eastern European museology (Nash 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Scheiner 2008, 213.

<sup>42</sup> Scheiner 2008, 213.

<sup>43</sup> The *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Muséologie*, directed by André Desvallées and François Mairesse, published in 2011, is a testimony to that fact, as a product of all previous debates and showing a great influence from Stránský’s ideas and terminology. See, for example, the chapter ‘Objet [de musée] ou muséalie’, in Desvallées and Mairesse 2011, 385-419.

<sup>44</sup> Stránský 1987, 290.



theory and practice,<sup>45</sup> or, in other words, in the ability of the theorists to contribute relevant reflections for the professional realities. In this perspective, museology would be configured as a *discipline of the interstices*, existing between two professional spheres: the practice, that is not necessarily limited by the empirical universe of the museum; and reflexive theory, that would make museum professionals (or museologists) become, rather than mere technicians, real *thinkers*.

### *Reflexive museology: new paths for critical thinking*

Throughout the process by which ICOFOM thinkers vindicated a scientific status for museology, a great part of the debates were marked by a struggle with interdisciplinarity. As noted by some historians of science, since 1808 during the Napoleonic Empire, a structural separation between the faculties of Letters and Sciences, defining an obligatory choice between literary culture or scientific culture,<sup>46</sup> established a rift in universities in different countries such as France and Germany. Knowledge was less strictly fragmented in other academic models such as in the UK and other anglophone countries; in this academic system, museology became an interdisciplinary branch of studies oriented to the museum.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, the epistemology forged in 19th-century Modernity, based on Rationality, resulted in the disintegration of the subjects of science, alienating academic disciplines by separating them in a process that was called a ‘pathology of knowledge’.<sup>48</sup> However, this pulverization of knowledge<sup>49</sup> produced in universities of the West, the logic of which is based on the division of areas confined to faculties and departments, has been challenged by contemporary scholars who dare to perceive *science* in political terms.

According to the Scottish anthropologist Joanna Overing, exploring a recent crisis of faith in philosophy over the empiricist’s paradigm of Rationality, the idea of a ‘single world’—or of a ‘single theory’—is being challenged

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<sup>45</sup> van Mensch 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Minayo 1994.

<sup>47</sup> While *museology* in France and Germany, but also in Latin America and in parts of Asia, was understood as a *science* in the academic system, inside of what was defined as the humanities, in the UK and in some parts of North America, the branch of *museum studies* would develop in dialogue with other interdisciplinary branches such as cultural studies.

<sup>48</sup> Japiassu 1976.

<sup>49</sup> Morin 1977.

within science.<sup>50</sup> Turning their gaze inward at themselves and their own actions, social scientists reveal that the world, from the perspective of our knowledge of it, is how we view it through the paradigms we create. What is being gradually perceived with the possibility of science is the fact that Rationality acts as a limitation in the way scientists perceive Others and even themselves. The Western fetishism for epistemological objects such as *reason*, *truth* and *knowledge*—or, even, the *museum*—is little by little demolishing the ways we relate to moralities and epistemologies different from ours.

Since the first questions raised in the ICOM community towards the imported models of European museology,<sup>51</sup> a window was opened for critical reflections on the plurality of cultural experiences that can be defined under the broad term of the ‘museum’. Events such as the emblematic Round Table of Santiago, Chile, organized by ICOM and UNESCO in 1972, as well as the international movement for New Museology (MINOM) in the 1980s, would be a call for the visibility of other museologies in contexts where the European methods and concepts were constantly being challenged.

Museology, as a reflexive field within the so-called *humanities*, has progressively opened up to different perceptions of reality and multiple experiences of the museum. After establishing a theoretical base for the internationally recognized but still emerging discipline, ICOFOM was challenged to acknowledge these other museologies, less absolute than the one some theorists were trying to defend. Responding to ICOM Statutes and their requirements for decentralization and regionalization, Vinoš Sofka and Peter van Mensch, the incoming Chair of ICOFOM, introduced ICOFOM regional subcommittees into the triennial plan at the ICOM General Conference in 1989 at The Hague. A committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was immediately constituted as ICOFOM LAM (since 2019, ICOFOM LAC) led by Tereza Scheiner (Brazil) and Nelly Decarolis (Argentina), and soon other committees would follow in Europe and Asia such as ICOFOM SIB (Siberia), later transformed into ICOFOM ASPAC (Asia and the Pacific).

These regional organizations, under the tutelage of ICOFOM, developed theoretical thinking in museology based on the diversity of museum practice. As for ICOFOM LAM, created in 1989 and holding its first annual meeting in 1992 in Buenos Aires, its most valuable aim was to look at diversity in the supposed unity of the theory defined by ICOFOM. The reflections in Lat-

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<sup>50</sup> Overing points out that for instance both Kuhn (1964) and Feyerabend (1975; 1978) forcefully argued against the belief of Western science in a unified objective world unaffected by the epistemic activities of the scientists themselves (Overing 1985, 2).

<sup>51</sup> Adotevi 1971.

in America have shown how museology becomes more complicated as the difficulty in defining the museum in universal and open terms increases.<sup>52</sup> The new questions posed by authors from the region raised doubts about the universality of museology, and the idea that one normalized discipline was profitable to all and applicable to every context in the world.

The museological exchange through regional subcommittees led ICOFOM to envisage ‘museum experimentation’ as the only path to theoretical innovation.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the theory of museology serves as a reflection for the museum of the future, and present experience also sustains new theories for the development of new museum forms. Therefore, ICOFOM’s fundamental role within ICOM is to elaborate a constantly evolving theory of museology, which means, according to Mathilde Bellaigue, that ‘it must absolutely assist the balance of the participation of scholars with that of museum workers and actors from the field [terrain]’.<sup>54</sup> In order for this collaborative reflection to succeed, the focus should be directed to the development of a common methodology for museology, encompassing the matters of theory but also those of practice.

Methodologically speaking, everyone involved in museums and their agencies must be studied by the scientists researching museology if we intend to understand and study *museological* practices and experiences. Nevertheless, when the same person plays both roles—the researcher who is also a museum professional—the scientific distance will depend on an exercise of *reflexivity* on his/her own museal practice. Such *reflexivity* in the making of science may prove to be a fundamental process that includes self-knowledge and the revision of paradigms.

What is certain today is that we have moved from the prescriptive field of museum practice to a *reflexive field* of museology devoted to the critical study of the existent practice. We are able, then, to produce theoretical questions in order to provoke real social transformation. In these questions, what interest us is no longer the facts, or the matter of facts, but the question itself, the issue, or the *matters of concern*.<sup>55</sup> In this new science, the role of the scientist matters, and there is not a sphere of science separated from politics.

In simpler terms, we can define reflexive museology as the *permanent consciousness* of museology. There is no denying that its first steps are to be

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<sup>52</sup> Rusconi 2006, 14.

<sup>53</sup> Bellaigue 1987, 56.

<sup>54</sup> Bellaigue 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Latour 2016, 160.

found in Stránský's metamuseology.<sup>56</sup> But some of the main social questions were not being posed when this central thinker, at the foundation of our discipline, was working solemnly with the Western conception of man-reality relations. Suddenly, contemporary museologists realized that this academic discipline, constituted at the end of the last century through a chain of geopolitical appropriations of knowledge, was made from the exercise of posing questions, rather than from the rigid definition of the answers.

*Some conclusions: open paths for contemporary museology*

Our aim in this chapter was to open up a contemporary reflection on the discipline conventionally called *museology* in some contexts of the world, and at the same time stress the importance of understanding the discipline's history. For this reason, our debate was based on one fundamental museological problem, one that still haunts this field of knowledge in its different approaches to museum theory: the challenge of configuring a unified science whose methods and theories may serve to study a vast diversity of museum experiences. This inaugural problem was raised for the first time at the core of ICOFOM, notably in the 1980s. Being at the same time theoretical and methodological, the problem could not be solved with one integrated system of concepts for museology, as first envisioned by the theorists that founded this field of museological uncertainties.

Caught between the normalization of theory and the diversity of practice, museology in its early years appeared to be at a methodological dead-end. In order to escape its own extinction, it had to be recalibrated as a field of research, not concerned with being a science or constructing a theoretical system. Museology was redefined as a field of reflections on essential problems of both the theory and practice related to the museum phenomenon. The role of ICOFOM in this process went from being a central forum or a platform for museological discussions, to progressively become a *laboratory* for museology, where one would experiment with theory and practice through conscious research.

In the beginning of the 1980s, the first attempts to summarize a theory for museology were based on the impression of certain theorists. Later, some museologists<sup>57</sup> came up with a more realistic solution for the *scientific* discipline. Research was the answer. The truth of the matter is that no philosoph-

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<sup>56</sup> Stránský 1995.

<sup>57</sup> van Mensch 1992; Teather 1983.

ical system would generate a science or its subject without a considerable amount of empirical and theoretical research.

Today, even though museology has gained a theoretical base, thanks to a fundamental methodological confrontation, museological knowledge is no longer produced solemnly in museums and for museums. A corpus of knowledge based on interdisciplinary research is still being constructed within ICOFOM, in academia and here, in this very publication, as well as in on-line academic journals, in blogs, on social media and in several other tools of cross-cultural connections that constitute what we understand as social science in our days. Museology's destiny, however, will have to be determined by its empirical character (as is argued by the humanities in general), by its instrumental value, its application to society and its purpose.

Without doubt, an academic discipline related to the museum universe (or to the *museal*) was born somewhere in the middle of ICOFOM history. As a result of different connections that were built, a new sense was given to the discipline of museology. Firstly, it was accepted that there might be museology even when there is not a museum.<sup>58</sup> When putting into question the status of museology, ICOFOM thinkers elevated the discussions from museum practice to other spheres that are within the scope of museological concerns.

By engaging multiple actors in a forum of debates, ICOFOM served as testimony to the idea—recently proposed by Bruno Latour—according to which we think together, and never apart. The *cogito* invented by Descartes is now being conceived as a *cogitamus*,<sup>59</sup> in the sense that we attempt to perform and produce a shared thinking, that in our case we call museology.

The definition of museology as a research field that goes beyond the museum raises the challenge of defining the boundaries of this discipline in empirical terms. But if the collaborative study of museology *is* museology, thus, by considering the reflexive investigation of the mediations that go beyond the museum, we begin to have a concrete empirical field for this discipline that is both theoretical and practical. From the diversity of approaches and influences here briefly presented, museology as envisioned within ICOFOM and by thinkers such as Sofka, Stránský, van Mensch, Desvallées, Rússio, Scheiner, Mairesse, and others, can be defined as 'the sum of attempts to theorization or the critical reflections related to the museum field'.<sup>60</sup> This rather large perception of museology helps to assemble some complimentary currents of thinking as well as some contrasting ones.

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<sup>58</sup> Scheiner 2005, esp. 100.

<sup>59</sup> Latour 2016, 97.

<sup>60</sup> Desvallées and Mairesse 2010, 57.

The reflection on the multiple approaches and studies in contemporary museology leads us to conceive its plurality in the world by comprehending at least three general axes that guide museological research in the present: (1) the studies that consider the museum in itself, with perspectives very close to the branch of museum studies in anglophone contexts; also (2) the matters of value related to the museum institution in the different societies, in the sense of museum ethics,<sup>61</sup> encompassing the study of cultural heritage in a broad perspective; and, finally, (3) researches on museology itself, as science or a branch of interdisciplinary knowledges and techniques, its theories, its methods, its terms and concepts. As envisioned by ICOFOM during the past decades, museology has helped to transform the museum field from its basis, by raising questions and provoking new answers to practical issues. Museology thus encompasses the museum institution but is not solemnly bound to it, as the concept has broadened in contemporary interpretations. Whether defined as science or not, museology is deeply concerned with the development of new methods and concepts that allow societies to further explore their material and immaterial culture and transmit memory in new ways and through critical, dynamic devices that we may or may not call 'museums'.

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<sup>61</sup> Chaumier 2016.

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# Over thirty years of travelling upstream: museumology and heritage studies at the University of Zagreb

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## *Abstract*

Over the last decade(s) we are witnessing an emerging interest in the heritage debate. While ICOM's definition of the museum has long been centred on the institution and its functions, the current one (adopted in Vienna in 2007) moved strongly towards explaining museums' role in society by defining heritage as its core business. This point is certainly welcome but raises questions about how already-established museum studies stand in correlation with emerging heritage studies. Is the latter taking over what was previously the main subject of museum studies and museumology, and if so, in what sense and to what degree? Heritage studies constitutes an attractive way to continue into the future but only if it can exploit the knowledge already achieved by museum studies and unfortunately this is not always the case. Museumology needs to remain in focus since heritage studies inevitably cannot cover all aspects of museum-related work.

Accordingly, some new themes do become significant, e.g. heritage interpretation, which in fact is not so new, or the idea of heritage accessibility. Both, but especially the latter, embrace in a somehow different way a participative, inclusive, and multi-cultural approach related to heritage and museums, as well as their management. Within this context we will address the role of the Zagreb School of Museumology over time and show how we keep nourishing some of the abovementioned approaches.

**Keywords:** museumology, heritage studies, heritage literacy, heritage management

## *Theoretical museumology within current heritage discourses, an introduction*

One of the pioneers of museumology at Zagreb, Ivo Maroević, discussed the beginnings of theoretical museumology:

When in 1965 the 7th General Conference of ICOM in New York concluded that

theoretical museology should be developed at the universities,<sup>1</sup> the education of museum specialists as an integral part of the creation of the profession obtained international backing. The only problem is in the fact that the definition of theoretical museology was imprecise, the result being its different development in different countries. If we can understand this today as a metaphor identifying a broad museological approach that through the training of new experts will also enable the development and advancement of museum work in a given time and space, then we will be able, with this kind of interpretation of the word ‘theoretical’, to understand the phrase ‘a theoretical approach’ [...] as the academic museological framework within which museological practice is developing. It is only with this kind of approach that we will be capable of managing the changes that are come upon [*sic*] and that are integrated in museum practice, quite frequently changing both the concept and the structure of the museum.<sup>2</sup>

Over time museology has changed, itself and ourselves alike, including our relationship(s) with the reality of the world which surrounds us. Museology—once an unusual perception termed *museality*,<sup>3</sup> conceived as the specific relation between man and reality, or else the documentation of the real apprehended via our senses<sup>4</sup>—gradually became an important field of study encompassing concepts of heritage understanding and interpretation. Accordingly, there is a reason why we need to stress here a certain (mis)use of the word *museum*. Museology is (obviously) concerned with museums but its area of interest, as Peter van Mensch rightfully argued over 20 years ago, is not the institute/institution itself but a structural category or a social system which has a much ‘wider range than when applied to a historical and social-cultural certain institute’.<sup>5</sup> After all, only from this perspective can we truly fathom ICOM’s expanded, inclusive definition of the museum:

A museum is 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 purposes of education, study and enjoyment.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maroević 2004, 125, referring to Maroević 1998, 83.

<sup>2</sup> Maroević 2004, 125. This quote first appeared in a paper published by Maroević in *ICOFOM Study Series/ISS 33a* (2001), 63-68 (in English).

<sup>3</sup> See the chapter on Brno museology, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Une relation spécifique entre l’ homme et la réalité caractérisée comme la documentation du réel par l’ appréhension sensible directe’, quoted in Gob and Drouguet 2014, 17.

<sup>5</sup> van Mensch 1995. Paper presented at the joint meeting of ICOFOM and MINOM at Stavanger, July 4, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Current ICOM definition, adopted at the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, August 24, 2007; emphasis by the author.

It is exactly this definition of the museum that opens up a whole range of issues regarding human relationship(s) with reality, from the point of view of culture/heritage production to diverse power relations, also the analysis of interrelated interpretations and presentations going on within today's museums and more.

The overarching idea (embraced or not by museum/heritage professionals) is that today, as far as heritage is concerned, we are taken aback when many traditional museum/heritage related scientific disciplines (e.g. archaeology, art history, biology, ethnology, history) deliver (more) practical heritage solutions, alongside theoretical ones. Practical means that those who support research are, more or less directly, saying that they would like to see tangible (for lack of better word) results of implemented research. Thus, the domain of museums/heritage interpretation and management is often handled without sufficient knowledge about it. The requirements of today's society tend towards utilitarian/practical/measurable (often only by economic standards) results in every human activity, including e.g. academic work as well as museum-related work.

### *Museology and beyond*

Let us rethink, then, why museums in terms of collections, functions, activities and heritage in general, are important to us and relevant? Heritage, a key element in the existing ICOM definition of museum, is unquestionably a very complex phenomenon which began to be particularly addressed only within the last twenty years or so, even though it was at the core of any museum-related enterprise for practically centuries, if not millennia. It was actually only very recently that we started paying attention to heritage as a phenomenon in its own right, and witnessed an exponential growth of interest in the various uses of heritage. If nothing else, the heritage turn makes us rethink a cynical remark back in 1967 commenting upon the redundancy of yet another scientific field dealing with museum(s), namely museology, by comparing it to grandmotherology.<sup>7</sup> We cannot help thinking how deeply wrong this remark was, as it put aside the fact that grandmotherology could bring about serious heritage discussions, in the sense of e.g. family-related storytelling, a well-recognized educational activity in today's museum/heritage domain. In other words, if we take into account the number of universities and cours-

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<sup>7</sup> Wilcomb E. Washburn in 1967 compared museology to grandmotherology, or science addressing grandmothers.

es offering knowledge in the museum/heritage field and the almost frenetic obsession with heritage at present, it seems that, ironically, grandmother(s) struck heavily back.

Museums are global phenomena and so is heritage. But are there any global, as we live in a globalized world, challenges which (may) exist here? Let us briefly summarize: museums constitute a European-based concept, in other words Eurocentric, a *Western* way to perceive the world and a Western understanding (imposed on others), of heritage too, which up to very recently only focused on materiality. On the other hand, we must not be surprised if we end up completely confused by ideas that heritage is actually entirely intangible. While within the concept of immateriality we (Westerns) are trying to cope by recognizing similarities in our own cultures (language, dance, traditional skills, etc.), some researchers in the field of Critical Heritage Studies, as e.g. Laurajane Smith further confuse us by saying that ‘there is, really, no such thing as heritage’.<sup>8</sup> Peter Howard in his book *Heritage: management, interpretation, identity* presents an only seemingly contradictory stance when he says that heritage can be really anything we want and that ‘things actually inherited do not become heritage until they are recognized as such. Identification is all’.<sup>9</sup> Finally, let us quote Brian Graham, Greg J. Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge who go even further by suggesting that ‘heritage can be visualized as a duality—a resource of economic and cultural capital’ or in other words (and more heretical for some) that heritage is actually ‘a commodity, moreover one that is simultaneously multi-sold in many segmented marketplaces’.<sup>10</sup> As presented, these statements impose more questions than provide answers as to what heritage might be, which is (or must be!) the crucial prerequisite for defining *the core business* of any museum. In addition, and according to contemporary ideas coming from Critical Heritage Studies, heritage does not actually exist until any specific elements inherited from the past, but also those created in the present are identified and labelled as such according to our current preferences. And there is nothing wrong with that. Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge will say that we therefore have gained access to a specific resource from which certain elements (deliberately picked) are turned into a particular kind of product intended to meet very certain (always contemporary) needs. Since conversion of resources into a product intended for consumption is, according to their opinion, evident, heritage is

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<sup>8</sup> Smith 2006, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Howard 2003, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Graham et al. 2000, 22.

already at its base a form of commodification.<sup>11</sup> Even more so, every time that heritage is brought up, there is a dual form of usage and consumption—on the one hand, a cultural or socio-political level, and on the other, an economical level, whereby in both cases heritage possesses certain market-oriented values.<sup>12</sup>

The most common methods of heritage exploitation as an economic resource are relatively well known<sup>13</sup> and easily identifiable, associated primarily with the creation of developmental strategies (i.e. regeneration and/or development plans in rural or urban areas) and for use and promotion in tourism, usually as the most important component of the global heritage industry. The question whether heritage possesses intrinsic values aside from the economic perspective is by all means insignificant here as long as heritage becomes the vehicle to attain desirable results. This means that any concerns regarding sustainability of resources (almost exclusively of a material nature) and the right of ownership (thus, right of use) are in general non-existent despite the fact that those concerns should always be in focus, especially in the case when use (any kind of use) of heritage is explained first and foremost by its beneficial impact on local communities. Still, we would like to argue, at this point, for more sincere policies towards a socially responsible heritage management approach that must take into account another level of heritage use, namely the socio-political one, utterly influential but often hidden. Questions such as why we consider heritage and care for heritage important, who defines it and how, what affects and determines our position towards heritage, who controls it and how, on whose behalf and with what purpose, are inherent within a socio-political approach. Heritage suggests and activates a network of power relations which turns the field into a dominance playground. This reasoning stems first and foremost from the idea of representation (i.e. attribution of what heritage is, or not, including neglected heritage) where designated heritage is used to maintain or reconstruct a full range of socio-cultural values and meanings. More specifically, the process includes the use of selected elements (be they tangible or intangible, or even actual, fictional, cultural or natural) on the basis of a particular interpretation. Those elements are then converted into heritage and become media communicating complex layers and characteristics of identity/ies.<sup>14</sup> We are then faced with an

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<sup>11</sup> Graham et al. 2000, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Ashworth et al. 2007, 36-45; Graham et al. 2000, 17-22.

<sup>13</sup> See Ashworth & Howard 1999; Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge 2007; Graham, Ashworth & Tunbridge 2000; Howard 2003; Rypkema 2005, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Graham et al. 2000, 41.



extremely important challenge: those in charge of creating heritage always constitute a small group of heritage professionals including peers, superiors and so on, a situation which Smith perfectly well describes as the dominance of an ‘authorized heritage discourse’.<sup>15</sup> Existence of an authorized heritage discourse means we are (still) living in a world where a minority defines values and meanings on behalf of much greater majorities, be it on a global or indeed local level. This privileged position of a minority group is more and more called into question over recent decades but still the issue has not, in our view, gained enough momentum, since the debate on power is dealt with only at a superficial level. Further empowerment of citizens to act as heritage curators/managers of their own heritage is thus desperately needed. We firmly believe that more participatory governance, also within the domain of heritage management, is the minimum we need to reach, sooner rather than later.

With these views in mind, let us turn to our main issue in this paper, namely the legacy of the Zagreb School of Museology.

### *The contribution of the Zagreb School of Museology*

In 2005-2006 all academic institutions in Croatia were confronted with the demand to update their study programmes following the so-called Bologna Process.<sup>16</sup> While some saw it as a burden, the Section of Museology in the Department of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Zagreb<sup>17</sup> recognized the opportunity and significantly reformed its study programme. Besides important and substantial changes regarding the content of taught subjects and courses, this development resulted in a title change for the entire study programme, which then became the Master of Museology and Heritage Management. This noteworthy change was at first a reflection of current trends on a local level, highlighting the fact that heritage slowly but steadily started to attract the attention of diverse stakeholders, despite the fact that heritage was then primarily connected with simplified management ideas, e.g. use within the touristic framework. At the same time this change co-

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<sup>15</sup> Smith 2006. For a definition of the authorized heritage discourse AHD and its uses, see Smith 2006, 29 (editors’ note).

<sup>16</sup> The Bologna Process stands for a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications.

<sup>17</sup> For the official site, see the University of Zagreb at <https://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/en/department-profile/department-sections/museum-na-heritage-management>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

incided with our intentions not only to follow but (when and where possible) also to shape global trends within the fields of museology and heritage studies. Introducing the concept of heritage interpretation, and more importantly the concept of heritage literacy, we proved not only that the re-formation of the museology programme at Zagreb University was needed but also that the directions adopted were the right ones, as global trends demonstrated later on.

It is important to remember that museology is not another pop-up idea that surfaced recently. While, then, we could applaud the boom of heritage interest, it should not escape our attention that museology is once again understood as a diverse set of epistemological approaches, theoretical as well as applied, with emphasis on the multi-layered, qualitative management of heritage. A very relevant example to illustrate this point, as far as Southeast Europe is on focus, could be the Zagreb School of Museology. In 2014, the Master Program of Museology and Heritage Management at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb celebrated 30 years of existence, yet another proof that the cynical remark about museology—a science addressing the museum (and heritage) phenomena—becoming redundant, was not only irrelevant but also wrong.

Focusing on the development of museology at the University of Zagreb, the first significant moment towards organized training for museum professionals in Croatia could be traced to 1967. It was then that the initial phase of the academic programme in museology started, as part of the Postgraduate Studies in Librarianship and Documentation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. This development was undoubtedly influenced by the Eastern European approach of documentation being the central core of all aspects of information science.<sup>18</sup> The formation of museology as an academically related programme in Croatia (then Yugoslavia) was initiated by Antun Bauer (1911-2000), an archaeologist, collector, and museologist who founded numerous museums in Croatia and enriched their collections with personal donations. The next key moment in the development of museology as an academic discipline and an academic accredited study programme is connected with the establishment of the Museology Section in 1984 at the Department of Information Sciences (currently Department of Information and Communication Sciences) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Two years later, the Museology Section welcomed the first generation of students, while the programme in

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<sup>18</sup> It should be mentioned here that this moment was coincidental with the first stages of informatization of museums and with pronounced tendencies of standardization in museum documentation.

museology was one of the specialized options within the abovementioned Department, along with librarianship, archive sciences and others.<sup>19</sup>

The main protagonist responsible for the important structural change was the esteemed Croatian museologist Ivo Maroević (1937-2007), an art historian by education who always felt there was more to say, think, and do regarding museums and heritage. According to his understanding, information sciences was the natural environment for the development of museology, which was formally recognized in 1983 as a scientific discipline within the field of social sciences in the then Yugoslavian, currently Croatian, classification of scientific disciplines. However, Maroević made much more impact by specifying the scientific character of museology, determining the scope of museological research and defining fundamental terms.<sup>20</sup> Let us quote only the definition of museology which has been recognized as important in the international museum community:<sup>21</sup>

Museology is that area of information sciences concerned with research into the identification, preservation and communication of the museality of the material manifestations of culture and nature (in the first place musealia) in order to preserve human heritage and to interpret and transmit its significance, and concerned with forms of organized and institutionalized activity (especially museums) serving these goals.<sup>22</sup>

For Maroević, museology focuses on objects and environments identified as heritage. While intangible heritage is not explicitly included in his definition, it clearly connects with time, context, and circumstances and therefore it is rather implied than ignored. Maroević's museology is primarily interested in the *museality* of heritage objects and environments. The origins of the term *museality* can be traced back to Central European museological circles; specifically, the term was coined by the Czech museologist Z. Z. Stránský.<sup>23</sup> Museality has been interpreted as a set of characteristics of objects, environments and phenomena witnessing another reality, i.e. a chronological or social con-

<sup>19</sup> <https://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/en/department-profile/department-sections/museum-na-heritage-management>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> The considerations and theoretical thinking of I. Maroević have been included in the international corpus of museological knowledge throughout his active participation in ICOFOM and ICTOP activities.

<sup>21</sup> Maroević's most well-known theoretical work on museology was translated into English as *Introduction to Museology - The European Approach* (1998).

<sup>22</sup> Maroević 1998, 129.

<sup>23</sup> In 1970 Stránský's theory of museology was presented to the Croatian readers through the text 'The concept of museology', published in the journal *Muzeologija* (Museology) 8, 2-73.

text from which they were taken and to which they refer. In contemporary terms we would say that the term *museality* covers multiple layers of meaning and attributed values which we can detect in diverse entities recognized as heritage. Within Maroević's understanding of museality the idea of multi-faceted heritage, as we read it today, is always present, no matter whether it exists inside or outside museums or if the use of the concept of heritage appears in a rather marginal way. In his work much more importance is given to the museological functions of protection and communication which, in addition to research, later became the well-known concept of the P-R-C system (Protection-Research-Communication).<sup>24</sup> The museology programme at the University of Zagreb was primarily shaped under the approach and perspectives set by Maroević and it was formed on a four-year basis, as well as an additional two-year supplementary, academic programme.

Although embedded in the theoretical principles of information and communication sciences, the academic programme always paid attention to the considerations and need for learning and mastering competencies connected with the practicalities of the museum world. But that elaborate programme was not the only approach to museology taught within the Zagreb School of Museology over recent decades. Two more important elements, one theoretical and another rather practical, significantly influenced the way education for museum and heritage professionals took shape in Croatia.

First, a Critical Heritage Studies approach has increasingly developed over the last five to ten years. Critical Heritage is an interdisciplinary academic field which takes a critical look at the diverse ways which we create, present, interpret, and participate in heritage, regardless of how we define it. The reason, albeit not the only one, why this understanding of heritage was adopted in Croatia relates to the importance of tourism for the local economy as well as with the global impact of tourism upon heritage, particularly given tourism's often questionable impact on local communities. After all, tourism has certainly influenced the blossoming of not only diverse types of heritage-related institutions but also the development of training workshops as well as university heritage related programmes<sup>25</sup> all around the world. No matter their quality, these programmes (in)directly reflect the above—an increased

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<sup>24</sup> The PRC system was introduced into museological enquiry by Peter van Mensch, a former doctoral student of Professor I. Maroević, in his PhD thesis *Towards a Methodology of Museology*, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 1992.

<sup>25</sup> We will not enter into a discussion here as to which are really heritage orientated and which just follow the trend whereby the word heritage is more attractive than tourism for branding diverse programmes.

interest in heritage and the importance of dealing with heritage by professionals and non-experts alike. We sincerely applaud this development since we all support the claim that heritage indeed belongs to the people. Moreover, another significant process should be mentioned, namely the introduction of theoretical heritage studies as a relevant research field which goes side by side with museology. This approach to heritage looks at, researches, and analyzes ideas and concepts where heritage is seen primarily as knowledge, an epistemological approach being very close to Maroevic's ideas about musealia and museality.

Regarding the concept of heritage today we are definitely talking about 'a cultural product and a political resource that fulfils crucial socio-political functions'.<sup>26</sup> The specific quote not only points towards the complexity of heritage as a contemporary phenomenon but also calls for a need to tackle as many contrapuntal notions of heritage in today's globalized, multicultural, supranational society as possible. The concept of dissonant heritage, as defined by Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge in 2007, existing in every society as already proved by the complexity of the heritage discourse, demonstrates that the discussion about heritage is still dominated by Eurocentric perspectives and is indeed fascinated by the grandiose, the monumental, and most importantly, the tangible.

The adaptation of these universal topics in a local context is now an important part of the curriculum of the MA in Museology and Heritage Management at the University of Zagreb. Specifically, by adopting a critical approach towards key issues and following the appropriate methodology, the goal is to understand the genuine idea of heritage as a universal concept; at the same time, to understand that heritage is valid at all levels—national, regional, local, personal. This includes a reconsideration of existing as well as new answers to questions like: what is or what could be a museum today; what is the role of museums in contemporary society, with heritage being at its core; who are supposed to be the heritage creators and who the heritage users, with additional questions addressing the issues of tourism, amateurism and so on. Finally, the overarching question remains, namely what the term heritage stands for, especially if we take into account diverse audiences (individuals and communities), diverse needs, a different insight into the matter by various groups but also commonly accepted principles around the world.

Under this apparent need for a critical approach to heritage issues and the many challenges that occur along the way, the dilemma is if we should

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<sup>26</sup> Ashworth at al. 2007.

switch from museum studies to heritage studies, having in mind the possible consequences, or if after decades of fighting for the recognition of museology we need to reinvent the wheel once again, advocating for the establishment of heritage studies as a sound academic discipline. The answer to this will be based on the experience of the development of museology, in the past and more importantly now, and the necessity for the continuation of this quest or, on the contrary, of supporting the emergence of heritage studies. Adopting the latter implies significant changes, as such a direction will influence all museum and heritage professionals. While many academics are convinced that following the already established state of affairs is the ideal way of action, the responsibility towards the shaping of the future is obvious. The role of academics and programmes in introducing new realities and approaches is crucial, primarily in a way that ensures the involvement of existing and forthcoming generations of museum and heritage professionals. The dynamics of an evolving world, full of changing realities and challenges, reflects in the complexity of dealing with heritage in any museum institution, and interested individuals have to become aware from the very beginning and later as part of their professional education.

The definition of museology as part of information sciences which points toward the study of the identification, protection and communication of material testimonies of culture and nature (i.e. museality) and aims to protect human heritage<sup>27</sup> remains relatively strong and very directly linked to museums as institutions mainly focusing on objects. Ecomuseums and New Museology challenged these ideas. More precisely, new museology opened a new chapter, or even a new direction or school, emphasizing that the prime content, the study of museology cannot be museum objects and collections but the concept of heritage, which does indeed include museum objects but it does not end there. If we paraphrase Kuhn's<sup>28</sup> wording we may say that museology is once again in a situation characterized by different schools stressing their approaches and views, therefore at some kind of a turning point towards a new heritage revolution which will potentially define a new or improved scientific discipline focusing first and foremost on the heritage phenomenon. Profound analysis of heritage has been initiated by practices of the ecomuseums and New Museology, but this just set it going, and left it desperately asking for more. Heritage studies in recent years do respond to

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<sup>27</sup> Maroević 1993, 92-93.

<sup>28</sup> Regarding the progress of scientific revolutions, see the introduction by V. Afrić in the Croatian translation of Kuhn, T.S. (2002) *Struktura znanstvenih revolucija*, Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk. Translation by the author.

this long request, even when repeating some known arguments.

In line with the above, the Zagreb School of Museology was among the prominent institutions to support this approach, primarily through T. Šola,<sup>29</sup> whose stay in France in the late 1970s influenced significantly his intellectual production. His works paved the way towards the establishment of heritage studies in Zagreb.

These ideas are not always easy and readily accepted. Indeed, we are not saying that the outcome from a Critical Heritage approach is completely new, especially for academics and professionals educated and researching within museology, particularly in the field of Sociomuseology.<sup>30</sup> However, we live in dynamic times as far as museology and heritage studies are concerned. Both approaches ask for our contribution towards a broadening of their core, especially since there is a visible convergence of their diverse practical and theoretical approaches and methodologies. Acting on this interaction may only positively contribute towards the formation of the future paradigm.

### *Heritage as knowledge: heritage interpretation and heritage literacy*

As we have already mentioned, heritage as an economic resource is, generally speaking, recognized and valued in a contemporary context. Accordingly, the majority of the general public, but also many heritage professionals (especially those with management responsibilities, including curators) broadly accept this idea. However, heritage has the ability to determine values and meanings through a process of selection as well as of use, thus it is a resource with very strong and important socio-political functions which form particular types of knowledge, always dependent on present perceptions. Heritage as knowledge is incomparably less-discussed than heritage as an economic resource although the former is in fact a prerequisite, or supposed to be a precondition for the latter. There is no heritage per se (that is, possessing intrinsic values). Heritage undergoes a kind of ‘manipulation’ and becomes ‘subjected to the management and preservation/conservation process, not because it simply “is”’.<sup>31</sup> What we are saying here is that heritage is actually a specific form of management of values and meanings, i.e. that heritage and heritage-related knowledge management are inseparable categories. This statement brings us (back) to the idea of museality as defined by Maroević. As a consequence, and from a practical viewpoint we must take into account

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<sup>29</sup> See Šola 2003; Šola 2005.

<sup>30</sup> See Assunção dos Santos 2010, 5-12.

<sup>31</sup> Smith 2006, 3.

inclusiveness and a participatory approach in order for ordinary people to be able to properly manage heritage. By 'ordinary' we mean those owning their own heritage (be they individuals, local, regional, national or international communities) who must be aware and understand the process by which heritage is constructed.

To enable them to do so it is crucially important to introduce yet another type of literacy in this context. While the basic idea of (any) kind of literacy always depends on existing information and communication forms defining and characterizing a society (for instance, reading and writing literacies define and characterize Western societies), literacy could at the same time be understood as the ability to navigate within specific social contexts defined by specific characteristics of a group, i.e. local culture. Thus, it seems obvious that we need a sort of heritage literacy vis-à-vis heritage management which is primarily (a kind of) knowledge management. Peoples/local communities, no matter how small or big, must be able to understand heritage processes and be able to navigate through heritage diversity, as it is clear that heritage processes are not identical among different communities, or even within the same culture. Only after ensuring this kind of awareness and participation in knowledge-related management can stakeholders profoundly claim their rights to heritage and eventually, to its economic management. The idea of heritage literacy brings about the role of qualitative, inclusive and participatory heritage interpretation as a necessity, a vital spark to catalyze the entire process. Heritage literacy, led by heritage interpretation is the only possible way to empower people over time so as to use heritage in a way they consider most appropriate, and best for their own future development. If heritage does not serve this purpose then we have somewhere, somehow, failed as a (universal) society.

### *Looking at the future. Thinking globally, acting locally*

From this visionary perspective, heritage interpretation uses all information and knowledge acquired to empower communities. It is only through this approach that heritage can become meaningful and useful. In fact, we are talking about an 'upgrade', a wiser understanding of the idea of heritage. Wisdom, in this sense, can be defined as 'selected or carefully filtrated knowledge, or as a sort of undoubtedly truthful knowledge which is always connected with making the right judgments regarding actions and the decisions we make, our behaviours and functioning'.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, wisdom inherently

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<sup>32</sup> Afrić et al. 2004, 36-37.



contains the capability to use knowledge for sharp-witted decision making in any situation, especially that of conflict. On the one hand, wisdom is a form of knowledge and on the other, it is an effective type of action in our existing societal environment. When applied to the fields of museums and heritage, to all tangible (objects, monuments, sites and other) and intangible evidence (customs, languages, music and other), then the foundation of heritage, the thing we are discussing within any defined territory, becomes, on the basis of this heritage/wisdom relation, a form of knowledge reflected upon our personal, local, regional, national, universal collective legacy. But wisdom, as does heritage from our vantage point, exists beyond that level. Heritage literacy embraces the idea of a systematic, global, lifelong and holistic process in which every individual and/or group must have an inalienable and guaranteed right to participate, benefit from, and use. This right aligns with that of self-definition, self-esteem and the right to create one's singular experience out of the pool of an endless collective human heritage. Empowering local people to become real heritage guardians in an open and democratic process is the only way to reach these goals, no matter how challenging it may sound. Museums are invited to have a vital role in this. While differences around the world regarding implementation may be significant, the main goal is always mutual. We all are invited to act locally while the idea of heritage and human legacy is a global one. In diversity we are united, with a reason.

It is a challenging task but more than desirable if we want to reach, address and accordingly transfer and exchange experience among us all, in a democratic way and with full respect towards the mutual understanding of diverse heritage(s) we all are concerned with. This final remark represents one of the main strands of how museology/heritage studies and management is understood at the University of Zagreb today. The future can be shaped but never fully anticipated, that is why it is so interesting, and the same applies to museology/heritage studies.

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# Critical Museology in Scandinavia and Finland: a basis for change?

*Kerstin Smeds*

## *Abstract*

Museology has in most parts of the world been, and still is, perceived as a theory of the museum institution itself; the museum as social phenomenon, the museum's role in society and learning, and museum collections and management. Parallel to this, particularly in Eastern European countries, museology early on was to cover much more. The concept grew larger and included other institutions from the field of heritage. Today, the concept of museology in many of these countries covers almost everything that has to do with man's dealing with time, history, immaterial and material heritage, from large geographical ecomuseums and heritage sites to the smallest private enterprise. The Chair of Museology at Umeå University, Sweden, defines museology in this very broad sense. Our theoretical standpoint is also more analytical and critical and can be seen as a parallel to the rapidly growing field of Critical Heritage. In this chapter I will explore the development of museology in Scandinavia and Finland—with more focus on Sweden—and its early influences from Eastern Europe and France.

**Keywords:** museology, Scandinavian museology, Finnish museology, critical heritage

## *Why museology?\**

*If anyone talked or wrote about museology as a science thirty or twenty years ago, he would be met with a pitying, disdainful smile from many persons. Today, the situation is quite different.*

This sounds somehow familiar, doesn't it? The quotation above is from an article on museology called 'Die Museologie als Fachwissenschaft' (Museology as science), written by a renowned German scholar.<sup>1</sup> Nothing special with

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\* Some of the contents of this article were modified and published in Smeds 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Dr T. H. Th. Graesse from Dresden published this in the *Zeitschrift für Museologie und*

this, only the fact that it was written one hundred and thirty eight years ago, more precisely in 1883. Today, one may ask: have we come any further from this statement?

Among academic museologists there is a strange defensive or apologetic attitude when speaking about the need for and usefulness of museology in the professional museum and heritage field. The same goes when speaking about museology as a scientific branch/discipline equivalent to other disciplines. We academic museologists incessantly have to explain what museology is, and tell museums *that* they need us, and *why* they need us; particularly so in Scandinavia and many parts of Europe, but also in the USA. Here I had better note that I am *not* talking about museology in the traditional sense of museography or Museumskunde or museum techniques, primarily teaching how to work in a museum, what some professionals call ‘housekeeping skills’.<sup>2</sup> Rather, I am talking about museology as an analytical approach to the museum, which is a complex phenomenon in society, intertwined with the history, culture and political ideologies in that very society.

The reasons for this peculiar situation address an intriguing epistemological question indeed. After all, almost every other cultural institution or cultural field in our Western society has, at an early stage, developed its ‘own’ scholarly discipline—such as archival and library sciences, media science, film science, theatre studies, literary science (or studies), musicology, with their own theoretical apparatuses. Thus, each of these fields are subject to deep scientific research and teaching, often at their own colleges or academies, but even more so at universities. To get a job in one of these branches, e.g. in a library or an archive, requires a degree in this particular discipline. Only museums have been overlooked. Even today, museology has to struggle uphill, not only in the academic world, but to some extent also in the museum field. In Sweden, for instance, a degree in museology or museum studies is still not a requirement to get a job as a curator or collection manager in a museum. More important would be a degree in whatever discipline the museum is built upon, be it art, archaeology or something similar. Finland is here an interesting exception; there is even legislation stipulating that you

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*Antiquitätenkunde, Sowie Verwandte Wissenschaften* (1878-1884), see Sofka 1992. See also van Mensch 1992, ‘The Museology Discourse’. In *Towards a methodology of museology*. PhD thesis, University of Zagreb, Croatia. <https://www.phil.muni.cz/unesco/Documents/mensch.pdf>, 1, n. 2 and 2, fig. 1. Accessed April 6, 2021 (editors’ note).

<sup>2</sup> Smeds 2000, 49. Although the chairs of museology in Paris and Rio de Janeiro were founded at the beginning of the 1920s, they too had merely a practical, not theoretical approach to museum management.

should have a degree in museology to be given employment in museums.

Even more interesting is to turn the coin and ask *why* there has been, and still often is, some opposition to museology within academies and museums, and why museology still germinates some mistrust within the branch. Briefly, to refer to what a Norwegian professor said in 1993, arguing against any museological university program: ‘A Norwegian museum training program [...] certainly represents a deadlock and leads us astray.’ An even more scathing verdict was heard from another professor (also historian) that same year:

I want to state, here and now, that museology offers training for a practical job. It is a misunderstanding to believe that it should be possible to be a ‘museologist’, one who studies museums in their abstraction without having a basis and anchorage in the real disciplines which are the genuine roots of the museums, the reason for their existence. It is unrealistic, thoughtless and naïve.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, this harsh statement is very particular, and does not concur with the entire field, nor with employment practice. In fact, opinions are divided. One faction of museum professionals have, beginning already in the 1970s, enthusiastically thrown themselves into museological development according to new international, social and museological trends.<sup>4</sup> Another faction, especially those with an academic degree in some classical ‘museum discipline’, are fiercely opposed any involvement of museology in the museum.

A very common, albeit unsatisfying, explanation for this opposition would be that museum professionals find it more important to enhance research in the classical museum disciplines, whatever discipline each museum’s collections embrace (archaeology, ethnography, art history, natural history, etc.). Another answer is that for a long time, museum and heritage problems are being explored through a vast variety of other disciplines such as ethnology, sociology, history, archaeology, art history, anthropology, and pedagogy. So why do we need museology?—especially since a third, and more adequate, answer to the *why* would be that museum professionals themselves, particularly those with a higher academic degree, do not find it important to scrutinize their doings. Many museum professionals are also so stuck in their everyday matters, running the museum, taking care of their collections and perhaps jealously guarding their own particular academic field, that their focus is exclusively aimed either at practical matters or at research in their own discipline. There is no time nor energy to start analyzing—let alone letting

<sup>3</sup> Gjestrum 1995, 5. Both statements in the same source, the latter of which is by the conservative historian Einar Niemi.

<sup>4</sup> Hofrén et al. 1970; Näsman 2014.

anybody else in to analyze—their museum's doings from a broader political, philosophical or museological point of view. Museums and heritage seem, to some, to be intrinsic values and nothing to problematize.

Deeper reasons for this tacit resistance to museology and museological research can, to some degree, be traced to the fact that in Europe, the dominant discourse on museology emerged, in addition to France, in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and indirectly, perhaps originally, in Soviet Russia. Here, the museums were early on, and more explicitly, already after the Russian Revolution, incorporated into the socialist ideologies and ideals of the state, thus gaining importance as a tool for socialist cultural policy and propaganda.<sup>5</sup> If museums were previously mainly seen as places for the preservation of collections and for research, they were turned into a kind of centre for pedagogy and culture, with a focus on visitors, teaching and learning according to socialist ideology. Hence, the museums' political and ideological role and importance in society also started to be problematized and 'scientified'. Already in the post-revolutionary period in the 1920s, there was vivid activity among Russian scholars and cultural departments, with the aim of starting up research not only *in* museums, but also *on* museums.<sup>6</sup> But this is only one, maybe not even a very strong argument, against the need for museology, since not many in the West were even aware of these historical socialist roots.

So, where does museology stand today and why are we where we are? What results has the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) achieved during its first forty years of existence and of theoretical museological discussion? In what way has this debate had an impact on how we, in Scandinavia and Finland, conceive museology? Has ICOFOM solved the problem of what museology is? A great bulk of books and studies (e.g. in ISS, ICOFOM Study Series available on the web)<sup>7</sup> are dealing with the substance of museology, the foundations and definitions of museology and museums. There are also many studies on the interrelationships between museology, society and museums, of which, in my opinion, those with a more philosophical and social perspective are the most interesting.

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<sup>5</sup> Ananiev 2016, 171-182; see also Ananiev, this volume.

<sup>6</sup> Ananiev 2016, 173-175.

<sup>7</sup> Mairesse 2000, 33-56; Desvallées 1992; ICOFOM Study Series: <http://network.icom.museum/icofom/publications/our-publications/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

### *Defining museology*

Before we start scrutinizing the 'schools' of museology in the northern countries, let us briefly trace the history of defining museological study. What do we conceive as our object of study and research? This is an ongoing international discussion, with ICOFOM at the forefront. In order to give a brief background to our own answers in Sweden, I have chosen to mention a couple of international definitions. One of the earliest, and broadest, is the one presented by Anna Gregorová in 1980: 'Museology is a science studying the *specific relation* of man to reality, consisting in purposeful and systematic collecting and conservation of selected inanimate, material, mobile (especially three dimensional) objects documenting the development of nature and society'.<sup>8</sup>

Gregorová distinguishes three domains worth studying: the museum's relation to reality and time (existential and semiotic dimension); the museum's relation to society (political and cultural/political dimension); the museum's practical functions (organization and mission). Museology belongs to the humanities, it is a *social scientific* discipline, not a discipline dealing only with practical matters (like classical museography and museum techniques), Gregorová states. She concludes that there are two main focus fields for museological studies: the historical sense of man, and material documents of the development of nature and society.<sup>9</sup>

The French sociologist and museologist Bernard Deloche picked up some of Gregorová's definitions when speaking about museology as our 'relation spécifique' to reality. What narrations do we weave into the concept and what do we do with the 'musealité' in terms of communication and social interaction, as well as in a political and ideological sense? Museums are *processes* with the aim of making man's multifaceted relation to reality and history visible. Deloche ends by stating that museology is a 'philosophie du muséal' and as such, a 'metatheory' and not a science. In this way museology is, according to Deloche, also 'contractuelle', a question of agreement on its objectives.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1979 and 1989 the foundations of museum theory/museology were laid in an intense international collaboration (e.g. within ICOFOM), and today, although the discussion is ongoing, there is an agreement that museology is defined differently and addresses different types of problems in different parts of the world. Many still focus on the museum as a social

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<sup>8</sup> Gregorová 1981, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Gregorová 1980, 20.

<sup>10</sup> Deloche 1999.



and political phenomenon and institution, while others go for the broader definition encompassing the totality of heritage and ‘museality’, as used by Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the object of study of museology could be extended, as Thereza Scheiner states, to encompass ‘the global museum as the planet Earth, the little spaceship on which we live’,<sup>12</sup> which would be transcribed to addressing not only objects and collections, museums and their communications, but also nature/ecology (ecomuseums and nature reserves), landscapes, the built environment, and other. In short, I would define contemporary museology as a philosophy of our existential relationship to material and immaterial heritage.

Those of us in Sweden and Finland who are teaching and conducting research in the field have long since lost interest (if ever there was any) in chewing and debating pure definitions and foundations of museology, or the concept of museum for that matter. It does not follow from this that we disregard the ongoing international discussion on the definition of the museum. Only, we are engaged in other problems. The definition of museums is important for many reasons, not the least for ICOM who needs international agreement on the subject. The definition of museology is another matter. To me, this is a global diversity problem that cannot be solved. There are, once and for all, different conceptions and ideas of museology in different parts of the world. The only thing we have in common globally is that we all, in one way or another, deal with museums, musealization (and heritage) and scrutinize the role of all this in society. That should be enough, as far as definitions are concerned. Nevertheless, it is important to cast an eye on the epistemological and educational history and development in our countries, up to this point where we are now. I will give a brief notion of this history here.

### *Museology in Scandinavia*

I have dwelt on these definitions for a while in order to present the setting and the context in which the museological school in Sweden and particularly at Umeå University developed. Museology at Umeå was founded in 1981 by Per-Uno Ågren, with the aid of Vиноš Sofka, Erik Hofrén and many others who, in the late 1970s, had started promoting the development of museology in Sweden. Ågren integrated museological theory and thinking in his courses on cultural analysis. For some time, he had been closely collaborating with lead-

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter on Brno Museology, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>12</sup> Scheiner 2010, 98.

ing theorists within ICOFOM and with European museologists and related museum professionals, among them Anna Gregorová, Friedrich Waidacher, Zbyněk Stránský, Georges-Henri Rivière, Gaynor Kavanagh, Kenneth Hudson and Vinoš Sofka, who had come to Sweden as a refugee from Czechoslovakia in 1968. The ecomuseum movement of the 1970s and 1980s, helped along by the founder of the concept, Hugues de Varine<sup>13</sup> and others, was, in Scandinavia, very relevant and influential for this development.<sup>14</sup> Inspired by this international movement, a feverish activity of museum development started in different parts of Scandinavia. At that turbulent time, museums were conceived not only as the guardians of our heritage, but also as social actors with a responsibility to engage ordinary people on the regional level in museum activities, promoting a collective memory.<sup>15</sup>

Of high importance were also several international conferences, the first of which, 'The role of the museum in a decentralized cultural policy' was arranged in 1976 in Umeå by Ågren, under the umbrella of ICOM / CECA (International Committee for Education and Cultural Action). This was the first major ICOM conference held in Sweden since the General Assembly of 1959.<sup>16</sup> In this same context, an encouraging sign of museological awakening in Sweden was the publication of a handbook on Museum Techniques (*Museiteknik*) for courses at Uppsala University. In this, Sofka wrote an article about museology from an international perspective.<sup>17</sup> The year after, ICOFOM was founded in Moscow, where both Sofka and Ågren participated. Then, in 1980 and 1981, two ICOFOM symposia were arranged as a cooperation between Ågren and Sofka at the National Museum of Antiquities in Stockholm. These workshops resulted in a publication series, *MuWoP/ Museological Working Papers: a debate journal on fundamental museological problems*,<sup>18</sup> in which almost all the leading museologists from Europe published a short paper. *MuWoP* was, however, short-lived, as only two issues ever appeared. On the other hand, a book series founded a few years later at Umeå, *Papers in Museology*, survives till this day mainly publishing our museological PhD theses. *Papers in Museology* emanated from the next two important museology symposia (after *MuWoP* 1980-1981) arranged by Ågren at Umeå in 1988

<sup>13</sup> de Varine 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Davis 1999; Évrard 1979; Hudson 1996; de Varine 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Näsman 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Maure 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Sofka 1976.

<sup>18</sup> No. 1, 1980, and No. 2, 1981, with the French title on the rear: *MuWoP: Museological Working Papers: revue de débat sur les problèmes fondamentaux de la muséologie*.

and 1989, concurrently with the foundation of the Department of Museology at the University (1988). The themes of the symposia were ‘What is museology’ and ‘Local and global—two aspects of museum communication’. Here, again, leading international museologists (and a few leading practitioners) took part: Tomislav Šola, Vиноš Sofka, André Desvallées, Hugues de Varine, Peter van Mensch, Gaynor Kavanagh, Per-Uno Ågren, Kenneth Hudson, Donald Horne among others.<sup>19</sup> The report from these two workshops, with short articles by all the participants, became very important for the development of museological teaching at Umeå and elsewhere in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries.<sup>20</sup> The symposia grew out of intense work and collaboration during the late 1970s and 1980s to develop Swedish museums towards more socially inclusive institutions. This movement was led by energetic museologists such as Sofka and Ågren together with museum professionals such as Erik Hofrén, Bo Lagerkrantz, Eva Persson, Margareta Ekarv, Ulla Arnell, Harald Hvarfner, Sten Rentzhog, Olle Isaksson and many others. The two symposia were also a result of collaboration between Museology and History of Ideas at Umeå University, with professors Ronny Ambjörnsson and Sverker Sörlin as leading figures.<sup>21</sup> Together all these personalities had created a very fruitful and inspiring intellectual milieu where heritage, museums, society, territories, nature and ecology all mixed together. Already then, the protection and preservation of nature had been incorporated into the concept of culture. Ambjörnsson and Sörlin, as well as many ethnologists and other scholars representing the faculties of humanities, wrote their part of the mentioned workshop report. In the museological courses, Human Ecology, and to some extent, Human Geography was introduced.

In 1993, in this part of Europe, museology took a big step forward—coincidentally (or not) at the same time as Friedrich Waidacher’s extensive handbook, *Handbuch der Allgemeinen Museologie* appeared. First, the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen organized (curated by Annesofie Becker) a major and very influential exhibition named *Museum Europa*, which museologically, and with a very philosophical eye, scrutinized the history of museums and collecting. That same year, three theoretically-oriented museum practitioners, Ågren, John Aage Gjestrum and Ole Strandgaard, from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark respectively, arranged a series of lectures at the Danish Museumshøjskolen (Museum Academy) on the initiative of Strandgaard, the leader of this Academy. The topic of the series was ‘The museum in its

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<sup>19</sup> Råberg and Ågren 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Råberg and Ågren 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Bäckström 2018.

time—on the trail of Danish museology'.<sup>22</sup> I do not know whether any museologists from Iceland attended to give a lecture, but from Finland, the future Professor of Museology (from 1997 on), Janne Vilkkuna, took part. Thus, four Nordic countries set the scene for museological development. The outcome of these lectures was the foundation of the journal *Nordisk Museologi* (Nordic Museology), the first issue of which appeared in Umeå a few months later, in 1993, with Ågren as the editor. The ambition of the journal was—and is—to constitute a link between the universities and the practical museum field, and to promote critical analysis of the phenomenon called museum. Another ambition was to convey museologically interesting texts from other countries and languages, particularly from Germany and France (also in translation), and the other way round, to make the Nordic museological discussion known in other countries, by means of English summaries of Scandinavian texts. Ågren presented a mission statement for *Nordic Museology* in the first issue of 1993:

Museology studies how the museum object is constituted, what values there lie behind the process from selection and collection to exposing and communication, thus also what ideas of history, culture and nature are projected in protected objects and milieus; that is to say man's relationship with his physical world as history.<sup>23</sup>

It was already clear at this point that museology should not deal with the museum only, but also with ideas and values concerning the broader field. In the following years, there was intense cooperation between these above-mentioned close friends and other museological actors in Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway, with the Museum Academy in Denmark and Umeå University as centres of activity. Very important was the international *Museum Days*, arranged for some time nearly every year by Ågren, Strandgaard and Gjestrum, mostly in Umeå, but also in Copenhagen and other places. Many international museologists and museum directors participated and presented papers and ideas for museum development. One such event, with the topic 'Museum Mission' in 1994, was later remembered by many as very significant. In those days, people in the field knew very well what museology was, and what it *did*. Those *Museum Days* were highly appreciated among professionals and practitioners as a deep source of inspiration. All this activity did not, however, automatically mean that museology gained very much success *within* the museums and heritage sites—it seemed very hard to really get the new ideas, no matter how inspiring, implemented in everyday work

<sup>22</sup> *Nordisk Museologi* 1, 1993 (translation by the author).

<sup>23</sup> Ågren 1993, 63 (translation by the author).

and practice. This was (often) simply due to some kind of institutional inertia. Again, Finland was an exception; there, professionals saw to the preparation of a Museum Law that would open the way for proper museological education (see below).

Apart from the international influences and collaborations, the broader definition of museology in Sweden (particularly at Umeå)<sup>24</sup> has national roots, too. Here, there is an old and firm tradition, actually since the 17th century when the first preservation laws were enacted,<sup>25</sup> of seeing museums and their collections as closely interwoven with material and cultural heritage in general, forming a *total heritage*. Hence, there is a logical connection between a variety of institutions and disciplines taking care of material and immaterial heritage. The material remains of history, whether ancient relics, buildings or objects, are perceived as intertwined, from a preservation perspective; heritage is coherent and undivided, as Ågren would say.<sup>26</sup> This implies that an understanding of what museology is all about, will be reached through the study of a great variety of artefacts as well as natural specimens, and therefore involves the protection and preservation of nature and, of course, natural history museums. This has permitted the development of an entire field of heritage as a whole, which constitutes museology's field of research. The term 'environmental heritage' (also used by Vilkkuna in Finland) embraces it all, and museology will cover it all. The concept is *social* and *value based*, says Ågren, who continues:

Museology studies the apprehension of nature and the view of culture and history projected by that legacy: the relationship of man to his surroundings as life environment and history. What in material culture has been imbued with so much meaning that it has been selected as an environmental heritage, protected by society [...]? What have the criteria been [...]? What role has nature, cultural heritage and history played in different eras?<sup>27</sup>

These questions are necessary in order to understand how cultural heritage is constructed and how institutions and structures have been developed for the purpose of safeguarding and communicating this heritage. My own conception comes close to Ågren's. This is my short definition as head of museological research at Umeå:

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<sup>24</sup> Here it is important to note that all universities in Sweden which offer museological courses do not necessarily share our definitions.

<sup>25</sup> Pettersson 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Ågren 1992, 111.

<sup>27</sup> Ågren 1992, 111.

Museology is a theoretical platform for our exploration of the industrial man's (traumatic) relationship to time and the material world, and how this is expressed in the musealization and preservation of objects, environments, the material and the immaterial, named heritage. The task of museology is to explore what kind of phenomena the museum and heritage are in modernity; what are we actually doing, and why, when preserving reality?<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, Ågren underlines that in order to understand the meaning and significance of heritage, we (museologists) must also study the world views and social views that determine social values. Museology is, thus, a kind of philosophy and sociology of museums. Hence, he divides museology into three main perspectives:

- A historical perspective, which seeks to describe and understand the environmental heritage of a certain era and a certain place;
- A sociological perspective, which studies the institutions and activities that have come into being as the result of a notion of cultural and natural heritage;
- A communicative perspective, which applies to the attempts to mediate the environmental heritage in time and space [e.g. exhibitions].<sup>29</sup>

No wonder many sociologists, ethnologists and historians in Sweden have undertaken museological research. One comes to the same conclusion by checking the outcome of museological/museum research in Germany and Austria. Just to mention one example, in the German collective volume *Das Partizipative Museum* published in 2012, only nine out of 39 authors have a museological degree. The rest of the contributors are sociologists, historians, ethnologists, pedagogues, a few art historians, one archaeologist and some from the field of communication.<sup>30</sup>

The introduction of museology as a specific discipline elsewhere (other than at Umeå and Jyväskylä, Finland) was a slow process, no matter how early and intensely the aforementioned actors of the 1970s and 1980s were serving as missionaries. Sweden and Finland were also, for a very long time, the only countries up north where professorships in museology were founded (in 1997), and museological education has been going on since the early 1980s. By contrast, in Norway a professorship was established only in 2011,

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<sup>28</sup> This definition of mine is not published as such. I have formulated it for use in my teaching of first class students at Umeå University. A somewhat similar definition is presented in Smeds 2007b.

<sup>29</sup> Ågren 1992, 112.

<sup>30</sup> Gesser et al. 2012.

in Iceland in 2009 and Denmark still, up to the time this text was in press, carries on without one, although a PhD in Museology can be obtained in Denmark through the Department of Art History at Århus University. The Museum Academy of Denmark (Museumshøjskolen), mentioned above, was not a university and taught no courses at an undergraduate academic level, but was dedicated to skill development for museum professionals.

Thanks to the long tradition of museology at Umeå, the courses we offer are also the most profound in the entire field in Sweden, even if museology courses, and Master's, are offered at many other universities: Uppsala, Lund, Linköping, Gothenburg, Växjö, Gotland, Stockholm and a few others. For many years in Stockholm too, there was a working group called *Museivetenskapliga Rådet* (The Council of Museum Science) led by museologist Stefan Bohman, at the time director of the Music Museum and a docent at the Department of Museology in Umeå. Members of this Council were also Lennart Palmqvist and Svante Beckman. They published a few important course books on museology for university students.<sup>31</sup> At Umeå, there are all levels from undergraduate to PhD; the undergraduate programme encompasses a total of three years—four semesters of museology and two of some related discipline. No other university in the countries here discussed has the same setting. Mostly there are only two to three undergraduate terms, or perhaps a Master's course (two terms), but no other PhD level course. In Stockholm, a program took the same name as the one at Umeå: Bachelor's program in Museum and Heritage Studies (*Kandidatprogram för museer och kulturarv*).<sup>32</sup> However, the courses contain in fact very little museology, but rather traditional museum disciplines (such as archaeology, art, ethnology).

Iceland is different; the University of Iceland also offers a package from undergraduate up to PhD in Museology, and the number of teachers—one professor, one associate professor and hourly lecturers—is the same as at Umeå. But Iceland boarded the train of museology quite late, and only offers two terms of undergraduate courses. A Master's and PhD programme was inaugurated in Reykjavik in 2009. Icelandic museology defines its object of study in the narrow sense—it is strictly about museums—but, as professor Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson remarks, 'it is of course inevitable that heritage comes in the picture e.g. via other courses that our students take in archaeology or folklore (as part of their choices)'.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Bohman and Palmqvist 1997; Palmqvist and Beckman 2003; Palmqvist 2005.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.su.se/sok-kurser-och-program/hmusk-1.412271>. Accessed April 6, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>33</sup> J. Vilkuna, pers. comm. Dec. 7, 2016.

### *Finland*

As already noted above, the conception of museology in Finland goes, from the very beginning, beyond exploring the museum's purely institutional endeavours or collections. Janne Vilkkuna, Professor of Museology (since 1998) at Jyväskylä University, formulates museology as follows:

Museology (heritology) is a science that explores the way the individual and the community perceive and control the temporal and regional environment [including both tangible and intangible, i.e. spiritual environment] through taking into possession [by selecting and demarcating parts of reality and by incorporating them as cultural reality] pieces of evidence from the past and the present.<sup>34</sup>

The term 'environment' in this definition also embraces nature and all sorts of cultural heritage in our life-world. This definition, one could say, stems from the close collaboration between Finnish and Swedish museological activists ever since the 1970s—a relationship that is still close. When it comes to education in the field, however, trends and traditions differ from one university to another. The museology courses at the University of Helsinki (only advanced level) focus on the museum itself with all activities that come with it, not heritage in general, while at Turku University, in the Department of Cultural History, it is again the broad definition that counts.

Here, one can see the influence of the Eastern European tradition where museology—apart from being usually incorporated in information sciences—has this very broad spectrum of objectives: museums/heritage in general.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Croatian museologist Tomislav Šola's term 'heritology' is perfectly equivalent to the much used Swedish term 'kulturarvsvetenskap' (cultural heritage) and the Finnish 'perintötiede' (heritage science). In accordance with our definition at Umeå and my arguments above, museology and 'kulturarvsvetenskap' as well as the modern term Critical Heritage go intimately hand in hand. When speaking about collaborations, influences and trends it is worth mentioning that Šola in the 1980s collaborated closely with the museological department in Jyväskylä (Professor Janne Vilkkuna) and the Finnish Museum Association, which also published his book *Museums and their Theory*. The most profound museological university courses in Finland are offered at Jyväskylä, which has a professorship in the field and offers a PhD already since the 1990s. Museological courses are also offered at Turku and Helsinki since the 1980s.

<sup>34</sup> J. Vilkkuna, pers. comm. Sept. 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Šola 1997.



In Finland, museology is acknowledged by governmental authorities as important for the work in museums and the like—which is, so far, not the case in Sweden or Norway. The Museum Law enacted in 1992 stipulates that employees at museums *should* have a museological education of some sort. In the year 2000 the Finnish Ministry of Culture demanded this education be further strengthened through the introduction of doctoral level studies in museology at more than one university (which, however, has yet to be implemented).<sup>36</sup> Due to this law, but also to a more open attitude, students of museology subsequently find employment in the field.

As a comparison, a few years ago in Sweden, the published findings (2015) of a committee set up by the government to study the state of Swedish museums suggested that a Museum Law be passed, more than 20 years after Finland. But this proposed law contains not a word about the need, not to speak of requirement, of museological degrees among the staff in museums.<sup>37</sup> Rather, it requires degrees in the so-called classical museum disciplines. In Sweden, the question of employment is a tricky one. It turns out that people holding a Master's or PhD in Museology often have difficulties getting a job that corresponds to their education.

### *Denmark*

In Denmark, studies and research in museology started early, in the mid 1970s, and when it comes to the rate of accomplished projects and published books with purely museological titles, Denmark stands at the forefront in Scandinavia, and always has. In fact, during the first years of the journal *Nordisk Museologi*, the main bulk of published articles came from Denmark. The same counts for museological research and publications today (depending, of course, on how museology is conceived, whether it embraces other heritage matters or only museums).

There is no professorship of museology in Denmark, but teaching is conducted at many universities: Århus, Copenhagen, Roskilde, and Ålborg to mention a few. For a long time now, the main centre for studies and research has been the Department of Art History, Aesthetics and Culture and Museology at Århus University. There, museology is, at least in principle, defined in the same large sense as in Sweden and Finland:

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<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately there is no English translation of this Act, but here is the Swedish version: <http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1992/19920729?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=museilag>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> *Ny museipolitik*. SOU 2015:89.

Museology is a broad, cross-disciplinary field of study comprising research into theoretical and practical questions about cultural heritage, natural heritage and art and their institutions, particularly museums and their significance and role in society. The museological research environment at Århus University explores processes of musealization, which means the way in which a society selects, exhibits, interprets and administers the tangible and intangible products of culture with a view to preserving them for posterity.<sup>38</sup>

At the University of Århus, there is a so-called Supplementary and a Master's course in Museology—of which the Supplementary requires Bachelor studies in some other subject.<sup>39</sup> The study of museology is structured around five perspectives that come very close to those of Ågren mentioned earlier, and are probably also influenced by him and the Strandgaard 'school' of museology at the Danish Museum Academy (Museumshøjskolen). Museology, they say, has:

- A historical-institutional perspective, including research into the history, collections, exhibitions and artefacts of Danish museums;
- A didactic perspective, focusing on young people and communication at museums among other things;
- A communicative perspective, with a strong focus on strategic communication in the museum world;
- A social-economic perspective, including research into museum economy and cultural heritage as policy;
- A technological perspective, with years of research into digital museology.<sup>40</sup>

Despite this broad definition of museology and research, the concrete research projects at Århus are focused mainly on the exhibition medium, often art museums, also digital communication and visitor participation. More about this will be discussed later in the article.

### *Norway*

Notwithstanding the efforts by the abovementioned Norwegian driving spirit of museology, the late John Aage Gjestrum, museology had faced a constant uphill struggle in Norway until just about a decade and a half ago. The imple-

<sup>38</sup> <http://cc.au.dk/en/about-the-school/subjects/museology/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> <http://bachelor.au.dk/en/supplementary-subject/museological-studies/?amp%3BorgUrl=http%3A%2F%2Ftilvalg.au.dk%2Fmuseologiske-studier%2F>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> <http://bachelor.au.dk/en/supplementary-subject/museological-studies/?amp%3BorgUrl=http%3A%2F%2Ftilvalg.au.dk%2Fmuseologiske-studier%2F>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

mentation of museological education and research has been very much slower than in other Scandinavian countries—to my understanding mainly due to a conservative attitude in the museum field itself and among professionals in related disciplines (see quote in my introduction). Still, some museological short courses have been, since the 1980s, offered at various universities scattered throughout the country. One of the first (for scholars, postgraduate) was offered at the University of Bergen taught by Anders Johansen and others, as well as some undergraduate courses in Oslo and Tromsø. These were shorter museological courses from around 1995 onwards. During the last twenty years, the situation has improved considerably, and the whole issue of the necessity (or not) of museology is today rather a non-issue.

Nowadays the negative attitude towards museology has faded away, particularly in the museum field itself, where people with a degree in museology are direly needed and employed. Today, the heart of museology is located at the University of Oslo in the Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages, where teaching at advanced levels began in 2008 and a Professor of Museology was instated in 2011, a position still held by Brita Brenna. There is no undergraduate level of study in museology, but the University offers Master's courses as well as a PhD, and conducts an increasing amount of research in the field. There, the discipline is called Critical Museology and is focused mainly on museums, not heritage at large:

Museology studies museums in history and contemporary society. [...] Nowadays museology explores not only what museums do but also the relationship between museums and society. We ask why we have museums, in what way museums are institutions of power and in what way they produce knowledge and offer resources for experiences. Museology is interdisciplinary and also explores in what way the preservation of culture and nature makes all the more areas 'museum-like'. Who is the agent of preservation and for whom is it done?<sup>41</sup>

The ambition of Critical Museology in Norway is to incorporate and strengthen the critical heritage aspect in teaching as well as in research.<sup>42</sup> However, what in the 'critical' aspect would be more critical than the general theoretical museological perspective, is not clarified.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.uio.no/studier/program/kulturhistorie-master/studieretninger/museologi/>. Accessed April 6, 2021. Since the drafting of the article, the text on the website has been changed, but the spirit remains the same.

<sup>42</sup> Brenna 2015.

### *What about museological research?*

It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that a large body of work in museology has existed ever since the 1960s covering a long period of time and many countries and also appearing within many different disciplines, this corpus is unknown to most people practically and theoretically engaged in museum work. It is also a well-known fact among museologists that few give references to previous works in the field, and nothing seems to prevent the repetitive re-invention of the wheel.<sup>43</sup> Many of the studies appear in French and German, or Spanish, which might explain the situation. Is there a lack of skill in languages other than English? This is the case at least in Scandinavia and Finland.

One striking example is the collective volume titled *The New Museology* edited by Peter Vergo (1989). Even the 'new' in 'new museology' has been said before, in other languages. This peculiarity is notable when one looks at museological studies appearing in the Anglo-American and German-French speaking worlds, respectively. I have noted that both camps infrequently refer to theoretical museological publications published under the rein of ICOFOM, which makes it obvious that ICOFOM publications are, for some reason, not read. Noteworthy is also that neither camp refers to the other, almost like an iron curtain has been drawn between them. This goes especially for the Anglo-American writings where very rarely a German reference can be found. Whether this is due to cultural reasons or language shortcomings is hard to tell.

During the first museological boom in Scandinavia in the 1970s and 1980s, there was some significant museological cooperation even across the language borders between the English and German speaking worlds. Then it seems to have dissolved, and Museum Studies in the Anglo-Saxon world went ahead on its own, with Leicester taking the lead. Nevertheless, museology and heritage studies is a rapidly growing field of research in Scandinavia as well, and has been accelerating during the last 20 years; but as I said, sources other than those in English are rarely referenced. Moreover, the great bulk of this research is done in disciplines other than museology—such as archaeology, ethnology, art history, sociology.

Are there any special trends or common fields of research interest in the northern countries? In spite of the many definitions of museology encom-

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<sup>43</sup> One of the first to note this was the Czech museologist Jiří Neustupný in 1968, as did Lynn Teather 15 years later in her thesis (Teather 1993).

passing the ‘heritage total’, natural heritage and the like, research in the discipline of museology focuses to an astonishing degree purely on museums, their collections, collecting, management, exhibitions and visitor studies. In other words, it focuses on traditional topics, and leaves the other part, heritage in general, not to mention natural heritage, to other disciplines, as mentioned. All together they form a common platform of museum/heritage studies. But generally, some confusion still prevails as to the objectives of museology. Other disciplines seem to carry on their business with heritage and museums and not really bother about what the very science of museology is, or does, or has done. Still, over the last ten years, more and more research has been conducted in the field, parallel to the immense growth of the museum/heritage field itself. In my view, there should be an opportunity right now to coordinate forces and start up some intercommunication between different international ‘schools’ and research groups. Museology could perfectly well be the umbrella for all.

As for Scandinavia, it is of course impossible in this chapter to count or refer to all research in the field. I will pick only a few, rather recent developments which I find interesting and important when it comes to the future of museology/heritage studies and the merging of the two into a kind of critical heritage research. These developments include the centres I mentioned, which also are the ones with which museology at Umeå has some cooperation. One of them is the Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning and Creativity (NCK) in Östersund, Sweden,<sup>44</sup> a Nordic-Baltic centre for learning through cultural heritage, which also conducts research in the field. For NCK, heritage is seen as a resource in the work towards a sustainable and inclusive society, where learning is a lifelong process.<sup>45</sup> Their research aims at understanding how cultural heritage can be utilized for social purposes and development, while combining cultural heritage pedagogy with a vision for the future and for engaging the ageing population. This, in my opinion, is a very important statement.

I would also like to mention two important research centres, the Danish Centre for Museum Research (2009, Copenhagen University), a kind of umbrella organization for Danish museological research, and the Norwegian Centre for Museum Studies (2011, Oslo University). The activities of the Danish Centre, with around 16 Danish university departments as members, encompass museums, archives and other cultural institutions—such as cen-

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<sup>44</sup> <http://cultureactioneurope.org/member/the-nordic-centre-of-heritage-learning-creativity/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> See note 46.

tres for natural sciences and techniques—and research in art, cultural and natural heritage as well as communication of this heritage in physical and virtual space.<sup>46</sup> It is important to note the inclusion of natural heritage as an object of study.

It was at Århus University, in the Department of Arts and Museology, where the very first Danish Museology Research Program was inaugurated in the fall of 2016. As said above, Danish museum and museological research has always been vivid, at the forefront in Scandinavia. Just to name one example, in 2005 Århus University published an outline of contemporary research titled *Ny dansk museologi* (New Danish Museology).<sup>47</sup> After all, it was there, together with Umeå University, where Scandinavian museology was ‘founded’. Interestingly enough, the Danes have even explored their own research. In 2013, a large survey of museum research was conducted among the abovementioned Centre’s participants. Within the 16 institutions, at least 47 museum research projects were being conducted, out of which 30 were joint projects between museums and other institutions,<sup>48</sup> an arrangement that is rather rare in Sweden. But the source does not mention exactly how many of these were conducted in the domain of museology, specifically. Worth noting, 1/3 of the projects dealt with visitors/pedagogy/communication and only 1/4 with collecting, preservation and other tacit parts of museum work; and (only) seven were part of some international project.<sup>49</sup>

The Norwegian Centre’s mission is also interdisciplinary, and it ‘wants to establish a network between institutions and departments, and start negotiating and opening up the boundaries between art and natural sciences, ethnology and anthropology’.<sup>50</sup> Some of their research interests are listed on their homepage: the history of museums; the biographies of objects; identity and institution building; exhibition analysis; the development of disciplines and museum formation; and processes tied to cultural heritage.

Last but not least I would like to mention the Association of Critical Heritage (ACHS),<sup>51</sup> an international network of scholars and researchers working in the broad and interdisciplinary field of heritage studies. The Association was founded as a result of the first large conference on the topic held in

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<sup>46</sup> [www.museumsforskning.dk](http://www.museumsforskning.dk). Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Ingemann and Larsen 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Gransgaard et al. 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Gransgaard et al. 2014, 7.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/center/museum-studies/about/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

Gothenburg, Sweden in 2012. The primary aim of ACHS is to promote heritage as an area of critical enquiry, much in the same way as we do with museology at Umeå, or Oslo with their *critical museology* ambitions. The ACHS 'Manifesto' of 2012 is worth quoting at length:

To critically engage with the proposition that heritage studies needs to be rebuilt from the ground up, requires the 'ruthless criticism of everything existing'. Heritage is, as much as anything, a political act and we need to ask serious questions about the power relations that 'heritage' has all too often been invoked to sustain. Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, and the fetishizing of expert knowledge have all exerted strong influences on how heritage is used, defined and managed.

We argue that a truly critical heritage studies will ask many uncomfortable questions of traditional ways of thinking about and doing heritage, and that the interests of the marginalized and excluded will be brought to the forefront when posing these questions.

[Its mission is] to explore new methods of enquiry that challenge the established conventions of positivism and quantitative analysis by including and encouraging the collection of 'data' from a wider range of sources in novel and imaginative ways [...]

The document goes on to enumerate the aims of the Association:<sup>52</sup>

- Integrating of heritage and museum studies within studies of memory, public history, community, tourism, planning and development.
- Democratizing heritage by consciously rejecting elite cultural narratives and embracing the heritage insights of people, communities and cultures that have traditionally been marginalized in formulating heritage policy.
- Making critical heritage studies truly international through the synergy of taking seriously diverse non-Western cultural heritage traditions.
- Increasing dialogue and debate between researchers, practitioners and communities.

This entire mission statement concurs with our ambitions at Umeå to develop museology as a tool for the dialogue between research and museum/heritage practices, towards a more sustainable society. It is also in line with ICOM's last revision of the *Ethical Rules* for museums, which confirms the museums' responsibility to cooperate with the society in which they are located and the local people they serve, and contribute to the development of

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<sup>52</sup> Both excerpts in <https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/history/>. Accessed April 6, 2021 (editors' note).

society (not only culturally but also economically)<sup>53</sup>—an altogether ecological and sustainable way of thinking.

### *Conclusion*

My ambition in this paper has been not only to tell the (brief) story of museology and the development of museological education and research in the Nordic countries but also to underline that museology, today, should be conceived and defined in a much broader sense than before. I would conclude—and this is my personal conclusion based on exploring a variety of museums, museological and heritage study centres—that Museology, ‘Heritology’, Museum Studies, and Critical Heritage Studies all have a joint scope of research which encompasses museums, the concept of museality, material studies, cultural heritage, total heritage, preservation strategies. Together, I think all this goes under the umbrella of Critical Museology combined with Critical Heritage to form a joint platform for study in this vast field. Today, museums and all kinds of heritage enterprises exist and operate in a rapidly changing society, so they should change, too. And Critical Museology would be the basis for this change.

Heritage institutions will, I think, be more and more at the core of the action, trying to change things and make an impact in society when needed. Museums, and the preservation strategies and institutions of society can no longer go on just collecting the leftovers of our destructive society—without intervening in the reasons for this destruction. Cultural heritage (as ICOM states) and Critical Museology should be a key element in a new model of sustainable development that sees heritage—within or outside museums—as important in the fight against poverty, in the protection of the environment, and a source of capital for the local populations as well as a source of pride, social cohesion and collective identity.

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<sup>53</sup> [http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/Codes/code\\_ethics2013\\_eng.pdf](http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf). Accessed March 22, 2021.



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# BEHIND AND BEYOND THE IRON CURTAIN



# Museology in the USSR/Russia in the second half of the 20th century

*Vitaly Ananiev*

## *Abstract*

This chapter is devoted to the development of Soviet museology in the second half of the 20th century. The author examines such elements of its development as general paradigms associated with the creation of textbooks on museology, historical approaches to the study of the phenomenon of the museum, international contacts with museologists abroad and the system of museological education. The beginning of this period can be considered the publication of *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies* (1955), and the last phase coincides with the completion of the *Russian Museum Encyclopaedia* (2001). The chapter attempts to show the basic paradigms of Soviet museology and analyze them in the context of the general development of museology as a field of knowledge.

**Keywords:** museology, museum studies, Soviet museum studies, museum, A. M. Razgon, Z. Stránský

## *Introduction*

The development of museology in the USSR/Russia in the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries can be seen to parallel several cross-sectoral stages distinguished in this same period, each essentially different from the other. Realizing that it can be very difficult to differentiate extra-scientific from intra-scientific factors, several are marked out here, with some degree of conventionality. On the one hand, of course, are political factors, according to which we can talk about the periods before and after the collapse of the USSR and the totalitarian state. Yet the Soviet period was not homogeneous: it is possible to distinguish several sub-periods when ideological circumstances and certain main cultural trends differed significantly (the time of repressions that lasted till the death of Josef Stalin, the 'Thaw' of Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev's 'Stagnation', Mikhail Gorbachev's

‘Perestroika’). The museum, as a subsystem of the metasystem of culture<sup>1</sup> and a public institution (private museums did not exist during the Soviet period), was greatly affected by the changes in the cultural and political climate of the country. Of course, these impacts were also felt by an area of knowledge associated with the museum field, namely museology.

On the other hand, we should take into consideration the factors associated with the development of museology as discipline. Zbyněk Z. Stránský identified three stages in its development: a pre-scientific phase; an empirical-descriptive phase; and a theoretical-synthetic phase.<sup>2</sup> The transition from the second to the third phase happened worldwide in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, taking into account the general development of museological knowledge, the period spanning the second half of the 20th century, both in the USSR and internationally, is further subdivided into two different stages: the first stage is dominated by museographical problems connected with the practice and methods of museum work (the end of the empirical-descriptive phase) while in the second phase, the problems of theoretical museology were more widespread (theoretical-synthetic phase).

The intersection and interaction of the factors marking the extra-scientific and intra-scientific approaches define the unique constellations in the development of Soviet/Russian museology in the second half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries.

### *Textbooks, the general framework*

For the period of our interest, we can consider the year 1955 as the starting point for the development of Soviet museology; it is the year in which the first Soviet textbook on museum studies, *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies* was published.<sup>3</sup> The book was prepared by a team of scholars from the Research

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<sup>1</sup> Here we use the concept of ‘museum as a subsystem of the metasystem of culture’ as it was developed in Russian cultural studies and museology at the turn of the 21st century (Moisey Kagan, Tatiana Kalugina, Olga Sapanzha). In accordance with this approach, culture is a metasystem, consisting of different subsystems. There is an isomorphism between the metasystem and each subsystem, i.e. we can see the main features of the former’s structure and content in the latter. All Russian translations of titles, departments, institutions, etc. here and throughout the text are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> On the details of this periodization, see the chapter by Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>3</sup> Galkina et al. 1955.

Institute of Local Lore<sup>4</sup> and Museum Work.<sup>5</sup> This Institute, founded in 1932 upon the results of the First all-Russian Museum Congress (1930) held in Moscow, was the central research institution of the USSR at the time, working on issues of museum studies, local history and monument protection.<sup>6</sup> Work on the textbook began in 1949.<sup>7</sup> Once completed, its importance spread beyond the USSR. It was translated into Romanian (1957), where, in fact, it remained the only general work on museums for many years.<sup>8</sup> A German translation was published in the German Democratic Republic. The editorial board of the textbook consisted of Pavla Galkina, Valentin Gardanov, Ivan Ivanitskii, Konstantin Mityaev, Georgy Novitskii, and Nikolay Plavilshchikov. None of these scholars took active part in the subsequent development of Soviet museology, but other researchers, whose names would be associated with the most significant achievements in Soviet museology over the following decades, also worked on the textbook: Anna Mikhailovskaya, Anna Sax, Dina Ravikovich, and Avraam Razgon. This was, in fact, Razgon's first work dedicated to museum issues.

The manual consisted of an introduction and six chapters: 1) The museum and its specificity; 2) Museum collections; 3) The recording, identification and scientific description of museum objects; 4) The storage of museum objects; 5) Exhibitions; 6) The work of museums regarding mass audiences.<sup>9</sup> As noted already in the introduction to the manual, the main purpose of the project was to give practical assistance to museum workers and especially to the staff of the most visited museums in the USSR—museums of local lore—, ‘imparting systematic knowledge on the theory and practice of museum

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<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter we will use ‘local lore’ as a translation of the Soviet term *kraevedenie*, which can be translated as ‘regional studies’, but with special Soviet connotations.

<sup>5</sup> During its history, this institute was renamed many times. The Central Research Institute of Methods of Local Lore Works (1932-1937), the Research Institute of Local Lore and Museum Work (1937-1955), the Research Institute of Museum Studies (1955-1966), the Research Institute of Museum Studies and Preservation of Monuments of History and Culture (1966-1969), the Research Institute of Culture (1969-1992), the Research Institute of Cultural Studies (1992-2014). It was dissolved by the Russian government in 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Frolov 1991, 78-96.

<sup>7</sup> Vakulina 2000, 149.

<sup>8</sup> Bădică 2011, 277-278.

<sup>9</sup> A Soviet neologism invented to accentuate the work of museums with the masses, i.e. with a wide audience, the ordinary people. The term ‘the masses’ was determined to show the difference between new Soviet museums and those old bourgeois institutions which were designed for the bourgeoisie/elite only.



work'.<sup>10</sup> To do this, the authors attempted 'to provide consistent coverage of all the major issues for Soviet museums, the theory and practice of Soviet museum studies'.

The latter inference is quite significant. Defining the essence of museum studies, the authors wrote: 'The theory and practice of Soviet museum studies is the subject of a special scientific discipline—Soviet museum studies', which 'seeks to determine general principles of museum work, taking into account the specific features of certain museums of different profiles'.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the manual was devoted to Soviet museum studies, which was seen as essentially different from non-Soviet, i.e. bourgeois or capitalist museum studies. It demonstrated the authors' adherence to the concept of social formations as this was developed in the Marxist philosophy of history and did not give them an opportunity, according to modern researchers, to address 'a broader cultural analysis of the problems of museum work'.<sup>12</sup>

The acknowledged subject of Soviet museum studies, and therefore museological research in the USSR at that time, was the theory and practice of museum work. This feature was characteristic for the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge, in which context all these ideas developed. As noted by Irina Andreeva, the textbook considered museum studies as a theory of practice, not as an independent discipline. And this theory was formed inductively, 'only on the basis of Soviet museums' best practices'.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with this theory, the museum was shown to be an establishment, not an institute, institution or cultural form. As a result, empiricism, linearity, stiff determinism, and subject-object-orientated knowledge predominated in the textbook.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note one more peculiarity. In addition to the 1955 published manual, two earlier unpublished versions survive. As Elena Vakulina notes, the most significant difference is in the interpretation of the concept of 'museum studies'. In the version of 1953, museum studies is defined as 'a theoretical synthesis of best museum construction practices during the Soviet and pre-revolutionary period'. In the 1954 version, museum studies is interpreted as a 'system of scientific concepts and principles in the field of museum work, which was the result of the study based on the Marxist-Leninist theory of history and the modern organization of museums'. In the manual of 1955, as has been shown above, museum studies is defined as a scientific

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<sup>10</sup> Galkina et al. 1955, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Galkina et al. 1955, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Vakulina 2000, 152.

<sup>13</sup> Andreeva 2016, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Andreeva 2016, 33.

discipline. This was significant for the development of museum studies as independent from subject-matter disciplines. At the same time, a clear distinction between such concepts as 'museum studies', 'museum theory', and 'theoretical foundations of museum studies' does not appear in the manual.<sup>15</sup>

Modern researchers have noted that the concept underlying the *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies* was ambivalent. On the one hand, it tried to overcome empiricism and use the main propositions (theses) of Marxist theory to understand museum activities. On the other hand, it demonstrated that it was impossible to create such a theory of museology that would be consistent with Marxist theory. This stimulated further explorations in the field of museology, which appeared at the turn of the 1950s to early 1960s, the time of the so-called Thaw, a period characterized by a certain liberalization of social and cultural life in the USSR. In his 1956 report delivered at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev denounced the personality cult and repressions of Stalin's 'Great Terror' era. The victims of terror were rehabilitated; a course of foreign policy called 'peaceful coexistence' was set. However, these trends were contradictory, as at the same time, the Soviet Union took an active part in the suppression of the uprising in Hungary, political repression continued in the country and an anti-religious campaign was launched.

Immediately after its publication, discussions began on possible changes to the text of the manual, as Vakulina has shown on the basis of a wide range of archival sources. Work on a second edition began at the Institute in 1963 and lasted almost 10 years, but the new text was not published (the Ministry of Culture changed the academic profile of the Institute in 1968, transforming it into an Institute of Culture, and soon put an end to work on a new version of the manual). The team of scholars involved in the project changed somewhat: now Razgon, who had become Deputy Director for research at the Institute in 1962, played one of the leading roles. The concept of the manual also changed. Two versions were completed in 1968 and 1970, respectively. It had been decided in 1966 just to add new chapters to the old structure of the manual; they were dedicated to the research work of the museum, the architectural-artistic dimension of exhibitions, museum buildings, and the role of the public in the activities of the museum.<sup>16</sup> Razgon wrote a new introduction, which was significantly different from the previous one, using theoretical rather than empirical premises. The questions of the theoretical

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<sup>15</sup> Vakulina 2000, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Vakulina 2000, 157.

definition of 'museum studies', its subject, method, structure and place in the system of sciences were on focus.

Analyzing this manuscript, Vakulina suggests that it occurred under the influence of certain ideas put forth by museologists from Central and Eastern Europe; in particular, the discussion taking place in the German Democratic Republic in 1964 and the works of Czechoslovakian museologists.<sup>17</sup> According to Razgon, the structure of museum studies included: 1) the history and historiography of museum studies; 2) problems of museum studies theory; 3) methodology of different areas of museum work (exhibition, preservation, etc.); 4) museum source studies.<sup>18</sup> It was one of the first attempts to justify the autonomy of museum studies as a scientific discipline; nevertheless the main museum activities were included in the structure of the science, i.e. the empirical/practical component had not been completely overcome.<sup>19</sup>

The Marxist theory of the museum did not disappear altogether from the manual, but the authors tried to combine it with the theoretical conception of the museum object as material thing. This was achieved through the theory of information popular in the 1960s. In general, this period in the history of Soviet science was characterized by the broad popularity of semiotics/semiology, which was not only academic but also political, a kind of opposition to the mainstream materialistic discourse. The Moscow-Tartu Semiotic School (Yuri Lotman, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Vladimir Toporov, Boris Uspenskij and other linguists and cultural historians) was formed at that time, and the works of several foreign scholars (Norbert Wiener, Louis Hjelmslev, Claude Shannon among others) were translated and made available in the USSR.

The nature of the museum was understood on the methodological basis of the Marxist theory of knowledge, supplemented by information theory. Using this theoretical approach, Ivanitsky, who, as mentioned above, was on the editorial board of the manual *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies*, tried to analyze the nature of museum objects. In 1955, the authors of the manual wrote that 'objects acquire value either in connection with their singularity or in connection with the disappearance of such items',<sup>20</sup> i.e. a museum object

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<sup>17</sup> Vakulina 2000, 158.

<sup>18</sup> Hereinafter we will use the term 'source studies' as equivalent to the Russian *istochnikovedenie* which denotes a field of knowledge devoted to source criticism. In Russian tradition it is a well-elaborated and important part of any humanities study, and the first phase of historical or philological research. The classical type of source studies is an analysis of written sources. On the special features of museum source studies, see below.

<sup>19</sup> Vakulina 2000, 160.

<sup>20</sup> Galkina et al. 1955, 35.

was determined on the basis of its rarity. In 1968, the manual noted not only the importance of an object as the object of cognitive knowledge, but also its significance as a sign of age.<sup>21</sup> However, this understanding of the iconic component of the museum object was rather limited. The Marxist theory of knowledge and theory of information were connected mechanistically.

In 1969 or 1970, Ivanitsky presented a report entitled 'Museum Studies in the Light of Information Theory' at the Institute of Culture in which he noted that information theory should be used while treating questions to which Marxist museum theory did not provide an interpretive approach. Thus the absolute primacy of Marxism in Soviet museology was shaken and the ability to seek out additional paths appeared. The sort of issues raised by Ivanitsky included: 1) Marxist theory explaining the emergence of the museum studied its functions rather than its causes; 2) according to Marxist theory, the specificity of a museum was determined by qualities of museum objects such as rarity, but the theory neglected to account for the presence of contemporary museum items that were not rare; 3) Marxist theory could not explain the interest of visitors in museum objects (particularly memorial items).<sup>22</sup> However, this line of thinking, as it was introduced by Ivanitsky, was not the focus of further development in Soviet museology.

The development of museological thought during this period is evident in the following example: in the 1968 version of the manual, there was only one theoretical chapter ('Theoretical foundations of museum studies'), while there were two in 1970 ('Museum studies in the system of sciences' and 'Museum and its functions'). The later version denotes a division of museological and museum-related issues. Issues relating to the place and tasks of museums in society, the functions of the museum, exhibitions, etc. were grouped under the general umbrella of museum problems, while museological issues, on the other hand, included the object, method and structure of museology, and the connection between museology and subject-matter disciplines.<sup>23</sup>

Razgon made the first attempt to define the subject of museology, identifying three systems of concepts: 1) the origin of the museum, its place in the life of different social systems, types of museums, their classification, internal organization, functional specificity of the museum, and other; 2) the study of the sources of natural and social phenomena; 3) the study of natural and social phenomena corresponding to the profile of the museum. The second and third systems in fact duplicate each other. But for the first time, muse-

<sup>21</sup> Vakulina 2000, 163.

<sup>22</sup> Vakulina 2000, 169-171.

<sup>23</sup> Vakulina 2000, 172.

ology and the theory of the museum as public institution were not equated. The former was recognized as a broader concept, the latter, part of the former. However, this was only an extension of the subject of museology, not a deepening.<sup>24</sup> No clear definition of the methods and structures of museology existed in these versions of the manual, and the place of museology in the system of sciences was defined as ‘ambiguous’. Although these versions of the manual were not published, the work done for them contributed to the elaboration of a number of theoretical issues surrounding museum studies by leading Soviet museologists. A significant number of their ideas were published in various articles, and the general plan to create a new textbook on museology was finally realized in the 1980s.

Work on the new textbook began in the years of the Brezhnev Stagnation, when the more liberal ideas of the Thaw period were rejected, but it was published in the times of Perestroika—a period when certain attempts were undertaken to reform the Soviet political system and make it more democratic. Until the mid-1980s, it was obligatory for any researcher to refer in his/her work to the classics of Marxist-Leninist theory and to the decisions taken at the Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Often these references were rather formal, part of the so-called literary etiquette of the era. This peculiarity should be taken into consideration when reading Soviet texts; it is not quite correct to talk about special Marxist-Leninist museology using quotations by professional Soviet museologists such as ‘museology should follow the lines of Marxist-Leninist ideology’ as confirmation, like Peter van Mensch did.<sup>25</sup> Such expressions were not always important for the author’s conception; sometimes they were simply signaling the censor to allow the text to be printed.

Razgon played again the leading role. He resigned from the Institute of Culture in 1972 and started working at the Central Museum of the Revolution (Moscow), where he headed the Sector of museology. In 1974, he became Head of the Department of Cartography at the State Historical Museum (Moscow), where he managed to accomplish the project that had remained undecided until the early 1970s. Work on a new version of the museology textbook was now planned as a joint project between Soviet researchers and scholars from the German Democratic Republic. Organizational support was provided by the Director of the State Historical Museum, Konstantin Levykin. Through his active involvement in the activities of ICOFOM, Razgon was

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<sup>24</sup> Vakulina 2000, 175.

<sup>25</sup> Van Mensch 1992, 4.

able to include a number of German museologists, and Levykin agreed to the participation of the Museum of German History (Berlin). Work began in the late 1970s.<sup>26</sup> The textbook itself, edited by the two museum directors, Levykin and Wolfgang Herbst, was published in German and Russian in 1987 (Berlin) and 1988 (Moscow) respectively. The project was organized by Razgon. Among the authors of the new manual were contributors to the previous editions (Razgon, Sax, Mikhailovskaya), as well as young scholars (Tamara Igumnova, Klara Gazalova) and German museologists (Joachim Ave etc.)<sup>27</sup>

The new textbook was called *Museum Studies. The Museums of Historical Profile* and was recommended by the Soviet Ministry of Education for history students. In other words, there was a change in the textbook's target audience. Whereas the *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies* was intended for museum employees, the new work was aimed at students. It consisted of eleven chapters. The first two were theoretical and were devoted to the problem of museum studies as a scientific discipline and to the role and social functions of the historical museum in a socialist society. The other nine chapters had a more practical orientation, discussing different areas of work within historical museums (research, inventory work, acquisition, registration and documentation, storage, scientific preparation of museum exhibitions, architectural design of the museum exhibition, ideological and educational work), as well as the buildings housing historical museums. In many ways, this edition summed up the Soviet stage in the development of museology and was the last major project in the field of museum studies in the USSR.<sup>28</sup>

The chapter entitled 'Museum studies as a scientific discipline', written by Razgon, defined museum studies as: 'the social science studying the processes concerning preservation of social information, knowledge, and transmission of knowledge and emotions through museum objects, the museum field, the museum as a social institution, its social functions and their implementation in different socio-economic circumstances'.<sup>29</sup> Referring to the work of Czech and East German museologists, Razgon noted that in socialist countries, museum studies was recognized as an independent science, and the scholarly debate was only about the characteristic features of this science (object, structure, method, language), not about its status as an independent science. On the other hand, bourgeois scientists had, in his opinion, developed different methodological approaches and often denied the possibility

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<sup>26</sup> Levykin 1999, 103.

<sup>27</sup> Levykin and Herbst 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Skripkina 1999, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Levykin and Herbst 1988, 9.

of the existence of museology as a science, independent from subject-matter disciplines.<sup>30</sup> Synthesizing the approaches that define the object of knowledge of museology and which had been proposed by Jiří Neustupný, Josef Beneš, Stránský and museologists from the GDR, Razgon supported an integrated approach. He considered museology to be concerned with issues associated with the museum as a social institution; questions regarding museum objects; and museality, defined as the special museum relation of man to reality.

Razgon substantiated the concept of the museum field (*музейное дело*), which was important for the further development of Russian museology. It was a special sphere of social activity made up of the practical tasks of museums and the preservation of monuments; museums themselves; museum policy and legislation; the system of preparing and re-training personnel; specialized scientific, methodological and training centers; specialized periodicals as well as the special scientific discipline—museum studies.<sup>31</sup> In determining the structure of museology as a scientific discipline, Razgon followed a modified version of the scheme proposed in 1971 by Stránský. Museum studies consisted of four main sections: 1) history of the museum field (including historiography); 2) theory of museum studies; 3) museum source studies (for the term, please see below); 4) applied museology. The theory of museum studies was further divided into four subsections: a) a general theory of museology; b) theory of documentation; c) the theory of thesaurization (a term coined by Stránský to define the processes of forming and curating collections);<sup>32</sup> d) theory of communication. Applied museology included: a) the scientific methodology of museum work; b) the technique; c) organization and management. This structure applied both to general museology and to special museologies: general museology was defined as relating to museum problems in general, in the sense of sharing trends in museums of all types and profiles, while special museologies focused on features caused by the proximity of museums to a special discipline, which could be some form of art or a type of production.<sup>33</sup> This reflects the influence of Neustupný's ideas; furthermore, Razgon's general concept was a synthesis of Eastern European museological ideas, especially those of Neustupný (general and special museology) and Stránský (scientific structure).

Typical for the Russian tradition, attention was paid to museum objects as primary sources of knowledge. This determined the appearance of museum

<sup>30</sup> Levykin and Herbst 1988, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Levykin and Herbst 1988, 18.

<sup>32</sup> Dolák 2019. See also Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume (editors' note).

<sup>33</sup> Levykin and Herbst 1988, 23.

source studies, an important field in museum studies focused on the study of museum objects. It differed from traditional source studies in that it investigated not only the semantic information of the subject (the information content), but also such characteristics as its attractiveness and expressiveness, i.e., not just how it could be used in research, but in the process of museum communication as well. On the whole, the museum source studies approach was characterized by attention to 'the internal functions of the museum' and the study of the museum as a specific socio-cultural institute, not an institution. As noted by Andreeva, the unequivocal primacy of the dialectical materialist methodology still remained in the handbook and the universal concept of economic determinism became the theoretical foundation of a new paradigm.<sup>34</sup> The influence of documentation disciplines in the new textbook resulted in the use of terms such as the 'documentary value of an object', and the museum collection was regarded as 'a documentary system' and a 'special model of the real world'. Nevertheless, the new text did not invest museology with a holistic new paradigm.

### *Historical museology*

Traditionally, historical museology or 'the history of the museum field' played an important role in Soviet museology. In the middle of the 1950s at the Institute of Museum Studies, work began on a major project on this issue.<sup>35</sup> The idea of writing a general work on the history of the museum field in Russia belongs to Georgy Malitsky, a prominent museologist of the first half of the 20th century and one of the first lecturers in museology, who taught in the 1920s at Moscow University.<sup>36</sup> Documents, found by the present author in the Saint Petersburg branch of the Russian Academy of Science Archive, reveal that Malitsky was planning to write a summary of this topic in the 1920s<sup>37</sup> but his work was never completed. A new attempt was made in the late 1940s, with a planned two-volume monograph on the history of cultural heritage preservation in Russia/USSR. However, this project turned out to be impossible for a number of reasons.

In the middle of the 1950s, the monograph project was replaced by a new plan: a series of essays on the history of interconnected topics relating, in

<sup>34</sup> Andreeva 2016, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Frolov 1990, 93-94.

<sup>36</sup> Sosimenko 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Saint Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Science Archive. F. 800 (N. J. Marr). Op. 4. D. 264. L. 18.



turn, to the history of museums in the Russian Empire/USSR. The team of authors consisted of leading experts from the Institute of Museum Studies.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Razgon himself headed this group. Between 1957-1971, seven volumes of the work *Essays on the history of museum field in Russia* were published including 47 articles. The weak point of the project was that there was no general consolidating concept, no conceptual framework; the choice of topics was open, not all types of museums and not all regions of the country were described, and there was not enough information on private collecting, biographies, history of museum legislation, history of museology, or the international relations of museums. But there were positive aspects: for the first time, a large spectrum of archival material was used, the history of the country's largest museums (State Historical Museum, Polytechnic Museum, Russian State Museum) was reviewed, and attention was paid to the history of the leading types of museums (historical, art, archaeological museums), the history of exhibitions, and the history of monument protection. The principle of objective, scientific analysis of historical sources underlay most articles. This gave the opportunity to revise and clarify many important features of museum history in Russia.<sup>39</sup>

The project closed in 1971 (for the reasons mentioned above relating to the shift in the Institute's profile). A few articles were published between 1971-1990 in the volumes of the Institute proceedings, for instance on different exhibition approaches in Soviet historical museums, and some articles appeared in the early 1990s.

As a kind of continuation of this project, the Institute published two volumes under the title *Museum and power* in 1991. The first volume included articles devoted to a chronological analysis of state museum policies in Russia from the early 18th to the late 20th centuries. As such, it contributed substantially to the development of historical museology in Russia.

### *From the Essays to the Encyclopedia*

The *Essays on the history of museum field in Russia* is connected to another monumental research project of Soviet/Russian museology: in the 1970s, an enormous amount of material on the history of the museum field and the theory and methodology of museum work was collected at the then Institute of Culture (as part of the preparation for the *Basics of Soviet Museum Stud-*

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<sup>38</sup> What the aforementioned Research Institute of Local Lore and Museum Work was called at this time.

<sup>39</sup> Frolov 1990, 93-94.

ies), and in the early 1980s, the Institute conceived the idea to prepare an encyclopedia of museums. Scholars began working on the project in the mid 1980s. Between 1987-1990, the conceptual framework of the encyclopedia, a list of entries, and guidelines for authors were published. The framework was written by Dina A. Ravikovich, who had participated in writing the *Essays* and preparing the *Basics of Soviet Museum Studies*.<sup>40</sup> As noted by Anneta Sundieva, one of the authors of the encyclopedia, 'the preparation for the encyclopedia has grown into a long-term study in the field of history and theory of museology'.<sup>41</sup>

Due to the difficult economic situation of the 1990s, only in 2001 were two volumes of the *Russian Museum Encyclopedia* published (and a second edition in 2005). A special sub-department for the encyclopedia was created at the Institute of Cultural Studies, with more than a thousand experts writing articles for it, who chose a historical approach to the analysis of the material. The articles can be divided into several blocks: the history of the museum field; theory; applied museology; and biographies. Articles dedicated to the museums of Russia (approximately 1,000) account for about half of the material. Around 300 articles are devoted to museologists and museum professionals. Some articles focus on key concepts such as the museum, museology, museography, the museum profession. Each article includes a bibliography. Around 1,700 images illustrated the texts.<sup>42</sup>

But all this material is devoted to the museum world of Russia. International contacts established by the museums of Russia or Russian museology are only mentioned briefly. And one more interesting detail: the article 'Museum studies' consists of two parts, written by two different authors. The first part chronicles the history of foreign museology (with numerous errors in the spelling of museologists' names and titles of their works) while the second features the history of Russian museology.<sup>43</sup> The lack of synthesis between these two parts reflects the weak links between Russian museology and international intellectual contexts even in the 1990s.

### *International cooperation*

As for earlier periods, Soviet museums and museologists practically ceased to have international contacts in the mid 1930s. Some intensification in this

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<sup>40</sup> Sundieva 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Yanin et al. 2005, 5-10.

<sup>42</sup> Yanin et al. 2005, 5-10.

<sup>43</sup> Yanin et al. 2005, 386-388.

area took place only during the ‘Thaw’, when in 1957 the USSR became part of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Soviet National Committee of ICOM was established. But this cooperation was on the level of museum activities (exchange of exhibitions, restitution of cultural property after the Second World War and others).<sup>44</sup> Contacts of a more theoretical nature were nearly non-existent. On the one hand, this was due to methodological reasons. As we have seen above, at that time the emphasis was on the development of Soviet museum studies, and studies by foreign researchers were criticized as bourgeois delusions. On the other hand, there were linguistic reasons: Soviet museologists were weak in foreign languages. The State did not encourage learning English, the language of bourgeois ideology, while German was more widespread as the language of the friend and younger brother, the socialist German Democratic Republic. In any case, as a rule, only special philological education gave real knowledge of foreign languages.

A significant number of museologists were first educated as historians, and fluency in foreign languages was not their strong point. In addition to language difficulties, it is necessary to remember that foreign museological literature was not readily available. Only the largest libraries received some journals and books on museology, and free contacts with foreign colleagues were greatly restricted. Real sharing of ideas was sorely lacking.

A good example of the problems surrounding the lack of foreign languages can be seen in the case of Zinaida Bonami. She was the first Soviet museologist to consistently look at the phenomenon of the museum and museum object from the point of view of semiotics in the late 1970s-early 1980s. She started her museum career as a junior researcher at the State Pushkin Museum in Moscow, and was also much involved in interpreting for Alexander Krein. Krein was the founder and first Director of the abovementioned museum. Together with Irina Antonova (who chaired the Soviet National Committee) at the 1977 ICOM General Conference held in Moscow and Leningrad,<sup>45</sup> he was responsible for the creation of a new international committee (ICLM), to unite the staff of literary museums. In those days, the USSR was the leader in such museums. Krein had published several popular books on the establishment and functioning of a museum (*The Birth of a Museum, The Life of a Museum*)<sup>46</sup> in the 1970s which reached a wide readership. He also wrote on the specifics of the museum profession and the interaction of

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<sup>44</sup> Ananiev 2013b, 90.

<sup>45</sup> The 1977 ICOM General Conference also approved the initiative by A. Z. Krein and I. A. Antonova for celebrating International Museums Day on May 18.

<sup>46</sup> Krein 1969; 1979.

the museum with the audience, aspects that were very important during the museum boom in the 1970s. Neither he nor other directors of Soviet literary museums, however, were comfortable enough in foreign languages to mingle with their foreign colleagues, and they called upon Zinaida A. Bonami to act as their interpreter. She thus had the unique opportunity as a young specialist to participate in the work of this particular international organization. The conferences held by the International Committee for Literary Museums (ICLM) encouraged her interest in the theoretical issues of museology and acquainted her with foreign museological contexts.<sup>47</sup>

Bonami's philological education led her towards semiotics, and she became familiar with its key concepts while studying at the Moscow State University and through reading the works of Ferdinand de Saussure. She published several articles on the topic in the ICOM-ICLM Information Bulletins<sup>48</sup> and in March 1986 (on the threshold of full Perestroika) she presented the first doctoral thesis in the USSR devoted to the semiotic interpretation of the museum. Perestroika started only in 1985, therefore semiotics was still regarded with some suspicion. Of course, she had to follow the official soviet standard, and titled her research *The psychological and pedagogical features of the aesthetic education of working people in the process of cultural and educational activities of literary museums*.<sup>49</sup> The title fulfilled all requirements of the era of Stagnation: it referred to 'education' as one of museum functions and 'working people' as the main museum audience. However, the content was really new. Museums were seen as the instruments for translating cultural-historical codes. Several PhDs dealing with issues aligned to the field of semiotics and museum communication were presented in the late 1980s-early 1990s: in 1988, Taras Polyakov wrote his thesis on the *Actual problems of relationships between the content and the form of museum exhibition*;<sup>50</sup> in 1991 Tatiana Kalugina presented *The Historical and typological study of the art museum exhibition*;<sup>51</sup> and in 1994 Mikhail Gnedovsky wrote the thesis *A communicational approach in museology: its theoretical and applied aspects*.<sup>52</sup> The authors of these theses had more freedom in choosing the methodological framework for their studies and a better knowledge of foreign museology, and they were also allowed to appeal to the (previously forbidden) experience

<sup>47</sup> Personal letter from Z. A. Bonami to the author, 30 October 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Bonami 1981; 1982.

<sup>49</sup> Bonami 1985.

<sup>50</sup> Polyakov 1988.

<sup>51</sup> Kalugina 1991.

<sup>52</sup> Gnedovsky 1994.

of the first Soviet decade. Thus, they became a link between the late Soviet and the new Russian periods in the development of museology.

For political reasons, the relationships between Soviet museologists and foreign museology were severely restricted. Cooperation was only permitted with museologists from Central and Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Poland, GDR), but even their works were extremely rarely translated. A good example is the Czechoslovakian archaeologist and museologist Jiří Neustupný; his archaeological work had more luck being translated into Russian than his research on museology. A Russian translation of his classic work *Prehistory of Lužice* was published in Prague (1947),<sup>53</sup> and later his report 'The historical concept of archaeological exhibitions' was presented at the ICOM conference of historical and archaeological museums held in Leningrad and Moscow, 9-18 September 1970 and was published in Russian.<sup>54</sup> Neustupný maintained contacts with Soviet researchers. For example, a letter from Neustupný addressed to the prominent Soviet archaeologist Sergey Rudenko was found a few years ago in Rudenko's archives. Four of his letters in the State Hermitage archive are addressed to Anastasia Mantsevich (an archeologist and curator at the State Hermitage), dated from December 13, 1957 to July 29, 1958. In the letters, Neustupný requested copies of museum objects for an upcoming exhibition, and presented ideas concerning their exhibition. This perhaps influenced the particular exhibition of archaeological material in the State Hermitage.<sup>55</sup> Yet, as said before, Neustupný's works on museology were not translated into Russian.

Studies by Central and Eastern European museologists became well-known in the USSR only after 1984 when Razgon prepared a review titled *The problems of general theory of museum studies in the academic literature of the socialist countries*.<sup>56</sup> The situation was typical of the times: digests of studies by foreign researchers (compiled by Soviet experts) were published but no Russian translations of the studies themselves. The State Library of the USSR named after V. I. Lenin (nowadays the Russian State Library, Moscow) issued a series of overviews on the theme 'Museum studies and the protection of monuments' with booklets containing summaries of the research by foreign and Russian museologists.

The review written by Razgon shows he was well informed, his expertise formed due to his active work with the International Committee for Muse-

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<sup>53</sup> Neustupný 1947.

<sup>54</sup> Neustupný 1970.

<sup>55</sup> Ananiev 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Razgon 1984.

ology (ICOFOM).<sup>57</sup> But Razgon was not himself familiar with the Czech language; perhaps translations were prepared by the cited authors themselves, or by Razgon's colleagues with knowledge of languages, or perhaps Razgon used German translations. In any case, even contemporary museologists in Russia often refer to Razgon's retelling of the ideas of foreign museologists, and not to their own articles and books. Inevitably, things were lost in translation. In 1986, in the abovementioned series, a review entitled *Current trends in the development of museum communication in capitalist countries: theory and practice* was published by Mikhail B. Gnedovsky. It provided a critical account of 79 works by Western authors devoted to the issues of museum education, visitor studies, and others. Among them, there were two articles by Duncan Cameron, two books by Kenneth Hudson and two books by Marshall McLuhan.<sup>58</sup> In the USSR, the development of certain ideas concerning museum communication as expressed by Cameron were accepted, but not those by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. As noted by the staff of the museological laboratory at the Central Museum of the Revolution (USSR) in 1989, the lack of knowledge regarding the theoretical works of Western scholars was one of the main characteristics of Soviet museology.<sup>59</sup> It was true.

We can illustrate this by using the following example. In 1984, Ravikovich published an article titled 'The social functions of the museum and its information system', wherein she regarded the museum as a special information system aimed at transferring information by specific means.<sup>60</sup> It was the first attempt in Soviet museology to theoretically interpret informative and communicative processes characteristic of museums.<sup>61</sup> Ravikovich referred to general works on information and mass communication theory written by English and American scholars, but only those that had been translated into Russian, and she was not acquainted with works on museums.

Ravikovich identified three social functions of a museum: documentation, education and leisure-time activity. These functions were made possible

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<sup>57</sup> Igumnova 1999. On his activity at ICOFOM, see Sofka 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Gnedovsky 1986.

<sup>59</sup> Skripkina 1999, 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> Ravikovich 1984.

<sup>61</sup> This was also the period in which research interests became focused on the educational role of museums in Soviet museum studies. In the aftermath of the museum boom of the 1970s, some scholars began to pay more attention to museum pedagogy. In the context of this chapter, it is worth noting the PhD theses by Lyudmila Shlyakhtina (1982) and Boris Stolyarov (1989). In the 1990s they both became the founders of elaborated methodologies of museum pedagogy (education in/through art museums) and authors of relevant textbooks. The theory of museum communication was an important part of such methodologies.

by the informative characteristics of a museum object, i.e. its semantic, expressive and representational properties. Ravikovich argued that it was the social functions of museums that determined the main museum activities. Although she relied on Lasswell's model of communication, she did not refer to his works directly but to a Soviet recapitulation. As a result, her scheme of museum communication appears very similar to Cameron's famous scheme published 15 years earlier. On the other hand, Ravikovich's concept was rather original in that it considered the museum an 'open information system associated with the external environment by specific "inputs" and "outputs"'.<sup>62</sup> There were two sorts of information at the museum's entrance: museum objects carrying material information, and information given by the government, experts and the museum audience. By the time visitors reached the exit, changes in their perception as a result of their exposure to this information were evident. The development of museum activities depended on the interconnection between inputs and outputs, i.e. on the feedback loop.

There was a widely-held belief in the USSR, the roots of which can probably be traced to the discussions taking place during the early years of ICO-FOM, that in the Western world, museology was understood as a practical discipline dominated by approaches focusing on practice. In some way, this was the evolution of common textbook ideas about the pragmatic West and spiritual Russia; it was a manifestation of the well-known cultural stereotype.

However, a new period, Perestroika of the second half of the 1980s, acquainted Soviet museologists with their foreign colleagues. The journal *Museum International* was published in Russian translation since the beginning of the 1980s. The 1985 issue (No. 148 of the Russian version) was dedicated to New Museology, with articles in Russian by Georges Henri Rivière ('Evolutionary definition of the ecomuseum'), Pierre Mayrand ('New museology'), Mathilde Bellaigue ('Participation in the work of the ecomuseum'), and others, contributing to a certain popularity of these ideas in Russia. The first Russian ecomuseums appeared after this publication, in connection with efforts to save the cultural heritage of small native ethnic groups in Siberia. Based on the Russian material, the concept was developed only in the 1990s-2000s and was primarily associated with the works of Vladimir Kimeev, Professor at Kemerovo State University. Kimeev published a series of articles on the subject in the 1990s and accomplished several projects. In 2009, he defended his doctoral thesis on the role of ecomuseums in preserving ethno-cultural heritage of the peoples living in the Tom River valley.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ravikovich 1984, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Kimeev 2009.

In the compilation volumes of the late 1980s, translations of studies by authors such as Anna Gregorova, Stránský, Klaus Schreiner, Wojciech Gluzinski, and Peter van Mensch were published. However, these works were published singly, outside their general historiographical context, which often had negative consequences. On the basis of a single, sometimes randomly-selected article, readers made conclusions about the general scientific concept of the scholar without taking into consideration the development of his/her ideas, leading to misunderstandings. Stránský's concept of museality, for instance, as this was understood on the basis of Razgon's summary and two translated articles by Stránský himself, was the subject of debate, yet the essence and evolution of his concept was not fully understood.

It should be noted that on the whole, Razgon was responsible for Soviet museology adopting the structure of museology developed by Stránský, but it was adjusted and creatively reinterpreted. Paradoxically, it was accepted together with the ideas of Neustupný regarding general and special museology (see above). The idea of museum communication began to spread in the second half of the 1980s based on Cameron's model of linear communication. However, the general level of familiarity with the works of foreign museologists still remains superficial. In this regard, we cannot agree with Maria Gubarenko, who affirms that the ideas of Czechoslovakian professional museologists formed the basis of the academic school created in the post-Soviet period in the Department of Museology at the Institute of Culture in St Petersburg.<sup>64</sup> Some of these ideas were indeed perceived; but taken out of context, they became just terms or simply words. We believe it is more logical to speak of the assimilation of dictionary terms or vocabulary, but not the concepts and theories of foreign professional museologists.

### *Museological education*

Throughout the entire Soviet period, the system of museological education remained the weakest part of the development of museological discourse. The teaching of museology in Russia began in the beginning of the 20th century. Lectures in museology along with other courses in auxiliary historical disciplines (i.e. historical geography, paleography, sphragistics) were part of the archaeological institutes (Moscow and St Petersburg/Petrograd). These institutions prepared students for positions in archives and museums.<sup>65</sup> Sev-

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<sup>64</sup> Gubarenko 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Ananiev 2013b, 6.



eral attempts were made in the 1920s to establish a system of museological education, but they were unsuccessful. Only in 1939, the Faculty of History at Moscow State University established the Department of Museum Work and Local Lore (later, the Department of Museum Studies), which was headed by G.A. Novitsky, a prominent Soviet historian and Curator at the Historical Museum. This department was closed in 1953 (or 1957). Its history has not yet been studied, and requires research in the archives. Museum studies continued to be taught at major universities and institutes as one of the courses in the history curriculum. For example, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, two prominent researchers, both curators at the State Hermitage, Vladimir Levinson-Lessing (art historian, author of the *History of the Hermitage Art Gallery*) and Leonid Matsulevitch (expert in Byzantine and Caucasian art) gave courses on Museum Studies to art historians and archaeologists at the Leningrad State University (now St Petersburg State University). Usually these courses lasted one semester (four months) and consisted of lectures and workshops. Their programmes have not been published, but several years ago in the L. A. Matsulevitch Collection (St Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Science Archive), I discovered his manuscripts related to this course.<sup>66</sup>

According to Matsulevitch's notes, the aim of the course was 'on the one hand, to prepare students for practical work in the museum; on the other hand, to expand their horizons, directing their thought towards theoretical problems in an integrated museum field and consequently to make the scientific materials of the museum easier to use by non-museum employees'. So, practical classes or workshops were included in the course. The course consisted of several parts: 1) history of the museum field of the pre-revolutionary period (from antiquity to the early 20th century); 2) 'The Great October socialist revolution—a new era in the museum field'; and 3) 'Aims (objectives) and key activities of the Soviet museum'. The last was broken down into subsections: 'a) systematic collecting; b) scientific conservation and documentation; c) a comprehensive study of museum collections; d) exhibition; e) publications; f) research-educational work within and beyond the museum; g) development of specific museum issues and theoretical museum studies; h) clarification and development of the programme of the museum'. It is thus clear that, along with historical and applied aspects, this programme paid attention to the problems of theoretical museum studies, albeit in the background. The nature of museum studies was stated briefly: 'the complex-

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<sup>66</sup> Ananiev 2013a.

ity and encyclopaedic nature of the science of museum studies'. Other evidence from Matsulevitch's archive shows that the main emphasis in lectures and seminars was placed on the practical aspects of museum work.<sup>67</sup>

The lack of museological education drew criticism from both museum workers and the State. In 1964, the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union issued a document entitled 'On the condition and measures for improving the work of museums'. It recommended the launching of Museum Studies training at Moscow and Kiev universities, as well as at the Moscow State Institute for History and Archives. Nothing came of this recommendation. In 1978, the Ministry of Culture of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Republic as part of the USSR) proposed to establish a system for the training of museum staff, but this proposal was rejected by the Ministry of Finance. It was only in 1983 that a separate (independent) Department of Museum Studies was created in the USSR, in the All-Union Institute of Improvement of Professional Skills of Workers of Art and Culture (Moscow).<sup>68</sup> Razgon was the initiator and the first Head of Department, which was designed for practicing museum professionals.<sup>69</sup>

For students, the first programmes and departments were only created in 1988, at the State Institute for History and Archives (Moscow) and the Institute of Culture (Leningrad). Initially, training was based on the standard 'Museum field and protection of monuments', but in 2002 the standard of 'Museology' was adopted, assuming a higher degree of conceptualization of the material. In practice, these standards actually duplicated each other, and in 2009 they were united into one: 'Museology and the protection of objects of cultural and natural heritage'. At the beginning of the 21st century, Russia adopted the Bologna system of education, and nowadays there are more than 30 departments in the country with museological Bachelor and Master's programmes.

### *Conclusion*

Summarizing the above, it can be noted that the second half of the 20th century was a period characterized by the convergence of new trends and those arising from earlier times regarding the development of Russian museology.

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<sup>67</sup> Ananiev 2013a.

<sup>68</sup> For more about the Institute and Razgon's involvement, see the introduction in <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/muse.12059>. Accessed December 9, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>69</sup> Gazalova 1999.

On the one hand, first attempts were made to work out a general paradigm, i.e. some conceptual frameworks within which separate elements of museology could be developed. On the other hand, the traditional Russian attention to the historical aspects of the museum phenomenon, likely stimulated by the understanding of the link between history and theory characteristic of Marxism, continued to develop. The conceptualization of such notions as 'museology', which included practical and theoretical aspects of the investigated phenomenon, attempted to synthesize these two directions. International contacts were very much restricted, in accordance with the USSR's total orientation towards cultural and scientific autonomy.

The active work of Avraam Razgon, who functioned as 'a museological *kulturträger*' (culture-bearer) brought some changes in this sphere; his efforts did not result in a profound understanding of foreign museology, but they did lead to some knowledge of its existence. In many respects, this situation persists to the present. The formation of the Soviet version of museology as a scientific discipline, carrying the features of a particular *mechanicism* (in the sense of a non-organic mechanic connection of different parts into a single whole), is connected with a fragmentary knowledge of works by foreign professional museologists (Neustupný, Stránský). The lack of a fully original concept of museology can be associated with poor regulation of the system of museological education, which was almost absent during the Soviet period. Thus, museology was deprived of a tool that would have broadcasted and, at the same time, developed professional knowledge.

TRANSLATED BY OLGA KRIVENKOVA

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# East, West, unified Germany: one language, two developments in museological theory

*Markus Walz*

## *Abstract*

Germany gives the unique possibility to observe disciplinary developments on both sides of the Iron Curtain, yet based on the same history and argued in the same language. East Germany saw the consequences of a centralistic dictatorship: a state-controlled but vivid discourse on the fundamental principles and structures of museology, the foundation of central institutions and academic journals, and a productive international exchange within the Eastern hemisphere. West Germany was definitely not interested in the development of the young discipline of museology, although two ICOM conferences published the ideas of one French and one Czechoslovakian museologist, and a national Institut für Museumskunde (Institute for Museology) was founded. Theory building and terminology started either in transdisciplinary fields (e.g. visitor studies for different cultural institutions) or by solitary individuals with experiences in museum work and in researching and teaching at the university level. Independently but quite similarly, both German states developed a separate 'museology of history'.

**Keywords:** GDR museology, West German museology, museology of history, museological theory

## *Introductory note*

The term 'museography' emerged in Germany in 1806, 'museology' in 1830. In 1845, the custodian of Munich's *naturalia* cabinet Alexander Held described museology as the science concerning collecting and preserving items for scientific education and contemplation. Another important date is 1922, when Bonn University appointed the first German professor of museology.<sup>1</sup> These promising developments raised the expectation that German museology would flourish in the second half of the 20th century, but reality proved more complicated.

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<sup>1</sup> Walz 2018.



German unification did not lead to any synthesis but rather put an end to institutions, journals, and most independent work of theorists with origins in the GDR: all the results of East German efforts were excised, except for the *Fachschule für Museologen* (College of Museologists). Continuity can be seen in the lasting discourse on the ‘meaning of things’—starting already in 1940—and in the dominance of the former Western system of individual, free-choice efforts and transdisciplinary inputs without any academic institutionalization.

This chapter proceeds in five steps: first are two separate surveys of the museological developments in East and West Germany; next, we delve deeper into the relations between museology and the science of history in both German states; then, the situation of museology in unified Germany is presented; and finally, an example is given with a broader historical scope including contributions from different disciplines, namely the developing theory of the ‘meaning of things’.

### *The German Democratic Republic: discourses on the discipline of museology*

During the 1950s, the socialist government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) established a central structure for museums known as *Fachstelle für Heimatmuseen* (National Advisory Agency for Regional and Local Museums), a journal for museum professionals *Neue Museumskunde* (New Museology), and a training college for future middle-level museum staff whose job title was ‘Museologe’ (museologist).

In 1964, the GDR held the first controversial discussion on museology. Reflecting upon the missing equivalent of archival studies, Annadora Miethe, Director of the *Fachstelle*, and her assistant Eberhard Czichon published the paper *Entwurf von Thesen zur Museumswissenschaft* (draft theses on museum science) pointing to academic documentation, research, registration, and conservation of original material evidence as the object of research. Erik Hühns—one of the authors of the paper—concluded that exhibition concepts must start with this material evidence, implicitly meaning that the ideological basis did not come first. As a result, Hühns came under severe criticism as a ‘bourgeois capitalist theorist’.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Culture suppressed further discussions by banning the staff of the *Fachstelle* from speaking. In 1964/65, the *Fachstelle* received the recommendation of five state museum directors to examine philosophically whether a museum science could exist or not. Within this context, the director of the Ernst-Haeckel-Haus Museum at Jena remarked ironically

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<sup>2</sup> Scheunemann 2009, 333-336.

that the new discipline was created by expressing ‘well-known phenomena in complicated and artificial terms’.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this discussion, the Ministry of Culture appointed a general advisory board or council for museums, the new Rat für Museumswesen, which undertook the editorship of the journal *Neue Museumskunde*. The Fachstelle gradually became an institute for research and museum instruction and was renamed Institut für Museumswesen (Institute for the Museum System) in 1971.<sup>4</sup> In 1978, the Institute translated and published some actual research in applied museology by the Research Institute for Culture at Moscow.<sup>5</sup> In 1981, it offered a typewritten translation of *Úvod do studia muzeologie* (Introduction to the study of museology) by the Czech docent of museology Zbyněk Stránský (1979) followed by a reader of Czechoslovakian museological research, translations of 11 texts produced at the time and an original contribution by Stránský, *Die Herausbildung der Museologie in der Tschechoslowakei* (The emergence of museology in Czechoslovakia).<sup>6</sup> Without visible connection to the Institute, Dresden University of Education accepted a PhD thesis on museum education in 1970,<sup>7</sup> but there was no chair in this subject.

The 1980s saw relevant developments. Although the *Neue Museumskunde* regularly printed contributions to museum theory, the Institut für Museumswesen started a new periodical *Museologische Forschung* (Museological research) as a supplement to *Informationen für die Museen der DDR* (Information for the museums in the GDR). [East] Berlin University accepted a postdoctoral thesis (‘Dissertation B’, corresponding to the West German ‘Habilitationsschrift’) entitled *Einführung in die Museologie* (Introduction to Museology)<sup>8</sup> by Klaus Schreiner, Director of the Museum of Agricultural History at Alt-Schwerin. As the most important natural history museum in the GDR was part of [East] Berlin University, it was easy to establish a docent of natural history museology there in 1980. This docent, Ilse Jahn, had written a ‘Dissertation B’ on museology as an academic discipline<sup>9</sup> and soon after issued reports about her first students and their dissertation projects.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Hanslok 2008, 51, 53. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of German originals are by the author.

<sup>4</sup> Hanslok 2008, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Beiträge 1978.

<sup>6</sup> *Museologie in der Tschechoslowakischen Sozialistischen Republik* 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Ave 1988a, 71.

<sup>8</sup> Schreiner 1982 a-c.

<sup>9</sup> Jahn 1979/80.

<sup>10</sup> Jahn 1982c.

The centralized structure of the GDR provided the main reason for the intense discussions: the desire to found a museological chair, even the acceptance of a journal by the state censorship body and the allotment of paper rations depended on official judgement about the relevance and worth of this new academic field. 'Differences between socialistic and late bourgeois ideology within the worldwide class struggle' should explain any lack of clarity in the discussions.<sup>11</sup> History museums functioned normatively for all museums; however, a biologist regarded museological research questions within this historical perspective as anachronistic or irrelevant for museums of natural history.<sup>12</sup>

The most ambitious project dealt with museological approaches revolving around historical matters, something corresponding to the importance of a kind of teleological history within Marxist-Leninist ideology. In 1979, an interdisciplinary working group was founded in the GDR to analyze the state of Marxist-Leninist museology and outline a study programme of museology.<sup>13</sup> In collaboration with Russian partners, the Museum of German History prepared a manual for use by museum professionals which would simultaneously serve as a textbook for museological studies.<sup>14</sup> The presentation of this book in 1988 resulted in an international conference titled 'Museologie und Museum' (Museology and Museum), which was published as volumes 15 and 16 of the museum's academic journal, *Beiträge und Mitteilungen*. A post-graduate study programme in museology started in 1988/89 at the History Department of [East] Berlin University.<sup>15</sup>

The conference 'Museologie und Museum' envisioned an internationality reduced by the Iron Curtain: apart from the 40 participants coming from the GDR, 13 foreign professionals arrived from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Yugoslavia. The only participant with a 'neutral' passport was the then president of ICOFOM (ICOM International Committee for Museology), Vиноš Söfka (Sweden). Western thoughts were quite unknown because of the restrictions placed on the international book trade and access to 'capitalist' literature in academic libraries. The official version declared that socialist countries were 'absolutely first in researching fundamental problems of general museology'<sup>16</sup> and that Western literature was of

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<sup>11</sup> Ennenbach 1983, 12, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Jahn 1979/80, part 3, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Ave 1988b, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Herbst and Levykin 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Ave 1988b, 41-4.

<sup>16</sup> Razgon 1988a, 23.

no help because the West had doubts about the existence of an autonomous discipline of museology.<sup>17</sup>

The opinions regarding the connection between museology and other disciplines diverged. The college docent Volker Schimpff described museology as a kind of *meta-science* between the higher-ranking epistemology and the lower level of the other disciplines.<sup>18</sup> Wolfgang Herbst, Deputy Director of the Museum for German History, disapproved of this discrimination because it would degrade the science of history and neglect Marxist ideology.<sup>19</sup> The Director of the National Museum in Wrocław (Poland), Wojciech Gluziński, thought that theoretical museology might be one of the numerous specializations within cultural semiotics.<sup>20</sup> The doctoral thesis by Wilhelm Ennenbach regarded museology as a special aspect of reality being addressed by different disciplines. Ennenbach used the term ‘museology of natural history’ as an intersection between (general) museology and natural sciences—e.g. the history of museums of nature as part of the general history of museums on the one hand and museology of natural history on the other.<sup>21</sup> Klaus Schreiner distinguished between general museology with a multidisciplinary approach to knowledge and special museologies following the disciplinary approach.<sup>22</sup> For him, both perspectives contain theoretical approaches and applied practices. Several authors neglected the disciplinary position and concentrated on practical problems: ‘We have to build the architecture of museology from scratch, arduously laying stone on stone without the aura of an autonomous discipline being our first priority.’<sup>23</sup> This correlated with the expectation of museum professionals that they would get applicable knowledge and not pure theory.<sup>24</sup>

Several phenomena were proposed as the object of museological research, e.g. Schreiner argued that it should comprise the ‘complex process of collecting, conserving, documenting, researching, exhibiting, and communicating mobile authentic objects which testify to the development of nature and society as primary sources’.<sup>25</sup> Gluziński sharply criticized Schrei-

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<sup>17</sup> Razgon 1988b, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Schimpff 1982, 16-17.

<sup>19</sup> Scheunemann 2009, 331-340.

<sup>20</sup> Gluziński 1988, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Ennenbach 1983, 44-45.

<sup>22</sup> Schreiner 1982a, 78-79; 1982c, 53-54.

<sup>23</sup> Hofmann 1982, 4, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Jahn 1982b, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Schreiner 1982a, 35.

ner's position during the conference of 1988.<sup>26</sup> Another opinion was closer to Stránský's: museum work should justify academic evaluations as aspects of the relationship between human beings and objects.<sup>27</sup> Jahn accentuated the relationship between musealia as information media and the social (or human) act of scientific recognition; she mentioned a close connection to museum-relevant disciplines which have similar relations to 'material research sources'.<sup>28</sup> Ennenbach preferred the interaction of man, museum and musealium.<sup>29</sup>

As defined by the German-Russian manual *Museologie*: 'Museology is a social science which researches the processes and laws of the preservation of social information and the communication of knowledge and emotions by museum assets'.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, these laws and processes were indicated as the focus of museological research.<sup>31</sup> Gluziński declared the same position.<sup>32</sup> But the manual also adopted Stránský's model: 'Museology researches that specific human relation to the environment which causes that a museum meaning and a museum value are attributed to certain assets'.<sup>33</sup>

The manual *Museologie* contains a chapter by Avram Razgon, Director of the Institute for Further Education of Museologists at Moscow.<sup>34</sup> He envisioned the structure of museology as having four sections: the history of museums and museology; theoretical museology (general theory, theory of collecting and conserving, theory of collection management, communication theory); theory of the sources of museological research; and applied museology (scientific methods, museum techniques, museum management). Applied museology is twofold, comprising general aspects and special museologies.<sup>35</sup> Razgon described the development of special museologies and their interaction with general museology as a relevant contemporary task.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Jahn's curriculum was divided into general museology (of natural history museums!) and special museologies, from anthropology to zoology.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Gluziński 1988, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Schimpff 1982, 15, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Jahn 1979/80, part 4, 78.

<sup>29</sup> Ennenbach 1983, 44-45.

<sup>30</sup> Razgon 1988b, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Razgon 1988b, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Gluziński 1988, 40.

<sup>33</sup> Razgon 1988b, 27.

<sup>34</sup> For more on Razgon, see also Ananiev, this volume (editors' note).

<sup>35</sup> Razgon 1988b, 33-34.

<sup>36</sup> Razgon 1988a, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Jahn 1982b, 32, 36.

The methodology of museology was reflected in contradictory ways. If museology is only an aspect within different sciences, there is no need for separate methods. Razgon thought of an 'interdisciplinary science' adopting the methods of the leading science in each particular case.<sup>38</sup> Schreiner regarded museology as a separate discipline which acted at a lower level vis-à-vis the 'neighbouring disciplines' (archive, library, documentation science) and used dialectical materialism as its methodological basis; but in applied situations, museology should only function as a complementary science.<sup>39</sup>

Schreiner rejected Stránský's museality (the special documentary value of assets) as adding any additional value to the scientific evidence of the object.<sup>40</sup> He criticized museality (as a human relationship to the environment) because of its 'questionable closeness to bourgeois values' which used anthropological arguments and neglected Marxist dialectical materialism.<sup>41</sup> He noted that Stránský's ideas had 'infected' many museologists in the GDR, but also mentioned that he had not received permission from the Institut für Museumswesen to publish his ideological critique of Stránský.<sup>42</sup> Schreiner's definition of museality as the 'suitability of an asset for the museum collection'<sup>43</sup> avoided any relation to Stránský.

These contradictory positions were typical for the international discourse on museology, with the GDR being no exception. Apart from that, the GDR presented a developed and institutionalized structure of museology; it left a single unresolved problem, the theoretical and institutional independence of the special 'museology of history' and that of natural history.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Razgon 1988b, 42.

<sup>39</sup> Schreiner 1982a, 34-35, 71-75.

<sup>40</sup> For more on Stránský, see also Kirsch, Mrázová, Jagošová, this volume (editors' note).

<sup>41</sup> Schreiner 1982b, 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> Hanslok 2008, 113.

<sup>43</sup> Schreiner 1982c, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Editors' note: In a private conversation with the author, Markus Walz clarified the special use of the term within the context of the museological paradigm of GDR. In this view, 'museology of history' is indeed a sub-discipline of museology, as also pointed out by Stránský, but it is not a rigid sub-discipline referring to the history of museums and museology. On the contrary, 'museology of history' draws on the Russian-GDR historical paradigm in the sense of being one of the so-called 'special museologies' (see also Ananiev in this volume). Museology of history thus studies the application of museology on historical topics for history museums by historians, comparable to the special museology applied to the arts or to natural history. The discourse behind the Iron Curtain, the author tells us, was concentrated on the special museology of history or that of natural history (Walz refers us, for instance, to Ilse Jahn) but other special museologies were of less interest.

*The Federal Republic of Germany: unstructured and inconsistent outlines of museum-related disciplines*

The Cold War touched the other side as well: Westerners ignored nearly all 'Eastern' theoretical reflections although they principally had access to Eastern publications. In 1960, there was considerable criticism over the fact 'that even Germany which has done so much for the development of general museology does not yet have a chair of museology at a university level'.<sup>45</sup> In 1971, ICOM Germany arranged a conference titled 'Museologie', but practical questions dominated. At the conference, ICOM consultant George Henri Rivière (Paris) presented museological research desiderata—but without explaining which professionals within what structure should work on them.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the speech by the president of ICOM Germany was titled 'Zur Einführung in den Begriff Museologie' (Introduction to the term museology), but it did not mention any definition of the term.<sup>47</sup> In 1988, the ICOM committees of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland organized a joint conference on museology in West Germany. Stránský was the only person to speak of museology as a separate discipline; Šöfka referred to the developing discourse of ICO-FOM.<sup>48</sup> No visible reaction followed these contributions.

The journal of the German Association for Ethnology showed a comparable isolated phenomenon in 1976: five museum professionals proposed to acquire only items useful for exhibitions; they proclaimed the inversion of the traditional sequence of collecting, researching, and educating.<sup>49</sup> Refuting this view, another ethnologist wrote on this very topic, and went on to discuss the 'needs of modern museology' by presenting his position, namely that different museologies existed as parts of each museum-related discipline.<sup>50</sup>

In 1971, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German community for research)—an important state-financed research funding organization—published a paper on 'The Crisis of the Museums in the Federal Republic—an Appeal for Immediate Help'; its first demand concerned the foundation of a 'central interdisciplinary research institute for museum methodology' for investigating the 'optimal and sustainable influence on the museum visitor by drawing upon applied educational theory, psychology, and sociology', and

<sup>45</sup> Ladendorf 1960, 74.

<sup>46</sup> Museologie 1973.

<sup>47</sup> Auer 1973.

<sup>48</sup> Stránský 1989.

<sup>49</sup> Vossen et al. 1976, 198-199.

<sup>50</sup> Nachtigall 1976, 299-300.

to acquire a deeper knowledge of the social structure of the audience with an aim to broadening it.<sup>51</sup> The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft also issued a memorandum which expanded the desired activities to include pure sociological research concerning the ‘actual and future duties of the museum within cultural life, especially within research, education, and leisure time’.<sup>52</sup> In 1980, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Foundation for the cultural property of Prussia)—a corporate body jointly financed by the Federal Republic and all federal member states—opened its Institut für Museumskunde (Institute for museology) as a centre for museum-related research, documentation, and information; its departments have mirrored practical questions (museum techniques, museum education, visitor studies, documentation/information).<sup>53</sup>

Politicians used museology similarly as an umbrella term for aspects of museum work and museum-related research. The founding contract of the German Historical Museum between the Federal Republic and the State of Berlin (28 October 1987) differentiated between history (‘the actual development of the sciences’) and museology as an applied science (‘illustrative for the visitors following museological knowledge’).<sup>54</sup> The contemporaneous concept declared that this museum ‘shall enrich the knowledge and experience of the visitors, inspire their historical imagination, and make their individual decisions easier by using the specific means of the museum’<sup>55</sup>—museology seemed to be nothing but didactics.

The development of terms and theories started informally in the space between university and museum practice. The biographies of two scholars illustrate this intermediate position. The cultural anthropologist Gottfried Korff started as an educator in the open-air museum at Kommern (1975–1978). In 1978–1982 he worked as secretary general of the temporary exhibition *Preußen—Versuch einer Bilanz* (Prussia—Trial of an End-Result, Berlin, 1981), and afterwards, until his retirement in 2007, he was Chair of Cultural Anthropology at Tübingen University. During these years, he engaged himself in student exhibition projects as well as in co-organizing large-scale exhibitions in Berlin (1987) and Oberhausen (1994/95, 1999/2000). The art historian Michael Fehr started in at the Bochum Art Museum (1974–1981)

<sup>51</sup> Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft: Notlage der Museen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Appell zur Soforthilfe. Bonn 1971. Printed in: Auer 1974, 185–190.

<sup>52</sup> Auer 1974, 201.

<sup>53</sup> Grote 1994.

<sup>54</sup> Stölzl 1988, 646.

<sup>55</sup> Stölzl 1988, 311.



and then worked at Wuppertal University (1981-1986). From 1987-2005 he was director of Karl-Ernst-Osthaus-Museum, Hagen; afterwards and until his retirement in 2014, he was the director of the Institut für Kunst im Kontext (Institute of art in context) at Berlin University of the Arts.

Both protagonists used the introductions in exhibition catalogues and academic conferences (in connection with exhibitions) as media for museological reflections. In stark contrast, the conferences of regional and national museum organizations did not serve as museological fora on a reflexive, theoretical level but mainly preferred political topics and discussed practical museum work. Comparably, the first museological discourse of museum educators was not part of a regular assembly of their association but a topic of informal meetings leading to a separate conference, *Zeitphänomen Musealisierung* (musealization as a present phenomenon, 1988).<sup>56</sup>

In most cases, the encounters of individuals interested in museology were brought about by a coincidence of personal networks and professional occasions, e.g. the conference *Geschichte, Bild, Museum* (history, image, museum) initiated by Fehr in 1988 on the occasion of the temporary exhibition *Vom Trümmerfeld ins Wirtschaftswunderland* (from rubble to the economic miracle) at the art museum Karl-Ernst-Osthaus-Museum in Hagen, organized by the Bochum Town Archives.<sup>57</sup> The summary highlighted the need to overcome traditional boundaries between different disciplines and museum professionals so that open and perhaps confrontational dialogues might take place.<sup>58</sup> This conference was focused on interdisciplinarity and (critical) applied science rather than on autonomous theory and its derivation. Museology served as a synonym for applied science; Korff talked about the 'museologization of the museum' by 'museologically invented and realized' concepts drawn from a multitude of museums in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>59</sup> Connections to East German museology only occurred implicitly. Sociology professor Heiner Treinen unintentionally presented a counter position to Stránský's museality: he thought that objects as traditional symbols—except for magical assets—can be replaced by artefacts with the same meaning; in his eyes, the high regard for the irreplaceable authentic asset begins with an evaluation outside the social context of its origin.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Zacharias 1990, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Fehr and Grohé 1989.

<sup>58</sup> Grohé 1989, 246, 249, 251.

<sup>59</sup> Korff 1990, 61-62.

<sup>60</sup> Treinen 1973, 337-338.

With political support, the awareness of museum education as a separate part of museum work increased. Given that the national organization of museum professionals (Deutscher Museumsbund) refused non-academics as members, museum educators founded their own separate regional associations in 1983 and the following years. This sector developed differently, influenced by existing study programmes for the teaching of art (Kunsterziehung) and history (Geschichtsdidaktik) and a separate discourse for education at sites of Nazi injustices (Gedenkstättenpädagogik). Arnold Vogt, Professor of Museum Education, discussed the relation to museology: he referred to Stránský's model of special museologies but favoured multiple intersections,<sup>61</sup> proposing a three-dimensional model with the intersection of museology and educational science and both intersecting with the museum-related disciplines, from archaeology to zoology.

Some other museum-related topics were proclaimed as new forms for applied disciplines without any thought of the existence of museology; e.g. museum sociology,<sup>62</sup> visitor psychology in art museums,<sup>63</sup> museum informatics,<sup>64</sup> or topics such as 'museum and psychoanalysis'.<sup>65</sup> Visitor studies became an increasing field of sociological research focusing not only on museums but also on exhibition halls, theatres, concert halls and so on. Therefore, visitor studies was not seen as a kind of applied museology. The majority of these empirical case studies have remained unseen because the agencies that commissioned them kept the results without making them public. Summarizing reports e.g. by Treinen<sup>66</sup> must be read as lacking precise proof in empirical data. Treinen published inductive theses. He described the basic behaviour of museum visitors as an 'active dozing' or 'guided daydreaming', looking for inspiration without a precise purpose.<sup>67</sup> For him, exhibitions are never appropriate for teaching and acquiring new knowledge because visitors come for various purposes. Exhibitions are 'extremely efficient' in confirming and reinforcing existing knowledge and learned values.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Vogt 1995, 60-61, 65.

<sup>62</sup> Treinen 1973.

<sup>63</sup> Schuster and Ameln-Haffke 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Krämer 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Pazzini 1999; 2003.

<sup>66</sup> Treinen 2000.

<sup>67</sup> Treinen 1988, 33.

<sup>68</sup> Treinen 2000, 174.

*The West German alternative to the GDR discussion of disciplinary positions*

West German authors dealing with museums showed little interest in academic structures but focused on museum analysis. Some observations look like precursors to the 21st century. In 1990, the art educator Wolfgang Zacharias considered the curatorial tendency towards collecting and exhibiting as a kind of meta-art based on art-pieces.<sup>69</sup> In 1987, a criticism of the concept of the German Historical Museum appeared as a herald of the ‘participatory turn’ of the 21st century: historian Andreas Ludwig envisaged a museum which would not answer but ask questions and stimulate not only wonder but doubt and reflexivity; a museum which would aim at emancipation instead of consumption, and would try to turn passive recipients into active users.<sup>70</sup> Treinen reflected on the relationship between museum exhibitions and mass media;<sup>71</sup> by that, he connected research on museum work with media analysis.

The West German discourse loved to refer to solitary philosophical ideas as isolated substitutes for a theory. Korff characterized musealization as the buzz-word of contemporary cultural journals; he quoted Sloterdijk’s text concerning *xenology* (discussed further below) as it was republished in the daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>72</sup> These details indicate that the mass media initiated the discourse. The minimal results of Korff’s efforts to ‘import’ thoughts by Niklas Luhmann,<sup>73</sup> Henri-Pierre Jeudy or Jean-François Lyotard<sup>74</sup> demonstrated the weakness of academic contributions.

Two frequently used philosophical ideas—musealization and xenology—look like fundamental alternatives to Stránský’s museality: both can give a reason for the existence of museums, not as a timeless human need as Stránský thought, but changeable in space and time.

The father of the term musealization, Hermann Lübbe, was Chair of Philosophy and Politics at Zurich University from 1971 until his retirement in 1991, and was the best-known conservative opponent of the Frankfurt School (known for critical theory).<sup>75</sup> In 1982, Lübbe presented this topic in an academic speech. The increasing quantity of museums and museum visits was

<sup>69</sup> Zacharias 1990, Introduction by the editor, 12-13.

<sup>70</sup> Ludwig 1987, 125-126.

<sup>71</sup> Treinen 1988.

<sup>72</sup> Korff 1990, 58; Korff and Roth 1990, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Korff 1988a, 12-13.

<sup>74</sup> Korff and Roth, 1990.

<sup>75</sup> Schweda 2015, 123-125.

his proof for the ‘actual dramatically accelerated process’ of musealization.<sup>76</sup> Lübbe thought along the lines of heritage and grouped museums with topics such as the preservation of monuments, cultural landscapes, and non-material traditions; ‘historization’ was his umbrella term under which musealization, historical exhibitions and bestsellers with historical topics could be found.<sup>77</sup> Lübbe described a ‘cultural evolution’: progress defunctionalizes elements which turn into rubbish or vanish in the museum. For Lübbe, these collected relics do not mirror progress but the psychological reaction to progress, called compensation: ‘By accelerated musealization, we compensate for the negative experience of speedy change that is the reason for the vanishing of cultural familiarity’.<sup>78</sup> These efforts to overcome dynamic modernization lead to a comparable dynamic in ‘transferring past phenomena to the present’.<sup>79</sup>

Lübbe has often been quoted; the author himself published his thoughts repeatedly without further elaboration. Korff added two parallel developments: the popularization of museum phenomena (new educational programmes, democratization of cultural politics) and the musealization of popular phenomena (for him an effect of trends such as the French *écomusée* or art projects such as the *musée sentimental*).<sup>80</sup>

An idea by the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk attracted similar attention. He declared museology as ‘a kind of xenology’, the museum as ‘a xenological institution’—a present locality where it is possible to observe ‘the activity of culture as simultaneously picking up and keeping away’, the ‘interest in everything new, acceptance, stimulation, exotic, sympathy with the not-me, ... defensive reactions to the not-me, contempt, antipathy and repulsion against the dead, external, non-similar’.<sup>81</sup> Sloterdijk contrasted this ambivalence with the museum of the 19th century as the ‘memorial of familiar phenomena and the Golgotha of strange phenomena’ which turns to the ‘central message of the modern museum: the world contains insoluble strange phenomena’.<sup>82</sup> Sloterdijk regarded schools and museums as the central institutions for keeping the ‘genii and ghosts of the past’ away and present. Museums master the

<sup>76</sup> Lübbe 1982, 1, 10-11.

<sup>77</sup> Lübbe 1982, 4-6, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Lübbe 1982, 14-18.

<sup>79</sup> Lübbe 1988, 151.

<sup>80</sup> Korff 1988b, 69-70.

<sup>81</sup> Sloterdijk [1988] 2007, 357. For the English version of this argument, see Peter Sloterdijk, P. and I. Boyd Whyte (2014) ‘Museum—School of Alienation’. *Art in Translation* 6(4), 437-448, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17561310.2014.11425538>. Accessed November 24, 2021 (editors’ note).

<sup>82</sup> Sloterdijk [1988] 2007, 358, 362, 367.

activities to keep them both distant and close by ‘defensive invitations, bringing sending away, destroying revitalization, exterminating conservation’.<sup>83</sup>

Musealization and xenology seem to be middle-range theories. Korff noted the validity of musealization only for ‘modernity and their affective interest in things’.<sup>84</sup> Lübbe and Sloterdijk argued without taking into account museums of mineralogy or biodiversity, for example. Lübbe did not think about museum topics such as ancient history, prehistory, or natural history which are not at all part of the audience’s familiar past. Lübbe and Sloterdijk had no intention of collecting art for art’s sake. Lübbe considered collections of contemporary art only as a closer way to define the past and minimize the value of the present.<sup>85</sup> Other authors also observed a ‘heritage obsession’, a ‘kind of self-archaeology’ in nearly all Western societies,<sup>86</sup> but preferred a different rationale like the idea of an absent utopia and fear for the future<sup>87</sup> or an increasing critique of progress and a renewed interest in the local as opposed to globalization and the building of the European Union.<sup>88</sup>

The impact of these philosophical discussions aside, some reflections on exhibiting affected the West German discourse. A milestone in exhibition history was the temporary exhibition *Preußen—Versuch einer Bilanz* (‘Prussia—Trial of an End-Result’, West Berlin, 1981), which explicitly aimed to represent ‘all sectors of reality of Prussian history’:<sup>89</sup>

Original relics of Prussian history are ... the relevant visual material of the exhibition. That doesn’t mean that explanatory texts are completely missing—historical exhibitions need explanation. Nevertheless, curators sometimes choose the way of *Inszenierung* for interpreting without written texts. This method of presentation uses single objects as elements of the exhibition less for their individual aesthetic value but rather as part of ensembles and arrangements according to the subject. The way of arranging gives the exhibits the effect of letting them ‘talk’.<sup>90</sup>

According to Korff, not only do exhibits ‘talk’, but so does the whole ‘*Inszenierung*’ (no English translation; French ‘*mise en scène*’), when perceived by the viewer. The philosopher Martin Seel underlined that ‘*Inszenierung*’

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<sup>83</sup> Sloterdijk [1990] 2007, 383-385.

<sup>84</sup> Korff 2004, 95.

<sup>85</sup> Lübbe 1988, 156.

<sup>86</sup> Wolfrum 1999, 316.

<sup>87</sup> Wolfrum 1999, 319.

<sup>88</sup> Vollhardt 2003, 202.

<sup>89</sup> Korff 1981, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Korff 1981, 27.

exists in its own right and it is not the representation of something else.<sup>91</sup> Fehr realized the need for art historians to elaborate on an ‘iconography of exhibiting history’.<sup>92</sup> Ulrich Paatsch, a socio-economist and freelance expert for visitor studies, offered a bridge to museological theory: museums always create a third space between the exhibit and its origin; the new aspect of ‘Inszenierung’ lies in the active and artistic use of that alienating effect so as to create new content.<sup>93</sup> Korff and Roth dismissed the neutral assessment of the binary choice (i.e. between the *mise en scène* and the textual information) by describing texts as ‘the weight of reading’ and the ‘non-verbal explanation’ as the ‘pleasure of looking’:<sup>94</sup> exhibitions ‘animate the curiosity about history through aesthetic and sensual means and incite an appreciation of the problem through aha-effects’.<sup>95</sup>

Without any visible link to GDR museology, West Germany saw an opposite way to sustain a museological discourse: no institutes supporting theoretical work, no academic journals, rare use of the term museology, solitary conferences outside the structure of universities and / or museum associations, some cross-disciplinary discussions, punctual input of philosophical reflection and a vivid interest in realizing and discussing alternative ways of exhibiting cultural topics.

### *Deepening: ideas concerning the special museology of history in the two political systems*

Nearly simultaneously, specialists in both parts of Germany worked on the same aspect of museology: the theory of museums of history. The GDR never doubted that history was the leading scientific field in the humanities so long as all social sciences were based on the Marxist-Leninist teleology. The discussion started in 1964 with the principles of exhibition. Erik Hühns—director of the Märkisches Museum (the museum of regional history in East Berlin)—criticized ‘paper museums’ and postulated that all exhibitions should be primarily based on a sufficient collection and not on a theoretical concept.<sup>96</sup> Herbst—the leading theorist of the Museum for German History—rejected this opinion because it would exclude necessary parts of history. The basic

<sup>91</sup> Seel 2001, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Grohé 1989, 249.

<sup>93</sup> Paatsch 1990, 74.

<sup>94</sup> Korff and Roth 1990, 22.

<sup>95</sup> Korff 1988b, 78-79.

<sup>96</sup> Hanslok 2008, 63.

principle was: ‘Planning historic exhibitions is not led by the—sometimes occasional—existence of museum assets but by the topic and the precise academic elaboration based on the political-ideological concept.’<sup>97</sup> The German-Russian manual *Museologie* gave a universal view of museology but applied it explicitly<sup>98</sup> on nothing but history. By doing so, it presented a unique implementation of Stránský’s idea regarding special museologies.<sup>99</sup>

During the 1970s the Federal Republic presented the ‘rediscovery of the museums of history as museums for history’<sup>100</sup> with fervent discussions about ways to exhibit history.<sup>101</sup> This discourse started at zero because historians were new members of the museum profession in West Germany and they never referred to existing models of history museums developed by archaeologists, art historians or cultural anthropologists.

A precursor can be seen in the Haus der bayerischen Geschichte (House of Bavarian History), an institution first proposed to the Bavarian parliament in 1961. The Bavarian Ministry of Culture argued that it should be thought of as an information centre because it was ‘nearly impossible to represent history in all its facets by means of a museum institution’.<sup>102</sup> Several history professors worked on the concept of this institution: one of them planned a museum that could go ‘against convention’ by combining authentic exhibits with ‘academic documentation’ (charts, models, reconstructions).<sup>103</sup> The realization of this project took time—till May 2019. In 1971, the Federal Republic turned a similar project into reality, namely the permanent exhibition of German history in the historical building that housed the parliament of the German Reich, West Berlin, staffed by professors of history without museum experience. The catalogue mentions the ‘exhibits’: only photographs and reproductions as illustrations of historical phenomena, no musealia.<sup>104</sup>

In the following year, West German museum professionals initiated a discourse concerning history museums, which was inspired by fundamental rearrangements in two museums. Both the Museum of Local History at Frankfurt on the Main (reopened 1972) and the Museum of Roman Antiquity and Pre-

<sup>97</sup> Hanslok 2008, 63–64.

<sup>98</sup> See the subtitle of Herbst and Levykin 1988: ‘theoretical basis and methods of working in history museums’.

<sup>99</sup> Stránský 1989, 45.

<sup>100</sup> Steen 1980, 19.

<sup>101</sup> Korff 1988a, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Vollhardt 2003, 11, 38, 51.

<sup>103</sup> Vollhardt 2003, 64.

<sup>104</sup> Mälzer 2005, 29–31.

history in Cologne (1974) were led by art historians. Hugo Borger, General Director at Cologne, defined the border between museum and history as follows: 'It is impossible to exhibit history' by exhibiting monuments and artefacts and explaining the historical background in exhibition media and books.<sup>105</sup> The Frankfurt museum explained the impossibility of exhibiting history by the unavoidably reconstructive character of all narrations.<sup>106</sup> It was common understanding that exhibits were not apprehended without textual information or comparison with other assets.<sup>107</sup> The Director of the Bavarian National Museum Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck criticized these interpreting texts as an 'abuse' of exhibits, drawing parallels to Marxist-Leninist museums and Nazi propaganda.<sup>108</sup>

A new term came to be used in museums following the concept of the museum at Frankfurt: 'learning exhibition' (a 'curricularly planned, structured, controlled museum').<sup>109</sup> An ideal example of how this could be employed in practice can be seen in the 1977 student working group at Frankfurt University where they developed the principle: 'Starting with the collection is a typical stereotype of museums, it must be overcome.' Instead, they argued, the starting point should be collecting historical facts and their interpretation; 'visualization based on museum means' should come last.<sup>110</sup>

The discourse concerning historical exhibitions caught the interest of mass media through two national projects. In 1982, the Federal Government took the initiative to start a collection of German history from 1945 onwards. According to the team of experts consisting of three history professors and one museum director, it was not just a 'museum project' but an 'exhibition, documentation and information centre'. This Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany) took shape in 1989-1994. Its first director, Hermann Schäfer, declared: 'The concept of a museum doesn't arise from the museum assets. These get their meaning by a creative power that combines them into an ensemble ... within the historical context.'<sup>111</sup> He insisted on the necessity of exhibition texts for communicating knowledge.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Schäfke 1990, 280-28.

<sup>106</sup> Steen 1980, 17, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Hoffmann 1976, 238, 240.

<sup>108</sup> Kriss-Rettenbeck 1979, 86, 91.

<sup>109</sup> Scharfe 1976, 218, 220.

<sup>110</sup> Stubenvoll 1980, 136, 141.

<sup>111</sup> Schäfer 1989, 45.

<sup>112</sup> Grohé 1989, 249.



In 1982, views regarding museums were published by the best-known German chairs of the science of history in a memorandum concerning the new project of the German Historical Museum in West Berlin. Their key word was interdisciplinarity—from art history to history of technology but without museology. They disliked ‘simple documentations’ (like the project of 1971) and opted for a museum with authentic exhibits and explanatory texts.<sup>113</sup> As in the abovementioned projects, professors of history dominated the works of the organising committee too. Their concept was structured around five abstract ‘central questions’ without any thoughts of exhibits. Critics commented on the high intellectual level and the integration of different historic trends, calling it ‘a milestone in the Federal German historic discourse’.<sup>114</sup> However, there were negative remarks concerning the centralized national narrative and the authoritative position of the scientists.<sup>115</sup>

The public discussion of these two history museums introduced an ongoing discourse concerning museums and exhibitions led by the chairs responsible for teaching history. Jörn Rüsen wished for the ‘broadening of the museological horizon’—which meant, moving from presenting a prefigured meaning to a complementary construction of meaning by scientists, politicians, and artists.<sup>116</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer reclaimed the prerogative for his own discipline which used the museum as its medium,<sup>117</sup> while Uwe Danker felt a conflict in museums because of the non-didactical expectations of the politics of history.<sup>118</sup>

### *Continuities and discontinuities after 1990*

The inspiring atmosphere of the Peaceful Revolution was more felt in Austrian museological circles than in the German ones. The Interuniversitäres Forschungsinstitut für Fernstudien (inter-university research institute for distance learning, or IFF)—a cooperation of eight Austrian universities—offered a platform for discussions. In 1990, its associated working group for theoretical and applied museology began revisiting ideas from both sides of the Iron Curtain (founders: Gottfried Fliedl, Roswitha Muttenthaler, Herbert Posch). Well-known activities were *The Museological Writing Workshop* (since 1994)

<sup>113</sup> Boockmann et al. 1982.

<sup>114</sup> Zang 1987, 80-81.

<sup>115</sup> Ludwig 1982, 125, 128; Zang 1987, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Rüsen 1988, 10, 12, 19.

<sup>117</sup> Jacobmeyer 2000, 155.

<sup>118</sup> Danker 2006, 220-222.

and *The International Summer Academy of Museology* (since 1999). Results were published in the series *Museum zum Quadrat* (Museum Squared, 1990-2003, 16 volumes). During a reorganization of the IFF, the working group disbanded in 2003.

The musicologist and cultural anthropologist Friedrich Waidacher worked during the years 1964-1994 at the Austrian multidisciplinary museum Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, serving from 1977 onwards as director. In 1993, his voluminous *Handbuch der Allgemeinen Museologie* (Handbook of general museology) came out. A second and third edition (1996, 1999), a condensed version (2005), and four translations followed (1999 Slovakian, 2005 Chinese and Ukrainian, 2007 Lithuanian). Waidacher proclaimed museality as the object of research interest. He defined it—following Stránský—as ‘a specific recognizing and valuating relationship of the human being to reality... It is the stance that leads human beings to consider selected objects as evidence of certain phenomena to such a degree that they want to conserve them indefinitely and communicate them to society.’<sup>119</sup> Waidacher regarded musealia as the carrier and ‘the real appearance’ of museality,<sup>120</sup> and the only possibility for empirical research on this topic.<sup>121</sup> For him, museality was an anthropological constant. Therefore, he could differentiate between museum-related disciplines—researching the ‘being of things’—and museology—researching the timeless ‘being for us of things’.<sup>122</sup> Museality should be a constant, ‘an attitude of mind created and accepted by society’,<sup>123</sup> but can also be absent from certain periods and cultures.<sup>124</sup>

Waidacher depicted general museology as the ‘science of all basically relevant phenomena of museality’. His museology had three aspects: historical, theoretical, and applied museology. In analogy to some GDR discussions, he postulated a separate epistemology of museology (‘meta-museology’) and placed museology in an elevated position next to ‘neighbouring disciplines’ like philosophy, psychology, sociology. He explicitly refuted the existence of special museologies. Only in the moment of application should the ‘symbiosis’ of museology and museum-related disciplines exist. These ‘source disciplines’ should provide their theories, technologies, and methods.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Waidacher 1996, 34. See also Kirsch, Mrázová, Jagošová, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>120</sup> Waidacher 2000, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Waidacher 1995a, 328-329.

<sup>122</sup> Waidacher 2000, 5.

<sup>123</sup> Waidacher 1995a, 337.

<sup>124</sup> Waidacher 1996, 67.

<sup>125</sup> Waidacher 1996, 40-44.

Gottfried Fliedl—head of the abovementioned working group for theoretical and applied museology at IFF—noticed two dialectical approaches. First, museums conserve things but use and exhibit them in a way which endangers or destroys their ideational or material identity.<sup>126</sup> Second, museums are places of scientific discourse, critical remembrance as well as places of rituals, mystification, the unconscious. Fliedl wondered whether museums would rest in ‘monstrosity’ or facilitate a critical, dialogic work on collective memory.<sup>127</sup>

Although the works by these Austrian scholars were bought and read in Germany, they did not initiate a vibrant German discourse on museology. Perhaps the internal processes of German unification absorbed too much energy. From an institutional perspective, the unification brought one-sided cuts. All GDR committees, all museum journals were abruptly terminated; the Institut für Museumswesen and the post-graduate museological study programme were closed; the GDR Museum for German History was transferred to the German Historical Museum (in the former West) but the whole staff went on pension or was dismissed. Only the College for Museologists continued as a study programme at Leipzig University of Applied Sciences, but with minimal continuity in personnel (only Katharina Flügel and Frank-Dietrich Jacob got professorships at this university).

At a joint conference of the three German-speaking national committees of ICOM in 1994, Waidacher complained about the lack of attention paid to museology and the fact that museum professionals were not obliged to prove their museological qualifications.<sup>128</sup> The director of the (former West German) Institut für Museumskunde emphasized his Institute’s explicit neutrality concerning the debate between an autonomous discipline of museology versus the Anglo-Saxon concept of Museum Studies without disciplinary status; he expressed his personal view metaphorically: travellers do not expect a scientific but a professional engine driver.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the 1994 conference discussed different approaches to professional education: two short-lived study programmes (Basel, Switzerland; Krems, Austria) and the (West) German tradition of learning on the job (internships) for young academics (Volontariat).

In unified Germany, theoretical ideas were published without an organizational frame and often without an explicit reference to museology. Fehr regarded the fear of death and that of falling into oblivion as a motivation for

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<sup>126</sup> Fliedl 1990, 173.

<sup>127</sup> Fliedl 2001, 38-39.

<sup>128</sup> Waidacher 1995b, 17-19.

<sup>129</sup> Graf 1995, 91.

museum work.<sup>130</sup> Collecting was interpreted as ‘a human attempt to rediscover an original but unreal object and to meet the origin of man’s own history’, combined with the sense of ‘grieving in the face of inevitable fading and dying’.<sup>131</sup> Museological competence resulted from individual interest: some researchers—typically university staff with experience in museum work—turned their interest towards museological problems. These personal interests did not correlate with any institutionalization; museological research was discontinuous in the case of retirement or death.

### *Deepening: the shifting localization of museological theory*

The minimal structure and missing institutionalization of German museological discourses can be exemplified by the developing theory of the ‘meaning of things’ which stands apart from everyday function. It is a core topic of theoretical museology but German cultural anthropology (Volkskunde) had been working on this already since 1940 because the meaning of everyday assets—the ‘irrational relations between human beings and things’<sup>132</sup>—were central to its research: cultures invest things with particular ‘meaning and power’,<sup>133</sup> regarding them as symbols of culturally encoded meanings.<sup>134</sup> Only members of the same culture are able to understand these signs.<sup>135</sup>

Moreover, Stránský’s museality (as a characteristic of things) and Krzysztof Pomian’s semiophore<sup>136</sup> lose their effect as monogenetic—that is, descended from a single source—innovations. Cultural anthropology criticized the museological position that museum professionals notice and denote semiotic qualities.<sup>137</sup> Both disciplines acknowledged the controversies regarding the relation between things and their qualities as signs, but the majority on both sides thought that past and actual meaning of things is accumulated within the asset and can be discovered by analysing the asset because meaning is inherent.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Fehr 1995, 13.

<sup>131</sup> Ruhs 1999, 62.

<sup>132</sup> Kramer 1962, 99.

<sup>133</sup> Kramer 1940, 1, 5.

<sup>134</sup> Schmidt 1952, 2-3.

<sup>135</sup> Kramer 1995, 23.

<sup>136</sup> A concept of the twofold character of musealia as a physical entity and a semiotic sign which visually transmits those historical phenomena that the asset is related to. See Pomian 1986.

<sup>137</sup> Waidacher 1996, 155.

<sup>138</sup> Walz 2015, 23-27.

The protagonists of this historical overview followed museological theory more or less precisely. In an unclear combination between activity and passivity of things, the Austrian Fliedl argued that collected assets 'have lost their original functions and meanings' and have received a new meaning in the museum 'by a specific act of ordering and interpretation'.<sup>139</sup> Karl-Josef Pazzini, Professor of Educational Science, chose the simple logic that a museum proves its absence from another locality; it changes to an indicator, a signifier of the other location or period thus allowing for the construction of meaning.<sup>140</sup>

Korff and Roth referred to the historical paradigm of remnants and suggested that these de-contextualized fragments need a 're-contextualization and re-dimensioning'; they proposed four different ways for this process to occur (declaration, narration, atmosphere [in German: *Ambiente*] and *mise-en-scène*).<sup>141</sup> They did not explain whether the two terms are synonymous, or whether the prefix 're-' indicates a new or a backward orientation. Recently Korff sought a direct connection to linguistics and turned to Pomian, whose position was briefly touched upon above. He now refers to collecting as 'semiophorization'; the contextual break as 'de-semiotization'; finally, the integration in the collection as 're-semiotization'.<sup>142</sup> These ideas were prefigured in the German *Volkskunde* (cultural anthropology): In 1973, Professor of *Volkskunde* Karl-Sigismund Kramer criticized the 'transplantation' of cultural assets into the museum because selecting and rearranging exceeded pure documentation, and unintentionally grew to interpretation, a fact which 'made the following research activities more difficult and leads them'.<sup>143</sup> Fehr developed a circular model:

Museum collections emerge from interpretations of the reality which the assets originate from; in this respect, interpretation precedes the objects and legitimates them. On the other hand, interpretations of reality must always be developed on the basis of objects; thus, collections precede interpretation.<sup>144</sup>

Korff and Roth repeated only the first half of this paradox.<sup>145</sup>

Furthermore, German-speaking museology presented four special re-

<sup>139</sup> Fliedl 1990, 171-172.

<sup>140</sup> Pazzini 1998, 314-315.

<sup>141</sup> Korff and Roth 1990, 18.

<sup>142</sup> Korff 2010, 27.

<sup>143</sup> Kramer 1976, 139-140.

<sup>144</sup> Fehr 1995, 16.

<sup>145</sup> Korff and Roth 1990, 19.

flections on the meaning of things. First, Marxist-Leninist museology maintained the position that musealia are superior to all criticism because they possess 'the character of objective information'. Musealia 'always embody objective historical experience or the evolution of nature'.<sup>146</sup> The limited use of such ideologies can be seen in the *Thesen zu Problemen der Museumsspezifik* (Views on problems surrounding the particularities of museums), set out by the Museum of German History in 1967, in which it is declared that objects as material evidence contain messages but they rarely or never 'reflect' those messages without suitable presentation and additional information.<sup>147</sup>

The second aspect of the meaning of things contradicts Pomian's model of the semiophores. Two Austrians revisited it in contrasting ways. First, August Ruhs, Professor of Psychiatry, argued that the function of an object as a semiophore stems from speech and speaking. Consequently the object does not signal any relevant phenomenon but only our knowledge about it: 'Objects in museums are always founded on the desire for seeing speech. They are materializations of significant[s] [signs] which grant us the illusion to see meaning.'<sup>148</sup> Second, Waidacher propagated his neologism 'nouophore' for expressing that musealia are not carriers of signs but carriers of meaning. The accession to a museum collection changes them into 'something completely new': representations of meaning, ideas, facts, situations, emotions, concepts.<sup>149</sup> He declared an 'ontological content' of things but saw this content not in the materiality but in the context of the thing.<sup>150</sup> Obviously the museum is one of those contexts because accession ascribes new qualities to the new musealia.<sup>151</sup>

In a third German impulse to theorize the meaning of things, Fehr revitalized Michael Thompson's *Rubbish Theory*. Thompson, a British social anthropologist (1979), argued that musealia are regularly identified through the re-valuation of worn-down, useless objects. He interprets this situation as a non-normative individual valuation on the basis of aesthetic criteria.<sup>152</sup> The transfer of highly valued objects from the market to the museum relieves the market by removing treasures which are hard to sell.<sup>153</sup> On the contrary,

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<sup>146</sup> Razgon 1988b, 23-24.

<sup>147</sup> Hanslok 2008, 65.

<sup>148</sup> Ruhs 1999, 61.

<sup>149</sup> Waidacher 2001, 91.

<sup>150</sup> Waidacher 2005, 28.

<sup>151</sup> Waidacher 2005, 261, 263.

<sup>152</sup> Fehr 1989, 185-187; 1997, 164.

<sup>153</sup> Fehr 1997, 162-163.

Treinen explained a scientific re-valuation of dysfunctional objects as historical, with the science of history as the interpreter of the material.<sup>154</sup>

The fourth contribution was made by Michael Parmentier, Professor of Museum Education at Humboldt University in Berlin. He postulated a 'hermeneutics of things' as part of the science of education.<sup>155</sup> He avoided terminological problems by using semiophore and sign as synonyms. Extending the regular semiotic understanding of the term 'sign', his individual contribution was to define four categories of signs: a) pieces of circumstantial evidence as intentional or unintentional remainders of a situation; b) examples presenting the common features shared by all specimens of a class; c) models representing a phenomenon through their provable similarity to it; d) 'material metaphors' as signs of emotions, imaginations, memories; as 'media of pre-verbal phenomena'.<sup>156</sup>

This long-lasting discourse on the meaning of things may be seen as a frame for the specific German development of museology. Starting as an intra-disciplinary topic of *Volkskunde*, the museological field emerging in the GDR and more informally in the West saw the possibilities for developing this aspect. In the surviving fragmented structure of former West Germany, the discourse continued as it had been.

### *Concluding overview*

The GDR actively took part in the development of museological theory, contributed to the international committee ICOFOM, and was in touch with museologists from several Eastern Bloc states. Establishing museology within academic structures was a process that only took its course in the last years of the GDR. West Germany on the other hand opted for the transdisciplinary importation of ideas and multi-centred discourses without a core theory. Even the foundation of a national institute for museology had no impact on museological reflection or the institutionalization of museology.

Both German discourses on museology had two phenomena in common. First, both systems were male-dominated as the conferences of 1988 indicated.<sup>157</sup> Second, by setting aside ideological differences, both German

<sup>154</sup> Treinen 1973, 339.

<sup>155</sup> Parmentier 2001a; 2001b.

<sup>156</sup> Parmentier 2001b, 105-107.

<sup>157</sup> 28% of the participants in East Berlin were women (15 of 53 participants) and 27% in West Germany (46 of 169 participants). Only three women lectured at the Western conference (9%), ten at the Eastern one (30%) but a single woman—T. G. Igumnova, Secre-

states went through very similar developments regarding museums of national history and the special museology of history. On both sides, these were dominated by historians (rather than *Volkskunde* and art history which were the disciplines dominating history museums in Germany before the Second World War).

After German unification, all development projects in the GDR were cut (except for the *Fachschule für Museologen*, the College for Museologists). On the other hand, the conditions growing in the field of museology in the former Federal Republic—marked by indefinite opinions, lack of academic structures for museology—continued to exist without any interruption, thus cultivating a fragmented field of transdisciplinary thoughts.

At the turn of the millennium, Waidacher referred to the unchanged situation in museology: many museum professionals considered museological knowledge unnecessary but liked to be designated as museologists.<sup>158</sup> The same author attempted to broaden the horizon towards other expressions of museality and periods other than the 200 years of the institutionalized museum by claiming, unfoundedly, that Stránský chose the term museology out of familiarity with the word *museum* and ‘only by default’ because he did not find another option.<sup>159</sup>

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tary of the State Historical Museum in Moscow—contributed to the writing of the manual and lectured at the conference as well.

<sup>158</sup> Waidacher 2001, 89-90, 93.

<sup>159</sup> Waidacher 2001, 85-86.



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EXTRA-MURAL ADVANCEMENTS  
AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOMUSEOLOGY



# A short history of museology in Greece: 1930s-2000s

*Alexandra Bounia*

## *Abstract*

This chapter provides an overview of the development of museology in Greece. It starts with a brief presentation of the discipline's emergence on an international level, so as to contextualize the discussion. It then traces the views and ideas of Greek professionals and academics who influenced the development of the discipline on the national level in the period between the Second World War and post 1990s, when museology was introduced into Greek universities. The discussion focuses on successive ideas about the understanding of museology as a discipline, the training of museum professionals and the role of museums in society. This work is a foundational attempt aimed at providing an impetus for a more comprehensive examination of the topic in the years to come.

**Keywords:** Greek museology, museological theory, Karouzos, Hourmouziadis, Kalogeropoulou, Fotiadis, Papadopoulos

## *Introduction*

Academic research regarding museums, museology, and their history in Greece remains scarce. With the exception of Angeliki Kokkou's work, first published in 1977 and reprinted in 2009,<sup>1</sup> on the protection of antiquities and the early history of museums in Greece at the end of the 19th century, no other monograph has attempted to comprehensively explore the history of Greek institutions and the development of museology on a local level. A series of unpublished PhD theses, written between 1993 and the present, have gone some way in providing in-depth analyses of specific museums or categories of institutions.<sup>2</sup> Catalogues associated with a small number of reflec-

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<sup>1</sup> Kokkou 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Andromachi Gazi (1993) focuses on archaeological museums in Greece in the period between 1829 and 1909 in her thesis. Maria Mouliou (1997) studies exhibitions of classical antiquities after the Second World War. Laure Caillot (2009) focuses on the history of sculpture displays in the National Archaeological Museum. Christina Ntaflou (2012) writes about the

tive exhibitions, usually put together in the course of major refurbishments of specific museums,<sup>3</sup> have also provided insight to those curious about the history of these institutions and their impact on the profession and discipline. The history of national museums has also been part of research undertaken within the framework of the EuNaMus,<sup>4</sup> a European-funded programme that has contributed to the discussion on the construction of national identity and uses of the past in Greece.<sup>5</sup> Within this broader discussion, the local history of museology has so far attracted little attention.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of a few publications on influential individuals, such as Christos Karouzos and Georgios Hourmouziadis, and their respective contributions to the establishment of museums and/or exhibitions in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, discussions around museology as an academic discipline only took off in the decades following the 1980s, starting with the establishment of the Hellenic Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).<sup>7</sup>

This chapter explores the era in which museology was established in Greece. The focus will be on museology as a discipline that has been evolving alongside Greek institutions, as opposed to a historical account of the development of Greek museums. I argue that the term ‘museology’ and the idea of the museum as a subject of study appeared much earlier than Greeks usually consider to be the case in their country. Its development is connected to personalities—the ones mentioned above and others that will be discussed further below—but also institutions both local and foreign, such as the International Museums Office (or Office international des musées, OIM) and the

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history of public art galleries in Greece between 1950 and 2010. Katerina Dermitzaki (2013) explores the history of the National Historical Museum in Athens. Lefteris Spyrou (2017) covers the history of the National Gallery in Athens. Sofia Fragouloupoulou (2018) wrote her thesis on Greek archaeological museums in the period between the two World Wars.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the exhibition organized by the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens in 2002 entitled *From the Christian collection to the Byzantine Museum (1884-1930)* and the more recent one by the Museum of Modern Greek Culture entitled *A Museum – A History of 100 Years – Contemporary Commentaries* (2018-2019).

<sup>4</sup> See Catapoti 2013; Gazi 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See articles published in Damaskos and Plantzos 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Paraskevi Nitsiou (2011) discusses in her thesis the development of museology in a European context and, using three new small museums in Greece, puts forward an argument regarding the museological design of exhibitions; that said, her work does not follow the historical development of the term and its uses in Greece. See also Scaltsa 2014.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Catapoti 2013; Solomon 2006; Tzortzaki 2008; 2012. The most comprehensive history of museology, so far, is the one published by Matoula Scaltsa, who in 2001 established, and until recently ran, the first Master’s programme in Museology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. See Scaltsa 2014.

International Council of Museums (ICOM). I will argue that museology in Greece followed what Peter van Mensch called the ‘emancipation process’,<sup>8</sup> i.e. from a subject-specific discipline—in this case, usually archaeology or history of ancient art—to a cognitive field of its own, that is to say, a separate field of study and research. Furthermore, I will argue that this process took place in successive phases from the 1930s onwards; these phases broadly correspond to similar developments in other parts of Europe, but they also relate to Greece’s specific history, context and priorities.<sup>9</sup> This chapter is based on textual and archival research, more of which needs to be done for a complete and comprehensive picture of the development of the discipline. To start, the development of museological thinking and international debates will be introduced schematically in order to frame those of the Greek case study. What will follow is an overview of the developments in this area of study in Greece and a presentation of the phases museology went through, from what we could call the ‘pre-scientific era’ to the ‘phase of maturity’<sup>10</sup> when museology began to be taught across universities in Greece.

### *Museums and museology: an international perspective*

The birth of museology as a way of organizing material assemblages of artefacts into what we now call ‘museums’ is usually dated to the middle of the 16th century, when the Flemish doctor Samuel Quiccheberg (1529-1567) published his monograph entitled *Les Inscriptiones vel Tituli Theatri Amplissimi* (1565) in Munich. The term later appeared in 1839, when Georg Rathgeber used it to describe his work in *Aufbau des niederslädischen Kunstgeschichte und Museologie*. In this publication, the term is connected to the history of art and is used to discuss the methods of description, taxonomy, structure and exhibition of museum collections, and more particularly those of sculpture and architecture. A few decades later, when Theodor Grässe (1878) published his book *Zeitschrift für Museologie und Antiquitätenkunde*, the term had already had a long enough history to allow the author to argue

<sup>8</sup> van Mensch 1992.

<sup>9</sup> van Mensch (1992, n.p.), following Stránský (1980, 71), identifies three periods in the history of museology: the pre-scientific, the empirical-descriptive and the theoretical-synthetic, or, in his own words, three stages: the ‘formative stage, [the] stage of unification and synthetization and [the] stage of maturity’. According to Maroević (1998, 79), 1934 (Conference of Madrid) and 1976 (establishment of the ICOFOM) are the key dates/events that separate the first phase from the second and the second from the third.

<sup>10</sup> Both these terms appear in the writings of Stránský, van Mensch and Maroević (see note 9).

that: ‘If somebody had spoken or written about museology as a branch of science thirty or even twenty years ago, the only response from many people would be a compassionate, contemptuous smile.’<sup>11</sup>

The development of museology as a term but also as an area of study and research follows that of museums. From the second half of the 19th century, and well into the 20th, museums were primarily considered places to deposit, organize and display— usually archaeological—artefacts and objects of art and history. The term ‘museology’ was thus used to describe anything that had to do with the museum.<sup>12</sup> Things started to change in the period between the two World Wars, and even more rapidly following the end of WWII: the number of museums multiplied, their content changed dramatically, and diverse categories of institutions were established. The creation of new history museums, as well as museums of applied arts, ethnography and folk art resulted first in the expansion of the idea of what museums are, or can be, and then in a redirection of understanding of the steps required to create better museums. It is during this period, roughly from around 1930 onwards, that everything that had to do with how museums work from the ‘inside’ gained importance. A substantial boost came in 1926, when OIM was established under the patronage of the League of Nations, and another in 1946, when OIM spawned the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Between 1927 and 1946, OIM published *Mouseion*, a review that became a venue to discuss interesting and wide-ranging topics related to understanding and running museum institutions.<sup>13</sup>

Following the establishment of ICOM, the term ‘museology’ became a hot topic of discussion, and even more so in the years between 1970 and 1980. Was museology a science, or not? What did it mean exactly? Where was the border between theory and practice? Was special training required to practice it? Was it enough to be trained in one of the museum disciplines? How interdisciplinary should it be? Could an international agreement be reached regarding its principles? Was it possible to be trained in this field, or was it enough to have experience working in a museum? These were some of the questions that dominated.

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<sup>11</sup> As translated in van Mensch 1992, n.p.

<sup>12</sup> See Desvallées and Mairesse 2005; see also Brulon Soares 2019a.

<sup>13</sup> The review published quality museological articles, written by important personalities of the museum world at the time. It allowed for sharing museum theory and practice and thus cultivating cultural cooperation and understanding. In the review, but also more generally in this period, the terms ‘museology’ and ‘museography’ were used interchangeably. See Caillot 2011; also Brulon Soares 2019a.

In an effort to provide at least some answers, ICOM established a special international committee in 1977, the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM). Thus, a space was created to discuss and reach consensus, which could then be used to mark the boundaries of the discipline of museology on an international level.<sup>14</sup> Eastern European Bloc countries had a central role in these discussions, with both ICOM as well as ICOFOM dominated by important personalities from this part of the world. Notably, members included those from the School of Brno in Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic), where the first museology programme had been established in 1963.<sup>15</sup> Jan Jélinek, president of ICOM between 1976 and 1979 was the director of the Moravian Museum in Brno,<sup>16</sup> Vinoš Sofka<sup>17</sup> and Zbyněk Stránský<sup>18</sup> were teaching at Brno, while personalities such as Jiří Neustupný and Joseph Benes (Czechoslovakia), Wojciech Gluzinski (Poland), Ilse Jahn and Klauss Schreiner (East Germany) were also highly influential members of ICOFOM. Museology as perceived by this school of thought had two main characteristics: first, it aimed to be considered as a scientific (empirical, rational) discipline and second, its discourse followed Marxist-Leninist principles of analysis. It is within this framework that in 1978 Soviet museologist Avraam Razgon<sup>19</sup> defined museology in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia as: ‘a scientific area that studies the origins of museums and their social roles, theoretical issues and methods of management. Museology consists of the study of the social circumstances that define the birth but also the operation of museums.’<sup>20</sup> This double emphasis on museums as ideological tools, but also on their methods of display, reflecting a Marxist-Leninist perspective, led—unsurprisingly, in the context of the Cold War—to serious debates between museologists from Eastern Europe on one side, and Western Europe and the States on the other. The latter two favoured the practical aspects of the discipline and resisted its theorization and discussion as a scientific field, contrary to members from the Eastern Bloc. In 1981, Ellis Burkaw, an American, highlighted this practical perspective, while his compatriot Wilcomb Washburn, director of the

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<sup>14</sup> For ICOFOM history, see Brulon Soares 2019a; Brulon Soares, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>15</sup> See Kirsch, Mrázová and Jagošová, this volume, for a history of the Brno School of Museology (editors’ note).

<sup>16</sup> Dolák 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Nash 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Brulon Soares 2019b.

<sup>19</sup> Leshchenko 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Razgon 1978, 254. See also Ananiev, this volume, for a history of museology in the USSR/Russia (editors’ note).



Smithsonian at the time, mocked the effort to present museology as a scientific field, likening it to an attempt to create 'grandmotherology'.<sup>21</sup>

Concurrently, another debate was in progress. This one was not about whether museology should be considered an academic field of knowledge, but about the philosophy of the *museal*. This was a consideration of the museum as a medium that can energize human perception, offer experiences and information, facilitate the understanding of the self and the 'other', and contribute to a better quality of life as well as preserve life for future generations.<sup>22</sup> This understanding of museology is at the heart of 'New Museology', as it came to be called in the 1980s;<sup>23</sup> this term is used to mark a new understanding of museums, their role and structure, and of course, the way we study them. The new model was provided by museums that had come into being in the preceding decade; museums that aimed to address not the tourists, but the locals and the community in which they were based and also to explore local identities and promote access to heritage for all. These 'new' museums had been created either in marginalized neighbourhoods of big cities, like the Anacostia Museum in Washington, DC (1967); in neglected or run-down areas, like La Casa del Museo in Mexico (1973); or in ex-industrial regions that were going through a period of decline, like Le Creusot -Montceau-les Mines in France (1974) or the ecomuseum in the Haute Beauce region in Quebec (1982).<sup>24</sup> In other words, these were museums based in the periphery, either in geographical or social terms. New Museology had two main characteristics: a relation between place, community and museum; and participation in the ongoing emancipation struggles on a global level, be it workers (as in the case of Le Creusot, that was also linked to Marxism), or farmers (as in the case of La Casa del Museo), or education as a practice of freedom, according to the principles of Paulo Freire.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Washburn 1981, 53.

<sup>22</sup> Spielbauer 1987, 271-277.

<sup>23</sup> The New Museology movement is widely considered to have originated in the UK, seeing as it was popularized via the eponymous book published in 1989, edited by Peter Vergo. However, the term *nouvelle muséologie* had already been introduced by André Desvallées in 1985, to refer to the developments in the museum world between 1967 and 1985. The latter put an emphasis on the regional and the local, as well as on the understanding of the museum in terms of community engagement and participation. Georges-Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine, both ICOM chairs, were very influential in supporting the movement in theory and in practice. See Desvallées and Mairesse 2005, 145-147.

<sup>24</sup> See Carter and Hoffman, this volume, for a discussion of ecomuseums in Canada (editors' note).

<sup>25</sup> See Freire 2000.

This 'revolutionary' framework brought a spirit of radicalism to the museum world and highlighted a need for drastic change, which was made particularly clear in the Santiago Declaration of 1972. According to this Declaration, which was written by museologists in collaboration with specialists in agricultural development and education, the museum should re-position itself by balancing technology and culture and become directly involved in the discussions around required structural and societal changes. This could be achieved through inter-disciplinary collaboration, the realization of the museum's social role, including its contribution to promoting and resolving social, ecological or other issues, as well as issues related to urban development, and, finally, its educational role. On a more practical level, this approach has been called 'museology of rupture', a term coined by Jacques Hainard, director of the Ethnography Museum of Neuchâtel.<sup>26</sup> His exhibitions did not focus on social change, but rather on the complete de-sacralization of the object/work of art. Hainard argued that museums needed to change their approach to exhibitions and artworks. Instead of 'displaying treasures and relics' and expecting audiences to 'admire' and 'honour' them, as they would in cathedrals, museums needed to 'narrate a story with a beginning and an end, trouble the harmony, stimulate the critical mind, and provoke the emotion present in understanding and discovering through the senses', thus allowing all objects, whether precious or not, to acquire different meanings and be used to tell different stories.<sup>27</sup>

By the time New Museology appeared as a term in anglophone literature in 1989 through Peter Vergo's book, the methods and aims of the museum as well as its relation to its audience had already started to be debated in francophone museum literature. Museum studies took a more critical perspective, focusing on the relation between the museum and politics, museums and entertainment (museums as edutainment), as well as the display of artefacts, visitors' research and all other aspects of museology that today we take for granted.

The 1990s saw intensive efforts to homogenize thinking around museums, to create a sound theoretical basis for the discipline, to introduce it to academia and solidify the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice. During this period, museology was discussed as a relation between people and reality, life and the world, and the museum as a phenomenon that appears within a specific time and place. ICOFOM thus started working towards creating a common terminology around museums and museology in

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<sup>26</sup> Hainard 1987; Hainard and Gonseth 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Hainard 1986, 275.

an effort to achieve what the OIM had initially envisioned, that is, a common language and uniform practice for museum work and museum practitioners and thinkers around the world.<sup>28</sup>

At the turn of the century, New Museology—that had already become ‘canon’—gradually gave way to Critical Museology:<sup>29</sup> this movement is now taught to undergraduates and postgraduates around the world. The museum, as an institution, has become of interest to various fields of academic study and research, such as sociology, anthropology, history, and so on, as well as newer interdisciplinary subjects, such as memory or heritage studies. Museums have been re-shaped with the introduction of new media, while their social and activist roles are currently a top priority to museum professionals.<sup>30</sup> ‘Museum’ is a term that can presently be used to describe many different types of institutions or initiatives, for instance, ‘pop-ups’<sup>31</sup> or even campaigns,<sup>32</sup> while the very definition of the museum is currently being debated by ICOM.<sup>33</sup> To summarize, museology today is a ‘huge, multilayered, sometimes contradictory, but incredibly lively domain’.<sup>34</sup>

### *Museology in Greece*

Debates around museology have tended to focus on one or more of the following interrelated areas: museology as a discipline (whether it is a social science or a branch of knowledge, and whether it has the museum as its centre or as its object of study), the professionalization of museum work and the training required to that end, the relation of the museum to society and how the operation of museums should serve this relation.

<sup>28</sup> Brulon Soares 2019a, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Shelton 2013.

<sup>30</sup> For the museum as an activist institution, see the 2019 collection of essays by Janes and Sandell.

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance the pop-up museum of firefighting at the Workshop building in South London.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, the 2016 campaign by Oxfam on the refugee crisis, *A Museum without a Home* (<https://www.oxfam.org/en/tags/museum-without-home>). Accessed April 5, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> A new definition for the museum was introduced in the 2019 Triennial ICOM Conference in Kyoto, but voting was postponed following concerns raised by several national and international committees. For a presentation of this definition and differing points of view, see the articles by various authors in issue 71 (281/2) of the ICOM Journal *Museum International* (2019): the entire issue is dedicated to the debate around the definition of the museum.

<sup>34</sup> Desvallées and Mairesse 2005, 151. For a discussion of ‘museologies’ today, see Bounia (2021).

These areas have also been at the core of discussions around museums and museology in Greece, where we are now going to turn our attention in order to consider how the above trends have unfolded and shaped the development of the discipline on a national level.

### *The normative phase*

As Brulon Soares argues, museology had until the 1970s a 'prescriptive and normative character'.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it focused on introducing 'museology' into the vocabulary of museum professionals and setting common standards around topics such as the organization and presentation of museums, and the management of collections and exhibitions. It was important to have museum professionals 'speak a common language and operate to a uniform practice'.<sup>36</sup> Greek museum professionals participated in this effort from the 1930s until well into the 1970s.

The history of museums in Greece is closely connected to the protection of antiquities and the establishment of archaeological museums.<sup>37</sup> When the new Greek state was established in the 19th century, the museum was initially identified as a space destined for the protection of antiquities. Gradually, this idea was complemented by the belief that museums contribute to the transmission of archaeological knowledge. As such, they promote appreciation and respect towards the nation and its glory, they help cultivate taste and spread an understanding of what art is. Early Greek museums, such as the State Museum established on the island of Aegina in 1829, were archaeological in nature,<sup>38</sup> connected with the excavation and salvage of antiquities. At the same time, along with the 'study and teaching of archaeology' and the 'promotion of archaeological knowledge', museums were also meant to contribute to the 'development of love for the arts'.<sup>39</sup> Unlike elsewhere in Europe, Greece, at least initially, was not particularly interested in branching out to other types of museum, such as museums of fine arts. The main reason was the divergence in social and political conditions; for example, Greece had had no royal family or wider nobility who would have collected the art that would have eventually ended up in public institutions.<sup>40</sup> Several plans regarding the establishment of a museum of fine arts took a long time to come to fruition:

<sup>35</sup> Brulon Soares 2019b, 24 onwards.

<sup>36</sup> Brulon Soares 2019b, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Kokkou 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Gazi 1999.

<sup>39</sup> See also Gazi 1999, 46.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, Whitehead 2005 and Lorente 2011.

the first piece of heritage legislation in 1834 mentioned the establishment of a collection of sculpture, paintings and bronze artworks, and architect Leo von Klenze envisaged a National Museum in Athens that included what he called a 'Pantechneion', i.e. 'a museum of all arts'. It was only after 1900 that art museums began to be established in Greece.<sup>41</sup> Even then, the National Art Gallery collection remained more or less part of the university environment, with most of its activities taking place within the buildings of the National Technical University of Athens. It was only 70 years later that the National Gallery was finally housed in its own building.

As the 19th century progressed, calls grew for a museum to present the country's 'complete' historical narrative. The idea that the Greek nation has had a continuous presence on the same land since antiquity is in fact the story upon which the entire discourse of Hellenism and the Hellenic identity has been built.<sup>42</sup> The relationship between these artistic values and the establishment of the early museums and/or the display of artefacts and artworks within them is a long and complicated one that deserves to be discussed separately.

Greek museums were therefore initially connected with the following: (a) a clear and sustained reference to ancient Greece as the source of art prototypes for Europe and beyond. This led to the dominance of archaeological museums which were at the time understood as museums of art and followed the approaches and logic of European museums, with directors and curators that had studied in Europe and followed the French or German artistic and archaeological traditions; (b) serious reservations around the value of periods that followed—specifically the Byzantine and post-Byzantine—despite the fact that exploring these would only support the argument of the Greek nation's historical continuity; and (c) a lack of interest from the state in the acquisition of collections of contemporary art, alongside an effort to support the rekindling of artistic production (an effort mostly made by Greeks of the diaspora, for example, artists such as Nikolaos Gyzis, or patrons of the arts like Alexandros Soutzos).

In those early days, museum directors and curators were mainly archaeologists who also served in the Greek Archaeological Service.<sup>43</sup> For instance, in 1885, the director of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens was Panayiotis Kavvadias (1850-1928), who was also head of the Archaeological

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<sup>41</sup> While no art museum was established until after 1900 the Royal School of Arts maintained a small art collection since 1841 (see Kokkou 2009, Spyrou 2017, 4).

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Hamilakis 2007 and Damaskos and Plantzos 2008.

<sup>43</sup> To this day, the majority of museums in Greece form part of the Greek Archaeological Service and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, and focus on archaeology.

Service; he had read Classics at the University of Athens and had continued his studies in Munich. He was thus familiar not only with the theories and practices of German institutions, but also with the arrangement of museums like the Glyptothek and the Antikensammlung. His influences from these institutions come through clearly in the early exhibitions he organized at the National Archaeological Museum (1885-1906). Much like other museums of the same period, the exhibitions followed a chronological and typological approach.<sup>44</sup>

The community of Greek museum professionals became more actively involved in discussions around museology in the period between the two World Wars. In 1929, Euripide Foundoukidis (1894-1968), a Greek lawyer and art historian, was appointed secretary of OIM. He is considered to be the first who used the term *patrimoine* to refer to artistic heritage, a term that was later widely adopted. He was made Secretary General of OIM in 1931<sup>45</sup> a position he held until 1941. Foundoukidis directed *Mouseion*, the official OIM review, that aimed to provide examples and set the standards for museum professionals internationally. The review often published articles about or reports from Greek institutions, at times written by Greek museum professionals and archaeologists. For instance, Konstantinos Kourouniotis (1872-1945), director of the Archaeological Service and a number of museums, wrote a short article in 1930 explaining the policy around museum entrance fees in Greece. In 1937, a long article by the first director of the Benaki Museum, Theodore Makridy,<sup>46</sup> presented in detail the museography of the museum. Foundoukidis had written the preface, in which he shared with the readers (other museum professionals) his views on museography: 'this is not just a technique', he claimed, 'nor even just a science: it is also an art, with all the attributes that accompany the word'.<sup>47</sup>

Further exploration of museography can be found in *Muséographie – Architecture et aménagement des musées d'art* (1937), a two-volume publication that was put together after the 1934 international conference in Madrid<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> For a complete discussion, see Gazi 1993; 1999.

<sup>45</sup> In 1931, the OIM organized an international conference in Athens on the conservation of art monuments, after which a publication was put out that spoke about monuments the way the Madrid conference publication spoke about museums (OIM, 1938, 10). For Foundoukidis' career, see Stöckmann 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Also known as Theodore Makridy-Bey. Makridy became the first director of the Benaki Museum, following his long career at the Ottoman Museum in Istanbul.

<sup>47</sup> Foundoukidis 1937, 103.

<sup>48</sup> This conference is considered by Stránský and van Mensch to be the end of the pre-scientific period in the development of museology and the beginning of the descriptive-empirical

that aimed to present ‘noteworthy examples’ of different aspects of museum work, mainly related to what we would today call ‘collections management’. In the second volume for example, we find a photograph that shows the reconstruction and presentation of artworks at the Archaeological Museum in Corfu.<sup>49</sup> The article on the Benaki Museum that appeared a few years later in *Mouseion* closely followed the structure of this 1937 tome, revealing that professionals in Greek institutions were keen to follow international practices and trends. This is also the case when we generally compare photographs from different museums of the world depicted in *Muséographie*, with photographs from exhibitions that were being held in Greece at the time.

After the Second World War, Greek museums remained interested in issues of management and display. Archaeological museums started to re-display their collections—which had been hidden in wartime—to familiarize the public with the development of ancient Greek art.<sup>50</sup> Other categories of institutions broadly followed, for example the Benaki Museum and the Museum of Greek Folk Art. Even museums that did not have a permanent home, like the National Gallery, tried, through their temporary exhibitions, to create a similar narrative and contribute to discussions on the development of artistic production in Greece.<sup>51</sup> An example of the effort to narrate a comprehensive story of the nation through its institutions and key relevant actors is the publication of the Christmas 1955 issue of *Nea Estia* magazine. This issue (No. 683) aimed to present Greek artistic production through the ages and included studies written by individuals who had worked as directors or curators in the large museums of the period, such as Christos Karouzos (National Archaeological Museum) and Georgios Soteriou (Byzantine and Christian Museum), or had had a hand in the establishment of private collections and ethnographic or art museums, such as Andreas Xyngopoulos,<sup>52</sup> Angeliki Hatzimichali,<sup>53</sup> and

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period. For Greece (as for certain other countries, see Brulon Soares 2019a, 24ff) both these phases can be merged into a normative phase.

<sup>49</sup> OIM 1937, 330.

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance the article by Karouzos (1958) on emerging galleries of ancient sculpture.

<sup>51</sup> See Spyrou 2017, 1119.

<sup>52</sup> Andreas Xyngopoulos (1891-1979) was a professor of Byzantine Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He collaborated with museums such as the Benaki Museum, and private collectors such as Eleni Stathatos, to record and publish collections, mostly of Byzantine icons.

<sup>53</sup> Angeliki Hatzimichali (1865-1965) was an influential folklorist; she collaborated with various institutions of folk art in Greece, such as the Benaki Museum and the Museum of Greek Folk Art.

Tony Spiteris, respectively.<sup>54</sup> Their views on different periods of Greek art share a common trait: an interest in documenting the developmental process of Greek art and its broader connection to European art.

In January 1963, the term ‘museology’ made headlines for the first time<sup>55</sup> in the daily newspaper *Eleftheria* (Freedom), in an article titled ‘Museology, a new and demanding academic discipline: ideas for its organization’, authored by archaeologist Athena Kalogeropoulou. It was not however, museology’s first ever appearance in the newspaper. Readers of *Eleftheria* had already come across the term in a June 1960 article by Emilio Lavagnino<sup>56</sup> reporting on the newly inaugurated Guggenheim Museum in New York. Almost exactly a year later, museology cropped up again in a news report on the conference organized by ICOM Italy in Turin on museums and architecture.<sup>57</sup> This brief reference is particularly interesting: for one, it testifies to the fact that a conference for museum specialists is considered important enough to be reported on, and for another, it included a supportive statement of museology by the famous architect Le Corbusier: ‘The museum [...] is an electronic workshop of scientists and this is the reason it needs to have the right space for research, solutions, exhibitions and interpretation of its scientific work’.<sup>58</sup> A similar word, ‘museonomy’ had also appeared in February 1959, in Kalogeropoulou’s *Eleftheria* piece on the Acropolis Museum exhibition curated by Ioannis Meliades:<sup>59</sup> ‘In the decade preceding the Second World War, views on museonomy changed’, Kalogeropoulou argued. In December 1964, in another article on the Acropolis Museum, she mentioned the term again: ‘The organization of the exhibitions in the Acropolis Museum, in the National

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<sup>54</sup> Tony Spiteris (1910-1986) was an art historian and probably the most influential art critic of his time.

<sup>55</sup> To the best of our knowledge, as further archival research might reveal earlier uses of the term.

<sup>56</sup> Layagnino 1960. Note that his name was misspelled in the paper as Emilio Layagnino. He was a member of OIM and a frequent pre-war contributor to *Mouseion*.

<sup>57</sup> In May 1961, the Italian Committee of ICOM organized an international conference on ‘Museums and Architecture’, which took place in Turin, Genoa and Milan. The meeting in Turin focused around the work by Le Corbusier (Sutera 2016, 11).

<sup>58</sup> See note 56 above.

<sup>59</sup> Ioannis Meliades (1895-1975) was a Greek archaeologist who became the director of the Acropolis Museum, a post he held for more than 20 years. He was one of the archaeologists assigned to protect Greek antiquities during the German occupation of Athens in WWII. Following the war, he led the effort to restore the antiquities and organized new exhibitions around them in the Acropolis Museum (Papakostas 2012). For the term ‘museonomy’ see Kalogeropoulou 1959.



Archaeological Museum and in the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion have been considered exemplary and have led to new paths of understanding the science of museonomy.’

Kalogeropoulou (1919-2004) was a woman of progressive ideological beliefs, well-educated and cultured. Her articles consistently articulated an understanding of the museum as a complex institution, designed to exhibit rare artworks, but also to provide knowledge, pleasure and entertainment for researchers and the public alike.<sup>60</sup> The mission of the museum, according to her writings, is to be ‘educational/instructive’, while also being a ‘creative’ space for professionals and artists to get inspired and be productive.

[museums] should give their artworks the opportunity to breathe, to retain their autonomy, to be visible, so that the visitor can become familiarized with them, can feel their meaning and connect to their beauty effortlessly, immediately.<sup>61</sup>

[...] so that the museum is transformed into something alive, belonging to the people, regardless of the visitor’s psychological or intellectual development, as each person can take something away just by looking at past civilizations and their intellectual richness.<sup>62</sup>

She highlights the ‘new’ character of museology across her articles. In the 1963 article mentioned above, museology is presented as a ‘new discipline’, one that has only been around for 40-odd years: ‘A new discipline, museology, changed what has been accomplished in the past, or better yet, it has created new conditions [for museums]’. Thus, she asks museums to become ‘worthy of their exhibits’.<sup>63</sup>

Kalogeropoulou was well positioned to make such high demands of museums. She had not only been a journalist and columnist, she had also worked at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, where she played a part in Greek war history, hiding museum collections during the German occupation of Athens and re-installing them after the war. She collaborated closely with Christos and Semni Karouzos,<sup>64</sup> both of whom she greatly admired, as she made clear in her articles. Kalogeropoulou’s writings allow us to follow a crucial period in the history of museology in Greece, a period in which the term was introduced into Greek public discourse (towards the end of the 1950s), almost at the same time as modern ideas on museology were appearing in

<sup>60</sup> For the life and work of Kalogeropoulou, see Petrakos 2004; 2014.

<sup>61</sup> *Eleftheria*, 8 February 1959. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.

<sup>62</sup> *Eleftheria*, 14 June 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Kalogeropoulou 1963a.

<sup>64</sup> Petrakos 2014.

Europe and the rest of the world.<sup>65</sup> Turning back to the articles themselves, we can see that Kalogeropoulou showed a great interest in architecture and the new modernist approach to designing museum spaces. Furthermore, she seemed to appreciate characteristics such as the symmetry and individuality of each exhibit, the use of brief poetic texts as interpretative media, and the organization of exhibitions around artists and artistic workshops. Furthermore, Kalogeropoulou appreciated curatorial agency. As she wrote in 1959:

The presentation of a museum collection, with the aesthetic views that prevail today—essentially different from those of a few years ago—is one of the most difficult and complicated problems that an archaeologist can face. One's responsibility is not limited to merely finding a place for each work of art and to position it close to others of the same period so as to remain true to the historical development. One's work does not end if he manages to arrange the exhibits in a chronological and material taxonomy, and present all the treasures that each museum holds, as was the case in the past.<sup>66</sup>

She thus reflects the views expressed by Semni Karouzos a year earlier, in 1958, when the latter presented a new exhibition of Archaic statues at the National Archaeological Museum, emphasizing that the exhibition aimed to 'rectify' prior 'erroneous' approaches. She believed that visitors should enjoy Archaic sculpture, not as they did in the past, 'outside of any theory, condescension, and historical understanding', but 'through a new perspective'.<sup>67</sup>

The relationship between the museum and the visitor was a great concern to this generation of archaeologists, who were responsible for the post-war re-mounting of museum collections in Greece. Kalogeropoulou took on the role of mediating between scholars and their audience, so that their views would reach 'the wider reading audience that is interested in the arts'.<sup>68</sup>

Mr Meliades does not believe that the Museum should be "didactic". This is the reason he has avoided hanging any text on the wall. He holds the opinion that it is right for any person establishing a museum of art to start from the artwork, and not the visitor. A good museum is a beautiful museum, a museum that can ensure the comfortable arrangement of beautiful artworks and their harmonious co-existence within the fine and very sensitive spirit of the surrounding

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<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, confusion persisted around terms like 'museology', 'museography' or 'museonomy', as made apparent in the texts discussed previously.

<sup>66</sup> Kalogeropoulou 1959.

<sup>67</sup> Karouzos 1958.

<sup>68</sup> Kalogeropoulou 1961.

space. A collection of gypsum casts can impart more lessons, but its place is not in a museum of art.<sup>69</sup>

The almost metaphysical ideal of what Benjamin<sup>70</sup> had already called the ‘aura’ of authentic artefacts was an integral part of this approach. Christos and Semni Karouzos held similar views. The former mentioned in his address at a UNESCO meeting that:

a museum of any kind [...] should not merely be a kind of anatomical laboratory for specialists; it needs to be, or become, an important part of the psychological and spiritual life of the people.<sup>71</sup>

He added:

In order to achieve such a special psychological and spiritual education of the people, an artistic [education] that will make it possible for them to accept the multiple stimuli of artworks, contemporary art is not enough; it is necessary [for a country] to have an art museum that will make it obvious that, deep down, ancient art and contemporary art are basically the same.<sup>72</sup>

However, Karouzos alerts his audience to what he calls the ‘danger of “educationalism”’, that is the:

subconscious tendency [...] of professional educators to believe that the main parameter in the transmission of knowledge is not how well the educator knows what one is going to transmit, but the method that is considered best for the transmission of knowledge in different eras.<sup>73</sup>

Although one could argue that this is not necessarily connected to his views on museology, the relationship between museology and these views becomes very clear in the following quote by Semni Karouzos<sup>74</sup> published in an *Eleftheria* article by Athena Kalogeropoulou:

One would expect us to talk about the methods that we used (in the National Museum) for the presentation of the hundreds of sculptures, the thousands of vases, bronzes and other objects that now decorate the refurbished galleries

<sup>69</sup> Kalogeropoulou 1961.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin 1968.

<sup>71</sup> Karouzos 2000, 137.

<sup>72</sup> Karouzos 2000, 138.

<sup>73</sup> Karouzos 2000, 139.

<sup>74</sup> The couple held similar views and often wrote together. Their individual writings also reflect their shared beliefs around their work.

of the museum, as if these methods could be the recipes that could be used for the re-arrangement of other museums as well. The word “museology” that some constantly use, an outcome of contemporary technocratic ideas, is empty of meaning. First, because each museum has its own issues [...]. No *a priori* principle, no aesthetic theory has been applied to [the National Archaeological Museum of Athens]. One principle dominated: how it was possible to elevate, how each artwork would speak, sometimes on its own, sometimes within its group, always within its historical context.<sup>75</sup>

This negation of a pre-conceived theory (although this is not exactly the case, since even the lack of theory is a form of theory), the connection of museology with essentially technocratic ideas, placing an emphasis on the artwork, specifically in its historical, contextual basis, as well as an emphasis on the expertise of the curator, are basic characteristics of this phase of museology which remains normative, in the sense that it focuses on the ‘right’ way to display artworks and it remains connected to good standards of museum practice. The educational role of the museum is central to these discussions, but the exact meaning of the role remains a topic open for debate.

We could argue that it is exactly at this point that what art historians and theorists recognize as the ‘modern museum’ reaches its peak, which can be distinguished from the post-modern museum, i.e. the museum as a space of experience that will next make an appearance. The museum thus transitioned from an institution that had at its centre its collections, the expertise required in order for the collections to be interpreted and holistically presented, its historical continuity and historicity, to the next phase, where the material culture kept in a museum gave priority to narratives, to communication with audiences, to interpretation and, ultimately, to experience. This transition was not simple and did not happen overnight.

### *The phase of theoretical synthesis*

The transition to the era of theory and synthesis in Greek museology occurred gradually, and only took off after 1974, when post-dictatorship optimism allowed for diversity in approaches to the past, as well as the present. Many Greeks who had, in the years of dictatorship, self-exiled—usually to Paris—returned to Greece full of ideas and plans, fuelled by the teachings of Claude Levi-Strauss, André Leroi-Gourhan, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. The Ministry of Culture, which had been established in 1971, during the dictatorship, continued to influence the country’s cultural policy and in-

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<sup>75</sup> Kalogeropoulou 1967.

stitutions.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Greek institutions had started to multiply, and the country started to be enriched with diverse new museums (mainly ethnographic, but also museums of fine arts). Changes were therefore needed in museums and museology as well. It was time for the ‘theoretical-synthetic’ stage of museology,<sup>77</sup> for new ideas about museums and their relation to people and artefacts. The changes in the cultural management of the country and the increasing number of new institutions also led to questions around who was supposed to work in these institutions, what kind of training was necessary and whether there was space for professionals other than archaeologists to participate in the field.

The most well-known advocate of this theoretical turn was Georgios Hourmouziadis (1932-2013), an archaeologist and professor of prehistoric archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Between 1975 and 1976, while working as an archaeologist and curator<sup>78</sup> at the regional Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in Volos, Hourmouziadis re-organized the exhibitions in the city’s Archaeological Museum. While Karouzou had referred to museology dismissively in the past, Hourmouziadis argued that it was time to expand the meaning of the term, specifically to:

overcome the epistemological frames of museology, as these are presented by the dictionary definition of the discipline. Based on current museographical views, these include the methodology of exhibition design, security measures, storage, conservation, educational programmes and the like. If I try using this description to define the *museological problem* I have to deal with, I will think of it as a problem of practice and bureaucracy, while *in essence it is a problem of theory*, and indeed of *knowledge theory*.<sup>79</sup>

Hourmouziadis thus gets to the heart of the definition of museology as it had been understood up until then, i.e. focusing on the practical aspects of museum work, as opposed to his own definition, which revolved around ‘theory’, more specifically the theory about the construction of knowledge. He actually argued that the ‘museological problem’<sup>80</sup> was in need of being addressed and that the museums of his time were at a point of ‘historical crisis’.

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<sup>76</sup> Zorba 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Following Stránský’s terminology (1980, 71).

<sup>78</sup> In Greece, archaeologists working at an Ephorate are also the curators of the museums that are run by it. Even though it remains controversial in archaeological and museological circles, the practice continues to this day.

<sup>79</sup> Hourmouziadis 1984, 16 (my emphasis).

<sup>80</sup> Hourmouziadis 1980, 38, 40.

He bolstered his argument by pointing to the declining number of museums visitors, as well as the 'aimless wandering in the galleries by indifferent students'.<sup>81</sup>

Hourmouziadis was adamant that a change was required in the way archaeological material was presented in Greece's central and regional museums.<sup>82</sup> He claimed that Greek archaeological museums must transform from museums of history of ancient art to museums of history of ancient culture. He was also a proponent of no longer viewing Greek archaeological museums as 'temples', where visitors are expected to revere and admire the artefacts in the process of being 'enlightened' about dominant cultural values and stereotypes. Instead, he argued, museums should start focusing on their educational role and establish a two-way process between institutions and their visitors: one that takes into consideration the messages coming from visitors/consumers and not just from museum specialists.<sup>83</sup> In order for this to be achieved, he suggested changing the approach to one that makes connections between archaeology, and therefore the distant past, and folk life and traditions that are closer in time and in the minds and hearts of visitors.

Influenced by his own political beliefs,<sup>84</sup> Hourmouziadis' discourse on museology went beyond viewing the discipline as a mere set of practices aimed at protecting artefacts and educating museum visitors on aesthetics (as in the past). His writing, in line with his Marxist-Leninist principles,<sup>85</sup> urges the reader to understand the museum 'as a specific *system* for the production of historical information based on a methodology similar in objectivity and prospects to the one recognized in the sphere of the production of material goods, as described by Marx in his *Kapital*'.<sup>86</sup>

His assessment regarding the state of museology at the time strongly reflects the Brno school of thought: museology is, in fact, an empirical and rational discipline that produces ideology. Interestingly, a note in Hourmouziadis' seminal article entitled 'Comments on Greek Museology' in the journal *Scientific Thought*, mentions:

<sup>81</sup> Hourmouziadis 1980, 40.

<sup>82</sup> Hourmouziadis 1976, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Hourmouziadis 1976, 1; 1980, 38.

<sup>84</sup> He had been a member of the Communist Party since the 1970s (in 2004, he became a Member of Parliament for the Communist Party).

<sup>85</sup> For instance, in his article published in 1980, he references Michail Owsjannikow's book (1976) on Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. See Hourmouziadis 1980, 42, note 3.

<sup>86</sup> Hourmouziadis 1984, 19 (my emphasis).

a systematic effort is currently in place with outstanding results in the socialist countries. The democratization of information that aims to simplify historical knowledge takes a particular shape in the area of museology. When it comes to the organization of the historical museum, in particular, but also of the archaeological museum, one can apply the materialistic cosmo-theory in their exhibitionary practices, [thus creating exhibitions] which are aesthetically satisfying but also comprehensible [to the visitor].<sup>87</sup>

In other words, museums have an important role to play in simplifying historical and archaeological knowledge using a Marxist, materialist conception of history, without compromising the aesthetics as these were understood by archaeologists of the previous generation; it is a practice that needs to be based on a different theoretical understanding of the world. Despite the fact that we do not know whether Hourmouziadis had read specific texts on museology, we do know from the references in his articles that he kept abreast of works by various Marxist intellectuals, like the French Louis Althusser, the Germans Gerhardt Bott and Wolfgang Fritz, the Czech Jan Mykarovski and the Russian Michail Owshannikow. His suggestions point towards a structuralist approach to museums and exhibitions and would not only influence subsequent generations of archaeologists and museum curators, but also inspire the next generation of museologists.

At around the same time that Hourmouziadis was sharing his views on museology (late 1970s to early 1980s), and putting them in practice at the Archaeological Museum of Volos, ethnographic museums were multiplying across Greece. This new category of museum was connected to another approach to museology that is closer to the views of the French museologist Jean-Henri Rivière and his idea of ‘ecomuseology’ or ‘ecomuseums’. The idea was characterized by an emphasis on the community, as well as recent historical eras, collaboration with local communities, and a defiance of elitist notions regarding museum audiences.

One response to Hourmouziadis’ *Scientific Thought* article on Greek museology came from Thanassis Fotiadis,<sup>88</sup> in the next issue of the same journal. While Fotiadis shared Hourmouziadis’ theoretical perspective (Marxism-Leninism)—also searching for the ‘local, social, cultural and historical *unity* that can be represented in the museum’<sup>89</sup>—he argued for an expansion of

<sup>87</sup> Hourmouziadis 1984, 19, note 9.

<sup>88</sup> Thanassis Fotiadis (1921-1989) was a poet, author and lawyer. He also published studies on folk art and life. Politically active since he was a student, he was also involved in the Greek Resistance even while self-exiled in West Germany.

<sup>89</sup> Fotiadis 1985, 68 (my emphasis).

the discussion to include institutions beyond the archaeological. Fotiadis further argued that past contributions to the museum field by ‘progressive bourgeois men and women’, like Meliades, Karouzos, Hatzimichali and others,<sup>90</sup> were based on ‘*a* theory’, just not the one subscribed to by Hourmouziadis or even himself. Thus, Fotiadis refutes Hourmouziadis’ claim that there was a lack of a ‘museological theory’ in Greece. Moreover, Fotiadis urged for a more detailed reading of what was actually happening in the socialist world at the time, where, he argued, museums were still considered ‘temples’ but not in the sense of ‘spaces of silence and metaphysical questioning’ as Hourmouziadis had argued for the Greek museums,<sup>91</sup> but in the sense of being ‘respectful institutions that incentivize participation in quality living’.<sup>92</sup> He called for a more holistic approach to museology, following successful examples of museums in both socialist and capitalist countries. What these institutions share, he claimed, is a solid museological and museographical infrastructure, a clear ideological direction (whether materialistic or bourgeois), an adequately trained staff, and well-structured relations with the country’s educational system, all within a clearly defined cultural public policy. This is how ‘the democratization of information is achieved, knowledge is reproduced and enriched and the Marxist views presented by Hourmouziadis are indeed clearly proven to be true’.<sup>93</sup>

The approach described by Fotiadis—focusing on a diversity of institutions (such as those dedicated to ethnographic/folk art, whose numbers had multiplied in the 1970s),<sup>94</sup> on the creation of sound theoretical structures and the professionalization of museum staff, and giving priority to opening up the institution to its audiences over the artefacts themselves—was echoed by museum professionals such as Stelios Papadopoulos (1932–2004). Papadopoulos, who had studied museology in Paris at the *École du Louvre* under Rivière, was a strong supporter of the ecomuseum, as well as of the professionalization of museum work.<sup>95</sup> Throughout his career—including at the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, the Ethnological Museum of Macedo-

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<sup>90</sup> Although not mentioned by name, Athena Kalogeropoulou was definitely part of this group.

<sup>91</sup> Hourmouziadis 1980.

<sup>92</sup> Fotiadis 1985, 69.

<sup>93</sup> Fotiadis 1985, 69.

<sup>94</sup> Gizelis 1979.

<sup>95</sup> Rivière was the first to introduce ‘museologue’/museologist as a profession. A museologist’s role was to establish museums after bringing on board curators (or ‘conservateurs’) and museographers (‘*muséographes*’). See Brulon Soares 2019a, 23.



nia and Thrace, and later at the religious museums of Mount Athos and the industrial-thematic museums he established within the framework of the Cultural Foundation of the Industrial Bank of Greece (and later the Cultural Foundation of the Piraeus Bank)—Papadopoulos advocated for museology to put an emphasis on the local and the community, to adequately train museum staff and put museologists in charge of projects, and also to bring social and economic benefits to the region and the country more widely.<sup>96</sup>

In an article published in 1988, for instance, Papadopoulos reported back from the first International Conference of Museology that had been held in Paris the year before (13-16 November 1987) and argued, similarly to Hourmouziadis, against the ‘mystic experience’ of museums and in support of the ‘new discipline of museology’.<sup>97</sup> In urging for this transition, he also called for the ‘deep changes that [were] taking place in Western Europe’ to be critically evaluated and compared to the situation in Greece.<sup>98</sup>

Other professionals shared his views and influences. For instance, archaeologist Alexandros Pistofides wrote for *Archaeology and Arts*,<sup>99</sup> a journal for the Greek archaeological and arts community, presenting the main principles of the ecomuseum, using as examples the Seixal Museum in Portugal, Le Creusot, and the Haute Beauce Museum in Quebec. Pistofides wanted Greek professionals to learn about best practices from other institutions, in order to improve their own practice.

The (re)establishment<sup>100</sup> in 1983 of the Hellenic Committee of ICOM also aimed to create a professional community and share best practices. The committee soon organized three museological conferences: the First Museological Meeting in Athens (29-31 October 1984); the Meeting of Ethnographic Museums on Mykonos (7-9 September 1984); and the Museological Conference (1987). The committee launching back into action marked a transition to a new phase regarding professionalism and museums in Greece. In the lauda-

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<sup>96</sup> A volume published by the Piraeus Bank Cultural Foundation a year before his death features a collection of Papadopoulos’ writings regarding material culture and museology (Papadopoulos 2003). A more detailed discussion of his views and their impact especially on the history of technological and folk museums in Greece deserves to be written.

<sup>97</sup> Papadopoulos 1988.

<sup>98</sup> Papadopoulos 2003, 221.

<sup>99</sup> A journal which, a decade later, would be the first to publish a series of articles on museology in Greek. See also Pistofides 1986.

<sup>100</sup> A Greek ICOM Committee also existed in the 1950s and followed the established ICOM practice of the time: members were appointed by the state, usually museum directors or other well-known academics. The committee was not open to all museum professionals, as it is today (see also Brulon Soares 2019b, 24-25).

tory words of Teti Hadjinicolaou—long-time chair of ICOM—in July 2018:<sup>101</sup>

at the time of its establishment, ICOM covered a void that existed due to the lack of organized museum programmes in the country. It provided Greek museum professionals the opportunity to come in contact with international museological theory and practice. Its work included a wide range of activities: international conferences, academic colloquia, training seminars, lectures, collaborations with institutions locally and abroad, publications, the establishment of International Museum Day [...] as well as many other actions that opened up new horizons and created a new energy.

Hadjinicolaou continued:

In the years since 1983, it's clear that the Hellenic Committee of ICOM has flourished into an active community that has worked, and continues to work, in a collective manner, under a common vision and a shared desire to contribute.

ICOM was also instrumental in promoting the development of educational activities in museums, in what has been called a period of 'museum education euphoria'.<sup>102</sup>

The views and ideas developed during this decade on museums—their role in society, and their relation to people and their experiences—, on museology as a discipline in need of a theory (be it Marxist-Leninist or not), and on professional and academic training of museum workers came to define the following decades.

### *The phase of maturity*

The end of the 1990s found museology in Greece ready to transition once again. Museums had proliferated: new, mainly EU-funded projects (mostly focusing on archaeology) had contributed both to the establishment of new institutions, especially in the periphery, as well as the re-establishment of older museums and re-mounting of traditional exhibitions. Museology was introduced into Greek universities first at the undergraduate, and then at the postgraduate level.<sup>103</sup> In 2004, museologists were appointed for the first time at the Ministry of Culture and two academic journals focusing on museology appeared, *Tetradia Mouseiologias* (Museology Notebooks) and *Museology Online Journal*. In 2005, the Society of Greek Museologists was established.

<sup>101</sup> See the message from the President of ICOM on the Committee's 35th anniversary, available at: <http://icom-greece.mini.icom.museum/πληροφοριες/μήνυμα-της-προέδρου/> Accessed May 30, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> See Scaltsa 2014.

<sup>103</sup> For a detailed presentation, see Scaltsa 2014.

Academic pieces started to be published and international conferences were systematically organized as of 1997.<sup>104</sup> Research was undertaken on many levels, often in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and/or with individual museums. These developments expanded the vocabulary around the field of museology as it was practiced, theorized and understood in Greece. The academic character of museology ceased to be debated and began to be considered as a given.<sup>105</sup>

Despite variations in how museology is taught or understood across academic institutions, Greece takes on board both the European (French, German and Central European), as well as the Anglo-American approach. The principles of New Museology were soon adopted and museology was recognized as a field of study that connects theory and practice to social concerns and more complicated theoretical schemas. Along these lines, the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester<sup>106</sup> has been very influential, and has been the *alma mater* for many Greek academics who went on to teach, research and write about museological issues. In their turn, these academics influenced newer generations of museum professionals and academics. The holistic approach taken in Greece is captured well in a 1990 book by Susan Pearce, despite the fact that the focus of her publication was neither Greece nor Greek institutions. She outlined that museology is:

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<sup>104</sup> In 1997, an international symposium was organized in Thessaloniki by the Department of Architecture of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, entitled 'Museology in the 21st century'. The Department of Cultural Technology and Communication of the University of the Aegean organized three international conferences on topics related to museology and new media in 2002, 2004 and 2006.

<sup>105</sup> However, the debate about the role of 'museologists' and their professional rights is ongoing.

<sup>106</sup> The Department (and then School) of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester was established in 1966, see Pearce, this volume. Its first director, Geoffrey Lewis actively participated in ICOM as well as ICOFOM. As a result, Leicester adopted a pragmatic approach that is outlined in Lewis' conclusion to a 1980 ICOFOM newsletter article: 'We should have no further cause to debate whether museology is a subject in its own right; rather we should urgently lay the theoretical framework on which it, and the museum movement as a whole can develop'. This was the approach his successors also followed, creating the basis upon which the theoretical framework of museology was built both in the UK (Leicester trained the majority of professionals working in British institutions) but also internationally, through an extensive body of literature that continues to be produced by Leicester academics and international alumni, among them many Greeks. Pearce, Hooper-Greenhill and Kavanagh in particular pioneered new directions in museological theory: they enriched and gave nuance to discussions by introducing sociological, anthropological and visitor studies approaches.

concerned with the ways in which meaning is created through museum objects, and the processes which this involves [...] however, [it] adopt[s] a wide diversity of stances, ranging widely across the field; some take a broadly theoretical line, and others examine specific areas like museum education and the relationship of museums to [local] peoples.<sup>107</sup>

Today, museology in Greece follows contemporary international approaches: Greek museum professionals and academics participate and often lead international fora, such as the international committees of ICOM, they participate in international debates, such as those examining the very definition of the museum, and contribute to the development of new digital skills for museum professionals.<sup>108</sup>

We need to go further, however, with research-based reflection. What is it that makes museums important in this world? Can museums today do more than simply reflect, or represent the world? Can they actually change it? New theoretical approaches need to be developed in Greece as well, taking into account the local context and perspectives, to contribute towards a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the role and importance of the museum, its relationship to society and its future. We need to move, not just as individuals (institutions or persons), but as a community of museums and museologists to the next phase, i.e. the phase of 'reflexive' or 'critical museology'.<sup>109</sup>

### *In lieu of a conclusion*

From the outset, museology in Greece has been considered a practice based on theory. As the national and international museum scene changed over the years with the introduction of new ideas and the development of new perspectives, what this 'theory' consists of has also changed. From a 'sum of arbitrary metaphysical suggestions' and 'a tool to verify or disprove empirical data based not on collective social activity but on subjective and abstract views', as was the case during the normative phase of museology in Greece,<sup>110</sup> to the phase of theoretical synthesis, that led to a clearer understanding of practice and theory as interconnected, museums in Greece have been under-

<sup>107</sup> Pearce 1990. She served as both a supervisor and academic inspiration for many early Greek museologists, such as Maria Mouliou, Andromachi Gazi and the author.

<sup>108</sup> See, for instance, the EU-funded programme MuSA (<http://www.project-musa.eu/about/>). Accessed April 5, 2021.

<sup>109</sup> The term 'reflexive museology' is used by Brulon Soares (2019a and this volume); for 'critical museology', see Shelton 2013.

<sup>110</sup> The phrases belong to Hourmouziadis (1984, 18).

stood, implicitly or explicitly, as political institutions. Moving away from an early emphasis on the ‘neutrality’ and the ‘aestheticism’ of the artwork (itself a political argument), museums turned their focus on the people and on (re) presenting local and community concerns. The ‘grand narrative’ of the nation as outlined in the exhibitions before and after WWII gradually gave way to other narratives, a trend that never completely took over, as remains clear even today across many Greek institutions.<sup>111</sup>

The recently reaffirmed view<sup>112</sup> that museology consists of two parts, theoretical and applied, has always been at the heart of the development of museology in Greece.

Today, Greek cultural institutions are facing new challenges that derive from local as well as international socio-political circumstances.<sup>113</sup> I believe that this is the right time to start reconsidering how and why we are where we are, and to start planning for the future. Greek theoretical approaches so far have been defined by the local character of the country’s heritage and museums; while enriched by international debates, they have yet to become proactive. In other words, local experience has not been used to provide nuance to the understanding of museums, as well as their role in and impact on society. It is about time to do just that, and researching the discipline’s past and trying to position and understand it within a wider perspective is a first step in this direction.

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<sup>111</sup> See Gazi 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Nitsiou 2011, 279.

<sup>113</sup> On the recent economic crisis in Greece and its influence on museums, see Gazi 2017 and Gareizou and Keramidas 2017.

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# From democratization to decolonization: Canadian museological theory, 1960-2000

*Jennifer Carter and Sheila Hoffman*

## *Abstract*

This chapter discusses some of the epistemological foundations that shaped museology in Canada in the second half of the 20th century. The authors bring together several distinct features of Canadian museological theory and practice across linguistic and disciplinary lines, highlighting the *ideas* of scholars that resonated internationally and informed practices in museums both at home and abroad, as well as particular museological *practices* that have in turn contributed to the field's theorization. Exploring how a host of factors has been central to the dynamic and at times innovative museological praxis that has developed in Canada since the 1960s—itsself a defining moment in a radically transforming field—the authors consider how transnational networks, thoughtful scholar-practitioner-activists, new cultural policies, Aboriginal activism, and the rise and increasing specialization of professional and academic training programmes have all impacted upon museological theory and practice in Canada. Moving from calls to rethink the social role of museums, which was the remit of the *nouvelle muséologie* movement begun in the late 1960s, to measures taken to ensure the social and cultural relevance of museum collections and exhibitions through increased public access—through digitization, democratization and decentralization—, and to the political and moral imperative of decolonizing professional practices and museum institutions through a growing reflexive, Indigenous and collaborative museological praxis, the chapter demonstrates the importance and influence of both local traditions and international networks in the development of Canadian museological theory and practice throughout the second half of the 20th century.

**Keywords:** Canadian museology, epistemology, decolonization, ecomuseums

In 1971, visionary Canadian museologist Duncan Ferguson Cameron (1930-2006) penned an essay that would send reverberations across the museological world. His manifesto, 'The Museum, a Temple or the Forum', fundamentally

challenged a stasis he perceived in contemporary museums that, quite simply, had not been able to ‘resolve their problems of role definitions’, especially as many (the ‘temples’) continued to cater to a social and curatorial élite and this minority élite’s attendant value systems.<sup>1</sup> The museum world was indeed changing, and this change was already manifest in a variety of recent innovative museums founded or reconceptualized in the late 1960s that sought to push back against museological convention by involving community members in the interpretation of their heritage (Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Washington, DC is an exemplary case in point in North America), or by embracing experimental over established methods—in the manner of the pioneering Ontario Science Centre in Toronto (as one of the world’s first science centres, it privileged the experiential over collections-based museography)—or canons, as the historically conservative Art Gallery of Ontario seemed poised to do.<sup>2</sup>

An article resolutely of its time, Cameron’s arguments resonated deeply with museologists around the globe who were similarly committed to reimagining the social possibilities of museological institutions in the wake of what would come to be known as the New Museology movement.<sup>3</sup> Advocates of the new museology were museum professionals, theorists and activists<sup>4</sup> who understood the increased roles museums could play enriching community life, contributing to identity-making, nurturing cultural development and preserving local heritage. Yet significantly, Cameron’s call to affirm the cul-

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<sup>1</sup> The article was adapted from the University of Colorado Museum Lecture Cameron was invited to give in 1971. Cameron 1971, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cameron 1971, 12.

<sup>3</sup> The uses of the terms ‘new museology’ and ‘*nouvelle muséologie*’ in English and French have given rise to some confusion in the field (and in bilingual Canada) owing to their different origins, reference points, and contexts. This confusion is compounded by a linguistic divide amongst scholars, and the terms continue to be used indiscriminately to refer to the evolving intellectual platform of museological theory post-1960s. Here we intend to differentiate their use by distinguishing the international movement in the 1960s and 1970s whose proponents emphasized the social purposes of museums (for example Maynard, Kinard, Cameron, Maure) from another understanding given to the term by virtue of the publication of British scholar Peter Vergo’s eponymous anthology published in 1989, *The New Museology*. The authors of this anthology focussed on different issues from those grouped within the movement referred to by André Desvallées in 1980 as ‘*la nouvelle muséologie*’, such as the politics of representation and display. In his introduction, Vergo curiously made no reference to *la nouvelle muséologie* which preceded his own anglicized use of the term. Butler has usefully located Vergo’s volume within the later Critical Museology movement. See Butler 2015, 159.

<sup>4</sup> Lorente 2012, 241.

tural and social responsibilities of museums arguably remains as relevant to the work of Canadian (and many other) theorists and museum professionals today, although for different socio-political reasons, as it was in the era which gave rise to it: the social and civil rights movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A key contemporary example is the work of another provocative Canadian museum scholar, Robert R. Janes, and his compelling call for museums to take social action on various local and global issues in *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*, published in 2009. Indeed, while many Canadian museums at the millennium are vastly redefined and have taken great measures to democratize their collections and their practices—challenging in innovative ways the very form the ‘forum’ could take—so too have the potential roles of museums to intervene meaningfully in contemporary society evolved, as Janes’ manifesto suggests.

It is no coincidence that the now famous (and reference point of new museology) *Round Table on the Development and the Role of Museums in the Contemporary World*, co-organized by UNESCO and ICOM in Santiago, Chile, in May 1972,<sup>5</sup> would have as its *raison d’être* a reevaluation of the role of museums in the contemporary world and this world’s evolving needs.<sup>6</sup> Born of this groundbreaking meeting, the concept of the *integrated museum*<sup>7</sup>—with its multidisciplinary make-up and holistic approach—would find form in the experimental ecomuseum (to which we will return), theorized and put into practice in the late 1970s- early 1980s by figures such as Georges-Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine in France, and most famously in Canada—more specifically Québec—by one of Rivière’s students, Pierre Mayrand (1934-2011). Mayrand, who enjoyed a remarkable career at home

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<sup>5</sup> Of the many innovations of this international symposium—and its great strength—is that in addition to involving museologists, invitations were extended to Latin American sociologists, educators, and scientists as a means to engage in a deep and multidisciplinary reflection about how to modernize traditional conceptions of museums and to render their practices more in keeping with scientific progress and the changing needs of the modern world. Thus, beyond discussing scientific and technical developments of museums, less common subjects such as cultural development in rural and agricultural economies, social and cultural issues related to the environment, and finally, museums and permanent education, were key to the symposium’s programme.

<sup>6</sup> See Fernández 1973. The participants were mostly Latin American museologists, researchers, and professionals from related fields, with the exception of the French ICOM and UNESCO representatives from Paris.

<sup>7</sup> The ‘integrated museum’ is defined as one in which ‘subjects, collections and exhibitions are inter-related with one another and with the natural and social environment of mankind’ (Fernández 1973, 39).

and abroad, was a scholar-practitioner known for his participatory museological practice and as one of the founders of MINOM, the *Mouvement international pour une nouvelle Muséologie* (International Movement for a New Museology), in 1984.<sup>8</sup>

Let us consider, then, Cameron's far-seeing article and moreover, its pretense to fundamentally rethink and theorize the roles of museums as societal institutions during the heyday of the New Museology movement, as one of two bookends that has indelibly marked Canadian (and global) museological theory and practice for nearly half a century. The second—and here we will use scholarly license to slightly extend the temporal framework of this essay and this anthology's premise (1960-2000)—is the ongoing process of settler decolonization and the dismantling of colonial museology in Canada through a growing reflexive, Indigenous and collaborative museological praxis. The move to decolonize Canadian museums has gained significant momentum since the late 1960s. Aboriginal activism, calls for the cultural repatriation of Aboriginal human remains and sacred objects, artistic and curatorial interventions critical of establishment practices, and the rise of Indigenous curation have, over the years, successfully challenged institutional power relations in Canadian museums and Aboriginal-run centres. While there is still significant work to be done to integrate Indigenous curators, worldviews, traditions and practices more fully into mainstream museological practice, Canada has been recognized for its intellectual and professional leadership in this movement both at home and overseas.

In a volume dedicated to providing a national comparative overview of museological theory of the second half of the twentieth century, it is necessary to be explicit about how we have defined 'museological theory'—as related to (individual) writing or arising from (day-to-day) practice—and furthermore, how we have measured this theory's impact and influence on museum practices, be these local, national or international. It is also important to consider from the outset that Canadian museology has developed in accordance with local, regional, national and international traditions *and* across a vast and complex landscape that in many ways define the people of this nation—Canada's First Peoples, its colonial settlers, and more recent immigrant and diasporic communities—in myriad ways. Owing to the sheer scale of its geography of regionalisms and the great diversity of this country's traditions, we have been necessarily selective in our approach to discussing the major trends

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<sup>8</sup> For further information about MINOM, please consult their website at <http://www.minom-icom.net>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

and particular features of Canadian museology not only during a key period of Canada's coming-of-age in a post-centennial moment (1967), but also in the nation's museological history.

Museology as a multidisciplinary field of study has many tentacles, and tracing its linear history is neither possible nor desirable. In considering late 20th-century museological theory in Canada, we have focused on some of the intersecting ideas that have informed a growing critical practice, and conversely, on some of the practices that have informed the theories of contemporary museology. We have thus considered examples of theory arising both from writing (ex. ecomuseology, Critical Museology)—thereby generating a practice from theory—, and from practice (ex. documentation and training)—leading to a 'theory of practice'<sup>9</sup>—, in specific contexts (ecomuseology) as well as with more general and varied applications (documentation), and whose impact may have been quickly assessed or is subject to lengthier development over time (Cameron's 'forum').

The other challenge in this type of writing is inherent in the complexity of the museum institution itself, which, as Anthony Shelton reminds us, is important to analyze as 'hubs ... within networked fields'<sup>10</sup> of 'social, political, and economic relations'.<sup>11</sup> Its study not only invites multidisciplinary forms of analysis (about collections, exhibitions, visitors, management, cultural policy, ethics, among others) from a wide variety of disciplines, but also approaches that account for the distinct histories and practices of different museological typologies (art, history, science, natural history) and that are more often than not disciplinarian in their affiliations and dissemination.<sup>12</sup> A good example is how art curation, a fundamental museological function, is also theorized within a distinct body of work that is often parallel, yet distinct from, other museological publications. With these caveats in mind, this chapter seeks not to be comprehensive, but to bring together several strands of theory across linguistic and disciplinarian divides over the past half century and with an eye to the third millennium. We have highlighted the *ideas* of singular scholars that resonated internationally and have informed practices in museums and museological theory globally, as much as we have singled out particular museological *practices* that have in turn contributed to the

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<sup>9</sup> Shelton 2013, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Shelton 2013, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Shelton 2013, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Shelton 2013, 15, citing Gomez Martinez, who in 2006 referred to two movements of museum worlds, Anglo-Saxon and Mediterranean, as a means of explaining discrepancies in 'museological institutionalizations'.



field's theorization. Collectively these testify to the importance and influence of both local traditions and international networks in the development of Canadian museological praxis from coast to coast to coast throughout the second half of the 20th century.

*The new museology and the rise of innovative museum typologies in Canada, 1960s-1980s*

One of the defining features of museological theory of the late 1960s-1970s was the international exchange that catalyzed a profound rethinking of the fundamental purpose of museums in contemporary society. This radical interrogation of the institution's foundational roles coincided with the revolutionary fervour of the 1960s and challenged long-engrained museum philosophies and practices, resulting in the emergence of new museological insights and practices—literally, a '*nouvelle*' *muséologie* (a 'new' museology)—the neologism coined by French museologist André Desvallées in his 1980 entry to the *Encyclopedia Universalis*. French theorists François Mairesse and André Desvallées cite the movement's most important development between the years 1972 (the Round Table in Santiago, Chile) and 1985, when concepts and ideas such as participatory museology and cultural identity were put into practice in a host of new museum types (aboriginal cultural centres, neighbourhood museums, Casa del Museo, ecomuseums, community museums) that shared a common element of community support in their conceptualization, signaling a fundamental change in rapport between museums and the publics they served.<sup>13</sup>

Several Canadian museologists were germane to these discussions and played a key role in advancing these ideas and concretizing their related practices in the distinctive museum typologies that developed in Canada at this time. These new museum types were premised upon a desire to assert the social and educational roles of museums and related institutions within their immediate communities, and to democratize these institutions through their commitment to the socio-cultural and socio-economic development of the very populations these institutions were intended to serve:<sup>14</sup> the Canadian iterations of the ecomuseum and later the *musée de société* (or society museum, a genre more popular in Québec than in other parts of Canada) such as the Musée de la civilisation in Québec City, and Québec's neighbourhood *mai-*

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<sup>13</sup> Mairesse and Desvallées 2011, 367.

<sup>14</sup> Rivard 1984, 1.

*sons de culture*, are key examples of the 1970s and 80s. So too was the spate of local museums and community-operated historical societies that developed over the same period in rural environments throughout Canada. Their creation had been bolstered by the findings of the Massey-Lévesque Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, submitted in 1951, which argued the need to improve museum funding throughout Canada as well as the creation of new types of cultural institutions.<sup>15</sup>

The philosophies underlying the New Museology movement intended not only for museums to open their doors more broadly to the public, but that they should also play a far greater role in societal development. As Peter Davis has observed, the new museology emerged ‘from the widespread dismay within the museum profession regarding the inability of museums to deal with the contemporary, social, cultural, environmental, political and economic changes that confronted them in the post-war years’.<sup>16</sup> A changed sensibility to the fundamental roles of museums also grew out of the nascent heritage movement, and an international awareness of the need to preserve, protect and transmit to future generations national cultural and natural heritage, in synchronicity with contemporaneous environmental movements and postcolonial theories around the world. These were key to an expanded commitment to ensuring that heritage—since 1972 endorsed by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention—remain accessible to the public, and not confined to museological storehouses by institutional inertia.<sup>17</sup>

This ‘radical reassessment of both theoretical and practical aspects of museums’, explored at various ICOM General Assemblies throughout the 1960s and 1970s, encouraged greater attention to the needs of constituents and thereby ‘challenged long-established values held by museums and their staff’.<sup>18</sup> The core ideas continued to provide seeds for debate at international meetings, for example at the ICOM General Assembly held in Québec in 1992, yet even before this important meeting Québec had played a major role in providing an influential intellectual platform and international meeting ground for the advancement of these ideas. This included the drafting of the ‘Declaration of Québec’ by Mayrand and the *Groupe de recherche en patrimoine* (Heritage research group) at the University du Québec à Montréal where Mayrand was a professor in the Department of Art Histo-

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<sup>15</sup> Gillam 2001, 69-99.

<sup>16</sup> Davis 2011, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Describing this heritage phenomenon, Rivard 2014, 11, cites from de Varine’s 1976 publication *La culture des autres* (Éditions Seuil).

<sup>18</sup> Davis 2011, 59.

ry. The Declaration was a key outcome of the *First International Workshop on Ecomuseums and the New Museology* jointly hosted with the newly created Association des Écomusées du Québec (AEQ) in 1984. This foundational policy document, described by Davis as ‘arguably the most significant milestone for the new museology movement’,<sup>19</sup> affirmed the movement’s core ideas of community museology, social progress, interdisciplinarity, humanitarian principles, community development, and ecomuseology.<sup>20</sup> Out of this first workshop and meeting grew the more formal International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM), following the 2nd International New Museology Workshop held in Lisbon, Portugal, the following year, earning the committee the important status of an international organization affiliated (though not the hoped-for status of subcommittee) to ICOM. Over the years, MINOM has regularly hosted meetings across Europe and North America, and its ideas have been disseminated in the quadrilingual journal, *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia*.

In practice, the principles of New Museology were well epitomized by the ecomuseum, a new museum type deeply influenced by a broader appreciation of the environment and its ecology, as well as by a growing commitment to heritage interpretation and conservation. If Rivière had identified the first ecomuseum (though not yet formally named as such) in France in 1968,<sup>21</sup> early experiments of ecomuseum principles would gain ground in Québec soon thereafter. The creation of the Écomusée de Haute-Beauce near Québec City under the leadership of Mayrand in 1979, that of the Écomusée du Fier Monde in Montréal in 1980, where Mayrand was also a founding consultant, as well as the Écomusée de la Vallée de la Rouge in 1981, were all unique to their sites and deeply rooted in the social, cultural and political needs of their immediate communities—be these urban or rural. At these early stages, the very definition of the ecomuseum concept had yet to receive unanimous support. Rivière spent several years throughout the 1970s refining his own

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<sup>19</sup> Davis 2011, 182.

<sup>20</sup> Mayrand’s central role in this grew out of an invitation to form a working group on ecomuseums and New Museology for ICOFOM in 1983. Although ICOFOM did not convene in Canada in 1984 as planned, the seeds were sown as the Declaration articulated a key policy statement that would also be published in Mayrand’s 1985 paper, ‘The New Museology Proclaimed’ (Mayrand, P. [1985] ‘The new museology proclaimed’. *Museum International* 37[4], 200-201). See Davis for a more thorough account (2011, 63).

<sup>21</sup> The term itself was not coined until 1971, by Hugues de Varine for Robert Poujade, French Minister for the Environment, in advance of international meetings convened in Dijon in 1971 and again at an ICOM Conference in France in 1972. Davis 2011, 66; Rivière 1989, 146-155.

definition, de Varine provided a more elaborate definition in 1978, while in Canada, Mayrand and René Rivard also extensively theorized the ecomuseum. In 1983, Mayrand referred to the ecomuseum as a collective, extending over the territory of a population, and versed in the methods of popular education (quoted in Rivard 1984), while Rivard took care to differentiate the work of ecomuseums from other scientific museums with which their name lent possible comparison ('musées verts', comprising ecological museums). For him, ecomuseums were premised upon a more holistic understanding of ecosystems—natural and human—and their interrelations; interdisciplinarity; public participation (*participation populaire*); and a conservation ethos. Rivard further enhanced the equation given by de Varine (territory + heritage + population) with a fourth element: memory.<sup>22</sup>

That the earliest Canadian examples of ecomuseums appeared in Québec underscores the strong affinity between French and Québécois museologists and theorists that continues to this day. In 1978, de Varine had indeed published an influential article on ecomuseums in the Canadian Museums Association journal, the *Gazette*.<sup>23</sup> He also participated in the study day organized by Mayrand and colleagues in May 1983—a first ever on ecomuseums in North America—in the lead up to the October 1984 international workshop that Mayrand would host in Montréal and Beauce. It is important to note that both ICOM and UNESCO had affirmed their support of this meeting in the early stages of its planning, and its invitation list included participants from over a dozen countries, including John Kinard (USA), André Desvallées (France), Marc Maure (France, working in Norway), and of course, de Varine (France)—underscoring its international stature. The workshop intended to both concretize a 'movement', its guiding principles and concrete actions in line with the philosophy already outlined at the Round Table in Santiago and its famous Declaration in 1972, as well as the creation of a formal international committee (Ecomuseums/Community Museums) within ICOM and an international federation of new museology associated with ICOM, headquartered in Canada.

The transmission of these foundational ideas through international and francophone networks was undeniably a catalyst to the New Museology and ecomuseum movements in Canada. It is also notable for the majority of English-speaking Canada that Rivard had been invited to present his ideas on

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<sup>22</sup> For more on this subject, see Rivard 2014, 94. See also Davis for a close analysis of the definitions different theorists have given to the term, in 'Ecomuseums: definitions, theoretical models and characteristics' (2011, 78-96).

<sup>23</sup> de Varine 1978. The article also appears in Desvallées 1992, Vol. 1, 446-487.

the subject, ‘The Territory as Museum’, at the annual conference of the Canadian Museums Association in 1981, making them accessible to an even broader community of Canadian professionals.<sup>24</sup> Yet the development of eco-museums and the ecomuseum philosophy in English-speaking Canada has followed a different chronology and trajectory—due in part to its later implantation and how the movement’s ideals have themselves evolved over time. While focused on heritage preservation and management, English-speaking Canada neither adopted as early, nor with the same idealism, the term ecomuseum as had colleagues in Québec in the late 1970s.<sup>25</sup> While today there are a number of ecomuseums across Canada—Kalyna Country Ecomuseum, established in Alberta, in 1991, is reputedly the world’s largest—their scale, scope and organizational structure distinguish these newer iterations from preceding Québécois models. The sheer geographical range of several of these museums serves to regroup several sites or an expanded region in order to maximize economic development, cultural tourism, ensure sustainable forms of development and community governance of local heritage.<sup>26</sup> That said, the local museums that arose across Canada in the 1970s and 1980s can also be said to have adopted some of the foundational ideas of ecomuseums in their espousal of local heritage preservation.

*‘Democratization and decentralization’: Canadian cultural policy and the creation of the National Inventory Programme (NIP), 1970s-1990s*

Experimental museums were not the only important museological initiative in Canada in the 1970s. The introduction of new federal programmes and policies ‘nurtured rapid growth in the museum sector during the 1970s and 1980s’, leading to other theoretical investigations in the broader field of museology and cultural heritage.<sup>27</sup> The speech Canadian Secretary of State, the Honourable Gérard Pelletier, gave on March 28th, 1972, proclaiming the federal government’s ambitious new museum policy, provides an important portrait of Canadian museums and cultural policy at a turning point in the nation’s museological history, notably in the manner it underscored the government’s two principal objectives of promoting democratization and decentralization.<sup>28</sup> These objectives required a policy that would encourage the de-

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<sup>24</sup> Davis 2011, 182.

<sup>25</sup> Davis 2011, 181.

<sup>26</sup> Davis 2011, 185-195.

<sup>27</sup> Livingstone 2016, 186.

<sup>28</sup> CMA/AMC 1972, 4.

velopment of museums in Canada and attest to the government's support of the cultural sector writ large. Among other priorities, the policy significantly sought to decentralize national collections for viewing outside major cities.

Long before Pelletier's speech, Canadian museum professionals had recognized the difficulty of serving a widespread and diverse population:

In a country the size and special character of Canada two dangers are inherent in any federal institution. The one is that it should become too centralized and remote from spontaneous 'grassroots' activities, the other that it should become too closely bound up with local activities at the risk of dissipating energies and resources which must necessarily remain limited. Between the 'Scylla' of the Ivory Tower and the 'Charybdis' of federal paternalism there should be some middle way.<sup>29</sup>

The first step toward democratizing culture was to understand what objects Canada's museums possessed.<sup>30</sup> Under government management, pursuing democratization led to the 'persistent demand ... for increased accountability in the management of the (nation's) collections'.<sup>31</sup> To that end, the new national museum policy specified the creation of the National Inventory Programme (NIP).

Originating at the same moment as computers were on the rise as data processors, Canada's national inventory of cultural objects was conceived as a digitized database whose scope grew over the decades it operated.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, the NIP was the first broad effort in the world to introduce computerization into museums and apply them to collections.<sup>33</sup> Computers became tools for communication—impacting educational programmes—and of the administration—inspiring the use of statistics. Moreover, the digitization of collections' information spawned important questions related to object documentation in ways that would transform the practice and theory of museum collections and cultural heritage in Canada and internationally.

In the 1970s, databases were substantially different than they are today, requiring room-sized central processors but possessing only a few data entry terminals. Worldwide, museum documentation systems relied on paper

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<sup>29</sup> National Gallery of Canada 1955, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Sledge and Comstock 1986, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Spurgeon 1994, 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Musées nationaux du Canada* 1979, 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Musées nationaux du Canada* 1975, 7. Prior to 1971, there were several international projects that studied how computers could be used to create digitized archives of collections. Ellin 1968, 65-86 profiles several that appeared in the 1960s.

ledgers, files, or cards with brief identifying information. Having evolved to meet the needs of individual museums, this collection information was often inconsistent and incomplete.<sup>34</sup> The effort to collect information in its varying forms across many museums and place it into a single, rudimentary database that could serve a vast nation proved difficult and instructive. Despite maximum technical and financial support, the utopic idea of a national cultural inventory required the homogenization and reduction of records in ways that often undermined the character of the objects themselves. It further required choices from a central source about what and where to fund first, a process that usually privileged larger museums, even in the provinces furthest away from the nation's capital.

From the outset, the NIP was cognizant of the challenges inherent in incorporating data from all sizes of museums: the amount of information sent by museums for entry into the inventory database overwhelmed the ability to enter it.<sup>35</sup> Faced with the enormous quantity of data and the pressure of measurable success, the NIP began to prioritize a minimum standard required for inventory: identification, location and insurance value.<sup>36</sup> This approach allowed rapid 'success', but conceived of objects as static, underestimating the reality of object documentation.<sup>37</sup> Both minimal and static, data gathered on Canadian cultural objects implicitly rejected any qualities they possessed as dynamic reflections of society and environment, raising key theoretical questions.<sup>38</sup> As more countries launched digitized inventory initiatives, they inspired debates informed by different disciplinarian viewpoints about whether museum collections were objects or documents, and regarding what type of information was required for documentation.<sup>39</sup>

By the late 1970s in Canada, improvements in micro processing and distributed networks enabled museums to enter and manage their own data. By 1986, many Canadian museums digitized their own collection records and the NIP altered its focus to a 'national consultative function aligned with collections management', renaming itself the Canadian Heritage Information Network, or CHIN.<sup>40</sup> From then on, those Canadian museums with computer processing capabilities worked independently but oriented toward

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<sup>34</sup> Spurgeon 1994, 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Musées nationaux du Canada* 1979, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Sledge and Comstock 1986, 15.

<sup>37</sup> Chenhall and Homulos 1978.

<sup>38</sup> Basalla 1974; Sarasan and Neuner 1983; Schoener 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Desvallées 1994; Stránský 1994; Sylla 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Sledge and Comstock 1986, 8, 10.

national cataloguing and technology standards. Even the smallest museum could access CHIN's resources and expertise as more institutions introduced computers into their collections work. The goal remained achieving a nationally accessible information repository; CHIN provided consultation to make regional access to national heritage a reality.<sup>41</sup> In the short term, CHIN continued as a hub for collections data, but by the mid-90s this was untenable. CHIN modified its role to consultation on products, services, and training related to cultural heritage information management, a role it continues today. While centralized control of digital cultural object files was no longer CHIN's mandate, it furnished the foundation for advancing toward a national practice of digital management of cultural heritage just as digital management began to complexify—contemporary art began to eschew materiality and longevity and to incorporate new technologies<sup>42</sup> and today's efforts to link the collections of Libraries, Archives and Museums (LAMs) can trace roots to Canada's National Inventory Programme.<sup>43</sup>

Canada's efforts to create a digital national inventory demonstrate the tension between national and local interests and between the decentralization and democratization of national heritage. The desire for transparency in the management of cultural heritage logically led to a national inventory as a solution to uniting a vast country through shared cultural heritage, but the NIP revealed fundamental challenges with nationally-led decentralization and dissemination projects: in order to create a resource that would improve democratic access, it was first necessary to centralize the information and its management. Likewise, centralized digital documentation was problematic. Digitizing inventory information to make it accessible required homogenization and minimization. Furthermore, a centralized source chose what cultural heritage information was important—often with little direction other than how many characters fit into a pre-described category—and which museums would first be beneficiary to the funds available for digitization efforts, allowing for institutional size to influence the idea of reach and access. Decentralized and democratized access to cultural heritage seemed desirable but required a centralized and national authority to achieve it.

The goal of creating a national inventory was fundamentally challenged by this tension, and yet CHIN's real success was introducing computers into Canadian museums and making the hardware, software and operation accessible to small and large museums alike. As a result, museums across the

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<sup>41</sup> Sledge and Comstock 1986, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Dazord 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Allen 2002; Caron 2010; Rayward 1998; Trant 2009.



nation gained important insight into Canadian collections, allowing broader participation in important theoretical debates. The quantification of cultural objects began to remove the mystery from what Cameron had described as a 'temple', initiating its transformation into a 'forum'. Many museums developed a better understanding of collection gaps—particularly as these related to representation of the country's multicultural citizenry—helping to shape practitioners and theorists who envisioned a more inclusive practice. The approach to the digitization of collections in Canada's national museums evolved as a model but in actual practice was far from transversal in its application across Canada: shared collections data inaugurated a process of shifting collections information from the sole interest of internal collections care to the domains of education and public communication. Masterpieces, then whole collections, made their way onto CD-ROMs for sale in the museum boutiques, but were commonly an effort of Education Departments.<sup>44</sup> Standalone terminals were introduced into education galleries, but then such efforts migrated online in the mid-1990s, again under the aegis of Education<sup>45</sup> and conceived in terms of wide public dissemination.<sup>46</sup> As distributed networks became more robust and eventually moved into an online public space, the digital databases, once conceived of as inventory, now became platforms to reach new audiences.

As these platforms gained the ability to allow for visitor interaction and feedback, they allowed museums to better tune into visitors through measurement and statistics,<sup>47</sup> contributing to the rise of visitor studies.<sup>48</sup> And while a comprehensive national cultural inventory database has yet to be fully realized anywhere, CHIN's precocious effort continues to inspire and inform multi-institutional databases in Canada and abroad. Today, the national online cultural heritage database, Artefacts Canada, is a direct ancestor of CHIN

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<sup>44</sup> National Gallery of Canada, 1993, 15-16; 1995, 25. The National Gallery of Canada stands in here as a harbinger of what would soon be possible nationally with digitized collections no longer only having internal ends, but broad external implications for communication with the public. The project CyberMuse reinforced these distinctions: 'Launched in the spring of 1998, CyberMuse allows audiences across Canada and around the globe to navigate layers of information on art and artists, make inquiries, participate in activities, and offer feedback.' Annual Report of the National Gallery of Canada, 1998, 48. For a more in-depth analysis of how object documentation in the National Gallery under the influence of CHIN migrated into expanded domains of interest, see also Hoffman 2017, 234-237.

<sup>45</sup> National Gallery of Canada 1998, 48.

<sup>46</sup> National Gallery of Canada 1997.

<sup>47</sup> Spurgeon 1994.

<sup>48</sup> Daignault 2011; Hooper-Greenhill 2012; Schiele 2016.

and the National Inventory Project, while projects like Europeana, an online collective multi-national heritage object database, also owe much inspiration to the early work of CHIN.

*Professional training and the pedagogy of museum studies / museology in Canada*

As Pelletier's address outlining the new governmental policy made clear, significant disparities existed in museum collections throughout the country, as well as the standards under which these institutions operated. To improve the operational aspects of museum work, more than a centralized database was necessary—a professionalized workforce was key, and yet, access to, and the provision of, professional training was limited in Canada at the time, all the more so in one of Canada's two official languages, French.

The 1960s were a key moment for the professionalization of the Canadian museum workforce, one that significantly coincided with important changes, renewal, and a 'proliferation of new types of museums' in Canada.<sup>49</sup> Prior to Canada's diverse academic training initiatives that began in the late 1960s and expanded in the 1980s and again in a post-third-millennium wave, the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) dedicated its most important resources to the training programme it developed and oversaw in the 1960s and early 1970s: locating and training instructors and ensuring access to seminars by students in remote regions of the country, providing support for internships, and advancing technician training.<sup>50</sup> While the CMA published manuals and organized professional seminars in response to the need for technical training for both English- and French-speaking museum professionals, it also foresaw decentralizing this training to provincial museums associations in tandem with some of Canada's larger museums, as well as the possibility of enlisting universities into museological teaching through the creation of the country's first dedicated museum studies degree programmes.<sup>51</sup> In the intervening decades, as components of museum work have become more specialized,<sup>52</sup> some would be outsourced to specialized firms (such as exhibition design and interpretive planning), suggesting that technical and academic

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<sup>49</sup> Livingstone 2016, 184.

<sup>50</sup> CMA/AMC 1972, 14.

<sup>51</sup> The role of providing professional training in museology decentralized in the 1970s, as the CMA's leadership in this regard ceded to provincial associations and local training initiatives. See Carter and Macias-Valadez 2016, 43-58.

<sup>52</sup> Livingstone 2016, 200.

museum training meet some, but not all of the necessary skills of a changing museum workforce.<sup>53</sup>

Canada's first academic museology courses date back to the 1960s. During this early foray into the university setting, Museum Studies courses were either embedded within disciplinarian contexts, such as in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (UBC), or established as full-fledged professional graduate programmes, like the Master in Museology (subsequently renamed Museum Studies, MMSt) at the University of Toronto (U of T), established in 1969—long Canada's only generalist museology programme.<sup>54</sup> If embedded courses framed the study of museology within the prevailing methodologies and theoretical perspectives of their disciplinarian affiliations (for example anthropology and art history), Museum Studies programmes envisioned a more practical orientation to the curriculum, focusing on core museum functions related to collections, exhibitions and management.<sup>55</sup> This function-oriented pedagogy was (and continues to be) supplemented by internship placements in museums and heritage sites in Canada and abroad to enhance students' practical experience and professional skills. Integral to many museology programmes in Canada, internship placements may extend from 2 to 4 months (full time) and may be accompanied by written assignments that require a reflexive analysis of the student's on-site learning experiences.

The students enrolled in Canada's first Museum Studies programmes were themselves professionals from the field that had returned to the university to pursue a graduate degree and thus were already well acquainted with the practice. That demographic has now fundamentally changed as a growing number of students with limited or no museum experience are directly

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<sup>53</sup> On this subject, see the research reports produced for the Canadian Heritage Information Network by Duff et al. 2008-2009.

<sup>54</sup> The term 'museology' is a European tradition and is used in Québec to refer to academic training programmes, whereas the term 'Museum Studies', deriving from Anglo-Saxon traditions, prevails in English-speaking Canada. The use of the descriptor 'generalist' distinguishes the programme from Museum Studies or Museology concentrations in mainstream disciplines such as Art History and Anthropology, which have also developed in Canada. A discussion of these latter programmes lies outside the scope of this article.

<sup>55</sup> Lorente 2012, 238. Core courses of Canadian Museum Studies programmes typically include obligatory seminars on collection management; exhibitions, interpretation, communication; and museum management, while optional courses on museum education and programming, curatorship, and conservation cover other important museological functions. Increasingly, these programmes have integrated a more humanistic approach, including seminars that address critical contemporary and global issues.

entering Canada's professional graduate museology programmes following their Bachelor's degree.<sup>56</sup> If this underscores the need of these generalist programmes to provide substantive mentoring and training opportunities within museological institutions through a combination of internships and practical experiences, the curriculum in several of these programmes is also in need of updating to address the changing needs of the cultural sector more broadly.

Following the lead of other training programmes introduced in museum settings in Europe and North America,<sup>57</sup> Canada's first university museology courses and programmes were grounded in strong ties with major Canadian museum institutions. The courses at UBC were taught in conjunction with the Museum of Anthropology, while the Master of Museum Studies programme at U of T was taught with the support of the Royal Ontario Museum. This affirms that at their foundations, these programmes were designed to provide solid practical training within their academic settings, thereby addressing a longstanding concern that university training would be too far removed from the professional and practice-oriented needs of museums through their association with the theoretical predilections of universities.<sup>58</sup> This is a concern that Canadian graduate museology programmes have nevertheless increasingly wrestled with as many have evolved at a greater remove from their association with specific museums,<sup>59</sup> leaving the student's internship component as their main immersion in practical museum training.

In addition to there being training in museology as an applied science (vocational training has been offered since the 1970s in English-speaking Canada and since 1994 in Québec), Canada's Museum Studies / Museology graduate programmes have developed a curriculum around core museological functions. Some have argued that this curriculum has not evolved as significantly from its original focus on the core functional requirements of museum work as one might imagine in light of post-1980s theoretical discourses on post-colonialism and the critical turn of many disciplines including museology.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Dubuc 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Simmons 2006, 114-115.

<sup>58</sup> See the discussion in Simmons 2006, 113-128.

<sup>59</sup> Examples of generalist Museum Studies / Museology programmes include those at the University of Toronto, the joint Master's in museology at the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université de Montréal, the D.E.S.S at Université Laval in Québec City, as well as the Université du Québec en Outaouais.

<sup>60</sup> By virtue of its multidisciplinary, theorization of the field of museology has been advanced not only in traditional Museum Studies / Museology programmes, but as significantly by disciplines such as Anthropology, Art History, and Cultural Studies. For the purposes of this chapter, we are focusing on academic training in museology programmes. To consider

Too often, students are more apt to find initiatives that challenge conventional practice from a critical museological or other disciplinarian standpoint on the margins of conventional museological curricula.<sup>61</sup> Given the profound institutional changes that transformed the museum workplace between 1960 and 2000 in relation to technology, collaboration, and intangible heritage—as well as a commensurate rise in critical museological theory—the curriculum of Canadian museology programmes is ripe for change<sup>62</sup> and a new pedagogy based on the tenets of Critical Museology necessary.<sup>63</sup> A number of recent articles critiquing traditional training<sup>64</sup> and describing innovative curricula in newer, specialized programmes in Québec<sup>65</sup> points to the ongoing debate regarding the best form of training for museum professionals.

Many renowned Canadian scholars have been or continue to be affiliated with the teaching of museology in Canada and have contributed in fundamental ways to theorizing specializations within the field such as museum education, visitor studies, exhibition theory, cybermuseology, heritage, *médiation culturelle*, and new, critical and reflexive museology. Several are also highly influential in the international museum community, as active members of ICOM committees dedicated to theorizing the core training competencies of museologists (ICTOP, such as Lynne Teather) and museology as a scientific discipline (ICOFOM, such as Yves Bergeron). Many, such as Michael Ames, Ruth Phillips, Anthony Shelton, and Gerald McMaster, have advanced Critical Museology through their careers at the intersection of academia and curation/museum administration. Still others have pursued their careers predominantly in museums while actively disseminating their ideas through publications, participation in conferences, and innovative museum practice, in the manner of Robert Janes and Gerry Conaty at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, Tom Hill at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, and René Binette at the Écomusée du fier monde in Montréal, Québec, to name but a few. Collectively, these curators, administrators, and academics have contributed in foundational ways to a diverse and growing

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how museological theory has been advanced within other disciplines and in other training programmes lies outside the scope of this analysis.

<sup>61</sup> An excellent example is CaPSL, the Curating and Public Scholarship Lab, established in 2016 (formally CEREV, Centre for Ethnographic Research and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Violence), and founded by cultural anthropologist Erica Lehrer at the University of Concordia in Montréal, Canada.

<sup>62</sup> Bergeron 2015; Dubuc 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Phillips 2011, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Bergeron 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Guzin Lukic 2015.

body of museological theory (on curation, decolonization, collaboration, and critical praxis) in Canada and abroad. Going forward, we must continue to nurture collaborations between museums and universities in order to further the aims of Critical Museology and its practices, through teaching and praxis.

It is worth noting in the bilingual country that is Canada that the Museum Studies programme at the University of Toronto would remain unique and the only choice for museum professionals seeking a Canadian graduate degree in the field for almost two decades. For museum professionals in Canada's officially French-speaking and bilingual provinces of Québec and neighbouring New Brunswick respectively, training could be sought either in English at U of T (or in Museum Studies programmes in the USA), or in French through the professional development programmes developed by provincial museums associations, such as the Société des musées du Québec (SMQ) beginning in 1979 (then known as the Association des musées de la province de Québec, founded in 1958). The first francophone museology programmes were founded in 1987 and 1988, as a joint programme at the Université du Québec à Montréal and Université de Montréal, and Université Laval in Québec City, respectively.

An interesting and recent phenomenon in Museum Studies training in Canada points to an important epistemological shift from the traditional disciplinarian 'homes' of some of the first Museum Studies courses in anthropology and art history to the interdisciplinary approach of information studies and in closer relation to the field's attendant cultural memory institutions. In 2006, the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Toronto, hitherto overseen by the University's Faculty of Graduate Studies, moved to the Faculty of Information—or iSchool (Information School)—a graduate faculty that provides instruction in the related disciplines of Library and Information Science and Archives and Records Management, among others. Founded in North America and now a globalized phenomenon, the iSchool Movement is a response to contemporary society's shift to an information- and knowledge-based economy and contributes to the field of information through its combined research and teaching on the interrelationships between people, technology and information. The MMSt degree may remain distinct from the Masters of Information (MI), yet its conceptual and physical proximity to the MI programme has led to some innovative initiatives in the teaching of Museum Studies.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Some early—though by no means conclusive—signs of intellectual and epistemological convergence occurred when the Faculty foresaw a niche for cultural practitioners wishing to specialize in both sectors and created the innovative and joint MMSt-MI degree, which

It is also highly significant to note that since 1993 and as a result of the recommendations of the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* issued in 1992 (please see below, footnote 99), specialized professional and technical training in museum practices has been provided to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people by the Canadian Museum of History (until 2013 the Canadian Museum of Civilization) through the Aboriginal Training Program in Museum Practices. Now 25-years strong, this important programme has graduates working in national and local museums as well as cultural and heritage centres across Canada, after having received invaluable training in caring for, preserving and presenting the cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples across Canada and abroad.

In several provinces, training continues to be provided mainly, if not exclusively, by provincial museums associations offering certificates in museum studies, professional development seminars and exchange programmes.<sup>67</sup> Today, Ontario and Québec have the highest concentration of university-level museology programmes and attract students from across Canada, Europe, Asia and North and South America.<sup>68</sup> Their offerings have evolved to include both undergraduate programmes in museology (inaugurated by the Univer-

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enabled students of either programme the possibility of pursuing an accelerated second Master's degree through concurrent registration in both. The creation of this programme was premised on the thinking that the newest generation of museum professionals would be seeking specialization in the areas in which museum studies and information practices converge: the relatively emergent domains of museum informatics (theorized in the anthology of the same name, Marty and Burton Jones 2008), digital cultural heritage, cultural information policy, and digital curation. This is significant for two reasons: historically, Museum Studies programmes have evolved to follow the needs of museums, whilst this approach signaled how university training was attempting to take an early lead on societal (and not strictly museum) trends, thereby anticipating new professional needs that had not yet become manifest in the employment market. Secondly, it also responded to another emerging phenomenon in the LAMs sector (libraries, archives, museums): institutional convergence has increased amongst libraries, archives and museums in Canada and abroad since the millennium, and assumed many forms (converged collections and databases, shared buildings, etc.), resulting in the need for trained professionals with the know-how to perform in this environment amidst visitors with new and increased expectations about access to collections and information as well as the user experience. For more on the issue of convergence, see Duff et al. 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as well as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland in Atlantic Canada.

<sup>68</sup> Please consult the Canadian Museums Association website for a listing of courses and degree-based programmes in Museum Studies across Canada: <https://museums.ca/site/about-the-cma/careersheritageycw/museumsstudiesprogramsincanada>. Accessed May 31, 2021.

sité du Québec en Outaouais [UQO] in 2007)<sup>69</sup> and, since 2004, a doctorate at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). To our knowledge it remains North America's only generalist doctoral programme in museology.<sup>70</sup> University teaching of museology in Canada has not only contributed in a significant way to the professionalization of the workforce which was its first intention, it has also generated a steady stream of research, conferences, seminars and publications that make museology the subject and object of significant scholarly attention, be this in the broad field of museology or within other disciplines (cultural studies, art history, anthropology, education, information studies).<sup>71</sup>

### *Landmark exhibitions and the critical and reflexive turn, 1980s*

If the social ideas that were the key tenets of the *nouvelle muséologie* movement were influential to, and marked an important turning point in, Canadian museological theory in the late 1970s—and, to an increasing extent, practice within experimental and establishment museums since this period,<sup>72</sup> by the 1980s a more nuanced discussion of museological theory had developed. The 'new museology' in the sense that UK art historian Peter Vergo intended the term in his eponymous anthology of 1989 (and which surprisingly makes no reference to the ideas of French, Canadian or other colleagues pioneering in the *nouvelle muséologie* movement) is categorically different in its British perspective and indictment of 'old' museum methods. While he too called for 'a radical re-examination of the role of museums within society',<sup>73</sup> Vergo's preoccupation focused on the 'political ... ideological ... (and) aesthetic dimension(s)'<sup>74</sup> of museums: for example, authors paid heightened attention

<sup>69</sup> UQO inaugurated the *Muséologie et patrimoines* programme at the *École multidisciplinaire de l'image* (EMI). It would also create a Master's degree in museology in 2013 (Maîtrise en muséologie et pratique des arts), as well as an interdisciplinary doctorate in 2017.

<sup>70</sup> More recently, two doctoral programmes have been created, at the Université de Montréal and the Université du Québec en Outaouais, respectively. The former (called the *Doctorat disciplinaire en muséologie*), a doctorate in one of four disciplines—Anthropology, Art History, Library and Information Science, and the Biological Sciences—with a concentration in museology, and the latter, the *Doctorat sur mesure*, was inaugurated in Autumn 2017 at the *École multidisciplinaire de l'image*.

<sup>71</sup> Lorente 2012, 238.

<sup>72</sup> Collaborative exhibitions at MOA, and more recently the inclusive turn taken by the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, are two key examples.

<sup>73</sup> Vergo 1989, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Vergo 1989, 2.



to the semiotics of museum displays and the subject of visitor experience. This anthology's critique of the museum field has been widely expanded upon from a plurality of disciplinarian (and multidisciplinary) perspectives, most notably in a second wave of extensively edited volumes by a cast of international theorists that in rapid succession traced this foundational and postmodern turn.<sup>75</sup> New museology has since given way to newer designations informed by postcolonial theories, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, social theory, feminism, and a crossing of boundaries therein, and the concepts of critical, post-critical and reflexive museology have become more widespread in Canada, first as theoretical discourses,<sup>76</sup> and secondly as pretexts for practical experimentation in curatorial and exhibition praxis (such as through collaboration with communities). Jesús-Pedro Lorente's distinction is instructive:

While new museologists were mainly activists following a strong leadership, critical museologists are particularly abundant in universities ... While 'new museology' originated in the French-speaking world and its areas of influence, 'critical museology' developed in the postmodern, Anglo Saxon culture. There, special consideration has been given to what and who is represented in museums, and how, pointing to issues of class, gender, or multiculturalism—including some practical effects such as the return of materials to indigenous populations.<sup>77</sup>

The rise of reflexive and critical museology in the late 1980s takes as its intellectual foundations postcolonial practices and theories that privilege multivocality, community consultations and plural rather than master narratives<sup>78</sup> as guiding curatorial strategies to reconcile the omissions of conventional museum practice and its predilections for representing dominant cultures in society. It also interrogates the practices of operational museology ('practical museology'), to sustain what Shelton has referred to as 'an ongoing critical and dialectical dialogue that engenders a constant self-reflexive attitude toward museum practices and their wider constituents'.<sup>79</sup> Under its influence, Canadian scholars and practitioners have engaged increasingly and more sensitively with multiculturalism, the underrepresentation of visible minority communities and identity politics; institutional critique; and

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<sup>75</sup> Carbonell 2004; Macdonald 2006; Preziosi and Farago 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Butler 2015; Shelton 2001 in Lorente 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Lorente 2012, 244.

<sup>78</sup> Butler 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Shelton 2013, 18.

participatory museology for a diversity of publics. Community consultations, collaborations and multivocality have marked recent exhibitions in ways that have been foundational to Canadian museological theory and that are the hallmarks of a more ethical and inclusive era in museological practice (ex. MOA and Glenbow). As further examples: the increased attention paid to visitor studies (MCQ); an examination and re-evaluation of the politics and narratives of inclusion and exclusion in museum displays; the theorization around heritage practices; the rise of *médiation culturelle*—expanding socially and politically upon the principles of interpretation that Freeman Tilden first theorized in the context of the American national parks system in the late 1950s; issues of repatriation; the ethics of museum governance; and museums' social responsibilities and accountability have become key themes and preoccupations of a range of contemporary Canadian scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners. Thus, though an urgent call for reform within the institution he valued so dearly, Cameron's 1971 essay was also an important precursor to the paradigm shifts that have occurred in Canadian museological theory and practice leading up to, and into, the third millennium.

Yet it would be wrong to suggest that the transition from theoretical formulations to practical application of critical reflexive museology has not been hard won in Canada. Two seminal Canadian exhibitions, inaugurated in 1988 and 1989 respectively, challenged the prevailing modernist museological paradigm and stand as exemplars for the controversies they elicited, the global attention they generated, and the profound changes their problematic planning or ideological premise in part fostered within local and global museological practices. Though they are not models for future practice, they unwittingly created an 'opening for constructive dialogue'<sup>80</sup> and became catalysts for significant policy change, paving the way for the development of future partnerships and more ethical collaborative practices for representing the history and culture of Aboriginal Peoples as well as visible minorities.

In Calgary, Alberta, the Glenbow Museum's *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* exhibition, curated by anthropologist Julia Harrison, and the Royal Ontario Museum's (in Toronto) *Into the Heart of Africa*, curated by guest cultural anthropologist Jeanne Cannizzo, were both 'early iterations of reflexive museology' and in different ways demonstrate how the ideas these exhibitions put into practice were 'shaped by critiques of museums' colonial legacies and their representational power'.<sup>81</sup> Canniz-

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<sup>80</sup> Task Force 1994, 6, contribution by Ovide Mercredi.

<sup>81</sup> Butler 2015, 176.

zo's ambition to produce a critical exhibition at the ROM centered on revealing 'museological and colonial practices of representing Africa and ... teach(ing) visitors about Canadian complicity with the British Empire',<sup>82</sup> while her curatorial intent 'to explore imperialism, collecting, and Western display traditions'<sup>83</sup> fell squarely within the tenets of reflexivity in the greater purview of power relations. Yet as Shelley Ruth Butler argues, Cannizzo's misappropriation of postmodern conventions—an ambiguous use of textual irony and a surprising lack of contextualization amidst politically charged displays—as well as an absence of local community consultations proved to be the exhibition's undoing. So traumatized was the institution by this exhibition-gone-wrong that it offered a public apology in the fall of 2016.

Prior to the ROM controversy, *The Spirit Sings* exhibition, exploring Aboriginal culture during the period of European colonialism, drew its own share of rancor not, as one might expect in light of other problematic ethnological exhibitions, for its curatorial premise or content,<sup>84</sup> rather for the political situation in which it evolved—the sponsorship of the exhibition by a petroleum company (Shell Oil) within the context of an unresolved land claim by the Aboriginal community, Alberta's Lubicon Lake Cree—as well as the inappropriate display of sacred and ceremonial items and lack of inclusion of contemporary Aboriginal art.<sup>85</sup> Shell's endorsement of the exhibition prompted the Cree to boycott *The Spirit Sings* and to demand that lending organizations do the same (many did). The exhibition was part of the Arts Festival organized in conjunction with the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, and within this heightened media context, it was also a concerted effort by the Glenbow's Ethnology Department to 'educate the Canadian people about the native heritage of their country' by bringing this heritage (temporarily) home from the largely foreign collections in which it now resided.<sup>86</sup> Even if Glenbow reacted to the controversy by convening a Native Liaison Committee, the initiative was too little, too late. The committee's recommendations to meet with local band councils were unrealized, and Glenbow was critiqued for its inaction toward the concerns of the Lubicon Cree. As Julia Harrison then put it: 'The museum was (and is) committed to the idea that museums remain independent of external political pressures so that they can

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<sup>82</sup> Butler 2015, 161.

<sup>83</sup> Butler 2015, 160.

<sup>84</sup> Harrison 1988, 7; Livingstone 2016, 191.

<sup>85</sup> Logan 2005, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Harrison 1988, 6.

determine their own political stands'.<sup>87</sup> That position continues to be scrutinized as the field questions the true independence of museums from external political pressures. Moreover, as Phaedra Livingstone observes, the moment was keenly instructive for museological theory and practice:

From approximately that moment on in Canada, many curators began learning to see themselves as public intellectuals whose work had relevance and repercussions for the living communities that were represented in exhibitions. As post-modern approaches slowly took hold in the museum during the 1990s, the applied and negotiated nature of exhibition research and representations became increasingly difficult to deny.<sup>88</sup>

*'Turning the page': decolonizing Canadian museums in theory and practice, 1992-onward*

One of the defining features of Canadian politics since the 1960s has been the profound shift in the relationship between Canada's First Peoples and the Government.<sup>89</sup> This important shift, fueled by Indigenous political activism and transforming indigenous/settler politics, is also manifest in Canadian museological and curatorial praxis through the process of decolonization that Phillips has described as an 'evolving politics of contestation, theorization and disciplinary revision, and practice'<sup>90</sup> since the late 1960s. Before this, several Canadian museums adopted Eurocentric narratives in their founding myths and their representation of Indigenous communities,<sup>91</sup> perpetuating a form of cultural oppression that the assimilation policies of the federal government—notably the residential school era throughout the 19th- and 20th century<sup>92</sup> and the Indian Act—had sustained for over a century.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Harrison 1988, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Livingstone 2016, 192-193.

<sup>89</sup> Phillips 2011, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Phillips 2011, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> Onciul 2015, 31.

<sup>92</sup> Onciul 2015, 181.

<sup>93</sup> The Indian Act is a broad federal statute introduced in 1876 that defines the relationship between the Government and First Nations' bands and reserves in Canada with respect to such topics as governance, lands and taxation as well as status among First Nations peoples. Many policies enacted by the Indian Act have been discriminatory and oppressive to First Nations peoples, yet despite challenges and controversy, no replacement legislation has been put in place. The Indian Act is still in force today, following various amendments and reforms, most recently in 1951 and 1985. See <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act>. Accessed March 22, 2021.

Phillips has argued that the Indians of Canada Pavilion, curated by an Aboriginal advisory committee on the occasion of the international and universal exposition, Expo '67 in Montreal, was a 'precocious and revolutionary' display and critique of Canadian colonial museology that would not find its equivalent for several decades.<sup>94</sup> It was, she states, the place 'where the indigenization of Canadian museums began'.<sup>95</sup> Along the way, certain Canadian institutions, such as the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (under the successive leadership of Michael Ames, Ruth Phillips and Anthony Shelton) have been pioneers in shaping what a critical and decolonizing museological praxis looks like. The need for Indigenous self-representation has not only led to collaboration and co-curation in mainstream Canadian institutions, but to greater inclusion of Aboriginal curators within these same institutions, enabling important forays into the prevailing power dynamics of cultural institutions.

While dominant museological discourses in Canada's national museums have significantly undergone post-millennial revision and change (notably on the occasion of Canada's sesquicentennial),<sup>96</sup> there is still much to be done in the way of decolonizing museum practices in Canada. Early workings of this process of decolonization—and significant moments therein—include the Indian Pavilion at Expo '67, the creation of the National Conference on Aboriginal Art in 1978, and the formation of the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) in 1985, which provided the forum for debate between Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian visual arts and museological communities.<sup>97</sup> Another example, *The Spirit Sings*, is known as a watershed moment in this process.<sup>98</sup> Its legacy was to catalyze a series of national discussions beginning in 1988 on the need to develop the principles for work-

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The Indian Residential School system was created in order to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families and communities and to assimilate them to dominant Euro-Canadian values and thereby eradicate Aboriginal culture. The schools were put in place by the Government of Canada and administered by churches in the nineteenth century until the 1990s. See [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_residential\\_school\\_system/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/). Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>94</sup> Phillips 2011, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Phillips 2011, 16.

<sup>96</sup> Important examples include the extensive revamping of two national museums: the Canadian History Hall at the Canadian Museum of History and the new Canadian and Indigenous Galleries at the National Gallery of Canada, inaugurated in 2017 on the occasion of Canada's sesquicentennial.

<sup>97</sup> Logan 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Task Force Report 1994, 7.

ing partnerships between First Peoples and museums. A national conference, 'Preserving Our Heritage: A Working Conference Between Museums and First Peoples', jointly organized by the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association in Ottawa in November 1988 (coinciding with the closing days of *The Spirit Sings* hosted across the river at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Québec),<sup>99</sup> resulted in the establishment of a task force, and was followed by an intensive year-long period of national consultations to define this task force's mandate: to 'develop an ethical framework and strategies by which Aboriginal peoples and cultural institutions can work together to represent Aboriginal history and culture'.<sup>100</sup>

The consultations had identified the theoretical building blocks and the task force their guiding principles and recommendations for progressive museological practice. Chaired by two respected museum professionals—Tom Hill (Aboriginal), director of the Woodlands Cultural Centre, and Trudy Nicks (non-Aboriginal), curator at the Royal Ontario Museum—the task force produced *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples* (1992), an insightful report that reveals the diverse and differentiated needs of First Peoples across Canada. Most importantly, it affirmed: 1) that First Peoples should work as equals with museum professionals in matters of interpretation, research, exhibition planning, and access to Aboriginal cultural heritage; 2) an urgent need to correct prevailing stereotypes perpetuated by ethnographic models of primitive cultures with living, dynamic portraits of First Peoples in contemporary culture; 3) the critical need for training for First Peoples and non-Aboriginal museum personnel to sensitize these professionals to the values of First Peoples; and 4) a consensus with regard to the repatriation of human remains, sacred objects, and cultural heritage that had been illegally obtained to source communities.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> In 2013, the Canadian Museum of Civilization was renamed the Canadian Museum of History.

<sup>100</sup> Task Force Report 1994, Mission Statement, 1. The findings of another important contemporaneous and related study on the status of contemporary Aboriginal art in Canadian art institutions were published in the 1991 report by Lee-Ann Martin, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Contemporary Native Art and Public Art Museums in Canada*. Addressed to the visual arts community, it was penned during Martin's curatorial residency at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1989, and focused on questions of Aboriginal access to art institutions, institutional policies and practices, and questions of exclusion in the field.

<sup>101</sup> While the leitmotif of the task force report was to provide a guide to ethical and equitable partnerships between First Peoples and the museum community, many noteworthy collaborations already existed in cultural institutions across Canada—at the Museum of

The task force was not only fundamental in providing a roadmap for changed Canadian practices, it also stood as a model to practitioners abroad who had followed the Canadian controversy from which it was born with their own particular interests in its outcome and recommendations.<sup>102</sup>

If Canadian museums have spent the better part of 25 years refining the basic tenets of the Task Force's recommendations, some have argued that its recommendations are yet to be fully achieved.<sup>103</sup> The lack of equitable representation of First Peoples across the Canadian cultural spectrum is an argument Canadians continue to hear today in the wake of a national conversation instigated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008-2015).<sup>104</sup> Even if important strides have been made toward increasing the appointments of Indigenous curators to positions of power in mainstream museums and to ensuring greater inclusivity and more culturally sensitive representation of Aboriginal history and culture in Canadian museums, the need for increased representation of the accomplishments of Canada's First Peoples in the nation's historiography, museums, galleries and historic sites, as well as more equitable hiring practices with regards to Aboriginal people in major Canadian museums, prevails.

These observations notwithstanding, beginning in the 1960s and increasingly throughout the 1980s and 1990s and into the third millennium, there has been a notable surge of initiatives that have helped bring the unique praxis of Indigenous curators and the display of Aboriginal cultural heritage from an Indigenous perspective—and commensurate theoretical insights—to the fore. These include the creation of Aboriginal-run cultural centres as early as the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Musée des Abénakis, in Odanak, Québec, the province's oldest Aboriginal museum, founded jointly by community members and the missionary Rémi Dolan in 1965, and the Woodland Cultural Centre, established in Brantford, Ontario, in 1972 on the site of the former Mohawk Institute Residential School, of which Tom Hill was a longtime and

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Anthropology, UBC; the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario; the Musée de la civilisation in Québec City; the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; as well as Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre at Fort MacLeod, Alberta, among others. See Task Force Report 1994, 17-18.

<sup>102</sup> Phillips 2011, 13. See Onciul 2015, 38 for critiques of the report.

<sup>103</sup> Logan 2005, 78.

<sup>104</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008-2015) investigated the experience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, their families and communities in the wake of the Indian Residential Schools that operated in Canada from the 1880s to 1996 when the last remaining residential school, the Gordon Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan, was closed.

visionary director; the rise of collaborations and partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous museum practitioners and scholars (such as the online Reciprocal Research Network [RRN]<sup>105</sup> and the Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Cultures [GRASAC]);<sup>106</sup> and the curation of exhibitions in regional and national museums collaboratively between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, such as those at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, established in 1979, and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, or by Indigenous curators (Gerald McMaster, Lee-Ann Martin, Gloria Cranmer Webster and Tom Hill, to name but a few). While it is difficult to do justice to the important history of Aboriginal museology and the depth, range and diversity of decolonizing initiatives in Canada over the past several decades in an article of this length, these examples underscore that the methods, approaches and perspectives of Indigenous practitioners and their ways of knowing have challenged prevailing cultural paradigms. In this, they are indicators of an evolving decolonization process that has indelibly marked museological praxis and theory in Canada, as it has in other settler nations such as Australia and New Zealand.

### *Conclusion: going forward*

This account of some of the epistemological foundations that shaped museology in Canada in the second half of the twentieth century also demonstrates how two museological schools have evolved and co-existed in French- and English-speaking Canada respectively. While not wholly separate, each school nevertheless has some notable specificities. In French-speaking Québec, for example, the ideas of the *nouvelle muséologie* movement led to early experimentations in ecomuseology, and to the creation of a new museological genre in the 1980s—the *musée de société*—amidst exchanges with theorists in French-speaking countries abroad and in the international arena of ICOM

<sup>105</sup> The Reciprocal Research Network has been co-developed by the Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, the U'mista Cultural Society and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC and provides access to the cultural heritage from the Northwest Coast of British Columbia to 'Originating Communities, First Nations Organizations, Researchers, Students, Museum Professionals, Academic and Cultural Heritage Organizations'. See [https://www.rrncommunity.org/pages/about#about\\_rrn](https://www.rrncommunity.org/pages/about#about_rrn). Accessed March 22, 2021.

<sup>106</sup> Established in 2005, GRASAC enables researchers from Indigenous communities, universities, museums, and archives to share resources pertaining to the study of Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Huron-Wendat cultures of the Great Lakes region. See <https://carleton.ca/grasac/>. Accessed March 22, 2021.



and its sub-committees. The theoretical underpinnings of ecomuseums have continued to evolve and ecomuseums have since spread across Canada, however they did so significantly later than the first iterations in Québec. Conversely, Critical Museology has been more keenly theorized and explored in English museological literature, following on the heels of controversial exhibitions in Toronto and Calgary in the late 1980s, among others. Only recently has the term ‘*muséologie critique*’ appeared in an article published in French by Spanish academic, J.-P. Lorente (2016).

The new social consciousness in which the *nouvelle muséologie* movement developed was a direct catalyst for some of the earliest changes to museum practice as institutions experimented with innovation. Emerging digital technologies for collecting and sharing national inventory data seemed to hold limitless promise for the democratization of access to culture. And while the ultimate goal of a complete digitized national inventory of cultural objects was never quite achieved, it revealed important information on the museum institutions and their collections in a vast and diverse nation and provided new paths for museum practitioners to use digital technologies to serve the public.

University and professional training, provided in both official languages in Canada, maintains the linguistic divide that distinguishes the two museological schools, as do some of the transnational and disciplinarian networks in which Canadian scholars and practitioners largely exchange ideas, engage in research partnerships, and present their work. Following sustained Aboriginal activism and resistance since the 1960s, decolonization in Canadian museological practice and theory is reflected differently across the country, and this continues to evolve in a post-Truth and Reconciliation era. To consider therefore what theoretical avenues these two schools explored throughout the second half of the 20th century as the field came of age not only as a professional practice but as an academic discipline is to take stock of the larger field itself.

The work of many Canadian, Québécois and Aboriginal museum practitioners and scholars—informed by diverse theoretical insights and the rich cultural and political landscape of this nation—has been central to the dynamic and at times innovative museological praxis that has developed in Canada since the 1960s—itself a defining moment in a radically transformed museological field more globally. A host of factors has fostered this development: thoughtful scholar-practitioner-activists, transnational networks, new cultural policies, as well as the rise and increasing specialization of professional and academic training programmes. Canada’s particular make-up of First Peoples, settler and more recent diasporic communities—with their

different epistemological orientations—has also played a key role in defining Canadian museological practice. In a bold departure from museological precedent, Cameron once called for the reintroduction of the metaphorical ‘forum’ into contemporary public life as a radical alternative for museums wishing to eschew the traditions of the temple and to affirm the museum’s social role by addressing contemporary issues and debates.<sup>107</sup>

As the metaphor by which we imagine and shape museums and their practices has evolved—from temple to forum to dialogic and collaborative terrain—so too have expectations for a more ethical and culturally-sensitive institution and praxis. If a key feature of museum transformation since the 1960s both in Canada and abroad has been the definitive turn to ‘museum-community relations and collaborations’,<sup>108</sup> going forward Ivan Karp and Corinne Kratz have posited the interrogative museum, born of ‘a set of museological processes through which ... statements (about history, identity, value and place) and claims (of recognition) are represented, embodied and debated’, as a move away from an authoritative institution to a more dialogic encounter.<sup>109</sup> This bodes well for museums in Canada as they continue to expand upon their social remit as Duncan Cameron presciently envisioned they should in the 1960s. Moving from a commitment to ensuring their social relevance through increased public participation, community orientation, and access to museum collections and exhibitions—democratization and decentralization—to the political and moral imperative of decolonizing their professional practices and public output, many Canadian museums have experimented in, responded to, and expanded upon the major ideas and tenets of global museological theory. For meaningful praxis and institutional transformation to continue along the promising lines traced here, we must continue to reimagine and provide for the cross-pollination of ideas between scholars, scholar-practitioners and practitioners and the forms that these may take: museum, university and community (in the broadest sense) partnerships and collaborations, multi- and interdisciplinary experimentation, and an openness to the contingencies and contradictions that these may bring.

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<sup>107</sup> Cameron 1971, 19.

<sup>108</sup> Karp and Kratz 2015, 279.

<sup>109</sup> Kratz and Karp 2006, 4, quoted in Karp and Kratz 2015, 281-282.

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# Museology and the construction of its social dimension: multiple perspectives and paths in Brazil

*Claudia Storino, Judite Primo and Mario Chagas*

## *Abstract*

Over the past forty years the idea of the museum has undergone quite radical transformations. From buildings that house and accumulate heritage and collections, museums have also become centres of coexistence and expressions of the communities' social life; spaces for the social construction of memory and identity. Throughout this time, museologists have also redefined themselves: in addition to being museum professionals and treasure keepers, they have taken on roles as mediators, educators, researchers, social workers, social scientists, and activists in social movements. This whole set of new ideas, in the framework of museums, contributed towards the 'social' becoming a contemporary theme, furthering the emergence of new types of museums of a dialogical, democratic, participatory and inclusive nature.

New Museology turned to social subjects in order for them to actively intervene and resist the determinisms of the history of heroes and the glorious past. The militant character of this museological action was based on the fundamental difference between memory as home to tradition and memory as power and a tool for social transformation. In Sociomuseology, memory is used with a view to transforming present-day life. Research is conducted and exhibitions are mounted with the objective of knowing the heritage and the cultural manifestations at play in contemporary social life. This potential is underlined through five examples from Brazil. This chapter has at least two simple objectives: to stimulate the debate surrounding some of the issues presented here; and to contribute to the identification of topics for research and action.

## *Social Museology: some background*

Paulo Freire, the 'educator of obviousness',<sup>1</sup> as he liked to define himself, suggested that it is important to wander in among the obvious and seek in its

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<sup>1</sup> See Schwartz and Bragagnolo Frison 2009.



heart any vestige of the new and the original. Following his suggestions, we want to look at museology and, in particular, at the so-called Social Museology or Sociomuseology and discuss some ideas and notions that could be considered obvious but which, perhaps, when looked at from another angle, have a lot to offer. In addition, it is pertinent to ask: the obvious is obvious to whom? Often, what seems obvious to certain groups of experts may not be so to a large majority of people. It is in this sense that while wandering through obviousness, we want to affirm that Social Museology or Sociomuseology did not spring from nowhere and nor is it the result of enlightened intellectuals who took a step back from themselves, from their essential stance on the museal or museistic that would illuminate the world. On the contrary, it sprang from broad debates and clashes, from an accumulation of tensions, criticisms, confrontations, experiences, reflections and practices that have impacted museology and museums that were projected from the 19th century into the 20th century, without their paradigms ever having been subjected to a critical analysis.

Any reference to the transformations that occurred in museology during the second half of the 20th century is an acknowledgement of the place and prominent role of ecomuseums and community museums. Alongside these experiences, there emerged over the last decades of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, local museums in Portugal and to a certain extent, throughout Latin America. We are namely referring to community museums, indigenous museums, *Quilombola* museums,<sup>2</sup> favela museums,<sup>3</sup> itinerary and territory museums, points of memory and yet, points of culture, and museums of memories and resistance. Although many of these museums were born in response to the needs of specific social groups to protect and disseminate memories, heritage and cultural expressions, they were also born from the sagacious understanding that it is possible to use museums immodestly, in the way that dominant social groups have always done, in favour of certain projects and very specific struggles. Most of these museums are unaware of conventional museological theories and practices, as well as the operational chain of museums, and yet they develop important works regarding the protection and dissemination of their heritage and memories.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Brazil's Quilombola communities consist of Africans and Afro-descended people who escaped slavery and established remote mountain communities called quilombos'. Read more on the subject at <https://borgenproject.org/tag/quilombos/> Accessed September 11, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>3</sup> [https://favelasustentavel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-11-Guia\\_Museus\\_Memorias\\_ESPELHADO.pdf](https://favelasustentavel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-11-Guia_Museus_Memorias_ESPELHADO.pdf). Accessed September 11, 2021 (editors' note).

In Brazil and Portugal, Sociomuseology has gained traction. Among the reasons for this are the fact that universities offer both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in museology, combined with the coexistence of social inequalities and also inequality in the selection of assets to be turned into museum objects by the State, and growing social activism.

At the 12th International Workshop of MINOM, in 2017, Mário Canova Moutinho proposed an 'Evolutionary Definition of Sociomuseology', in a clear allusion to the 'Evolutionary Definition of Ecomuseum' by G. H. Rivière. According to Moutinho:

Sociomuseology expresses a considerable amount of the effort made to suit museological facilities to the conditions of contemporary society. The process of opening up the museum, as well as its organic relation with the social context that infuses it with life, has resulted in the need to structure and clarify the relations, notions and concepts that may define this process. Sociomuseology is thus a scientific field of teaching, research and performance which emphasizes the articulation of museology, in particular, with the areas of knowledge covered by Human Sciences, Development Studies, Services Science, and Urban and Rural Planning. The multidisciplinary approach of Sociomuseology aims to strengthen the acknowledgement of museology as a resource for the sustainable development of Humanity, based on equal opportunities as well as social and economic inclusion. Sociomuseology bases its social intervention on mankind's cultural and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible. What characterizes Sociomuseology is not so much the nature of its premises and its goals, as is the case with other areas of knowledge, but the interdisciplinary focus which makes it draw on perfectly consolidated areas of knowledge and relate them with Museology itself.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, Social Museology or Sociomuseology is not the result of a theoretical construction that wants, at all costs, from top to bottom, to frame museums and the different ways of thinking and practicing Museology to fit their technical, scientific, artistic and philosophical principles. Rather, it is a construction that results from a specific historical context, which does not have and does not want to have a normative character, and which presents unique answers to what are also unique problems and, above all, explicitly assumes political and poetic commitments. It is therefore understood that Social Museology was constituted and is constituted 'in the world', that is, in direct relation to society, with demands and questions from specific segments. From the 1960s and 1970s, behaviours, established traditions, official

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<sup>4</sup> Moutinho 2007, 39.

religious practices, established institutions such as schools, museums and theatres came to be strongly criticized by social movements, intellectuals and youth sectors. These criticisms, accompanied by concrete actions and gestures, were crucial with regard to breaking with traditions, triggering new behavioural modes, permitting new poetic, philosophical and religious forms to enter the scene, as well as opening the way to new possibilities for thinking and new museum practices and museologies to be set in motion. Therein lies, to a certain extent, the origin of some reflections and practices that have become known as New Museology.

Peter van Mensch identifies two ‘revolutions’ in the history of museums, one that took place between the years 1880 and 1920 and the other between the years 1960 and 1980. After expatiating on the first, van Mensch indicates that, apart from the synergy of discussions on the practical, theoretical and critical levels of museums, one of the main characteristics of the second is the desire to treat and affirm ‘museums as social institutions with political agendas’. ‘In both periods’, he says, ‘the rupture brought about by a new thinking was accompanied by a new “rhetoric”. The new rhetoric of the museum’s second revolution has been called “New Museology”’.<sup>5</sup>

### *Forerunners in Brazil / reverberations elsewhere in the world*

However, before New Museology and even Social Museology gained the colour and configuration they came to have, there had already been some decisive national and international experiences. In the Brazilian case, it is important to mention three benchmarks: *Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente* (the Museum of Images of the Unconscious),<sup>6</sup> *Museu do Índio* (the Museum of the Indian)<sup>7</sup> and the *museuafrobrasil* (Black Art Museum).<sup>8</sup> Each was, in its own way, innovative and linked to a specific project and to unique leadership.

The Museum of Images of the Unconscious is a revolutionary museum linked to the work of Nise da Silveira,<sup>9</sup> known as a rebel psychiatrist. Created in 1952 inside a mental institution, the Pedro II National Psychiatric Cen-

<sup>5</sup> See Alonso Fernández 1999, 75-76. Also see van Mensch, this volume (editors’ note).

<sup>6</sup> <https://vygallery.com/en/the-story-of-the-museu-de-imagens-do-inconsciente-imag-es-of-the-unconscious-museum/>. Accessed September 15, 2021 (editors’ note).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.museudoindio.gov.br/>. Accessed September 15, 2021 (editors’ note).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.museuafrobrasil.org.br/en/o-museu/introduction>. Accessed September 15, 2021 (editors’ note).

<sup>9</sup> Nise da Silveira (Maceió, February 15, 1906 - Rio de Janeiro, October 30, 1999) dedicated herself to psychiatry and spoke out against aggressive forms of psychic treatment.

tre, the museum was born of da Silveira's insubordination and her rejection of the medical practices of electroshock, insulin therapy and lobotomy. As a form of punishment for her rebelliousness, she was redirected to work in occupational therapy, an activity scorned by doctors. It was from this place of disdain and contempt that a museum was born: a museum that started to present the power of life, the poetic and political power of the insane, the schizophrenic, the mentally ill, the inmates of the psychiatric hospital. It is important to recognize that the Museum of Images of the Unconscious did not deal with an inherited collection, but with a collection that was under construction and that was constantly being made and remade; besides, it was not installed in a palatial edifice of extraordinary character, but in a building built to be a hospital. And, lastly, it was not aimed at the general public, but towards the hospital community and its supporters, including artists, art critics and intellectuals of different ideological persuasions.

The Museum of the Indian, linked to the work of Darcy Ribeiro<sup>10</sup> has, since its foundation in 1953, taken on the fight against prejudice towards indigenous peoples. Ribeiro had a special, defiant and differentiated *modus operandi* regarding museums, education and politics. Strictly speaking, he was a demiurge of museums, schools and universities. The Museum of the Indian, although not the only one, is his most notable museum project; it was one of the first Brazilian museums to explicitly embrace a cause. In museological terms, the decision was made to not present indigenous peoples as fossils, but as contemporary peoples. It also made the somewhat romantic argument affirming the desire for beauty among certain indigenous peoples. And it also created a pioneering postgraduate course in Anthropology. The Museum served as an inspiration for several other projects and, even today, continues to have a relative importance in defending the rights of some indigenous peoples, especially with regard to their archival and museological collections that can, in certain cases, function as supporting documents.

The Black Art Museum, linked to the intellectual, political and militant work of Abdias Nascimento<sup>11</sup> is a little-known project and therefore deserves to be studied. In 1955, Nascimento accepted Guerreiro Ramos' suggestion

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<sup>10</sup> Darcy Ribeiro (Montes Claros, October 26, 1922 - Brasília, February 17, 1997) was an anthropologist, educator, writer and politician. He worked radically in favour of indigenous peoples and public education.

<sup>11</sup> Abdias Nascimento (France, March 14, 1914 - Rio de Janeiro, May 24, 2011) was a poet, actor, playwright, visual artist, politician and human rights activist for black populations. He founded the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN), the Black Art Museum (MAN) and the Afro-Brazilian Research and Studies Institute (IPEAFRO).

and held a plastic arts competition on the theme ‘Black Christ’, in which more than one hundred artists participated. The winning piece was *Christ at the column* by Djanira, evoking a ‘black man in the pillory of slavery’. This competition sparked the idea of creating the Black Art Museum, with its first public exhibition taking place in May 1968, at the Museum of Image and Sound. Eight years later, Nascimento reflected on this innovative project:

The Black Art Museum suffers from a profound ambiguity. It’s *about* black people, but it includes works by white artists, too. More serious is the nature of the museum itself, a static section only known and visited by people from the middle class up, only appreciated by the ‘cognoscenti’. To fulfil its meaning, the museum had to be mobile, climb the hills, travel through the interior of the country. Collect the material created and display it to be discussed, disseminated, enriched with other experiences. Valuing Afro-Brazilian art bearing in mind the Afro-Brazilian people: we did not have the conditions for this type of aesthetic and cultural revolution.<sup>12</sup>

The three case-studies presented here—the Museum of Images of the Unconscious and the Black Art Museum, alongside the efforts by the Museum of the Indian—demonstrate that the museum field in Brazil remains open to different experiences of creative imagination, not entirely aligned with traditional classical museums. They also serve to recall the constant challenge of ploughing this field, especially in a country where the processes of social exclusion are continually renewed.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these three Brazilian examples, it is important to remember, for instance, those mentioned in the book *The Museums in the World*, published in 1979 in Spain, Switzerland and Brazil, within the scope of the Great Themes collection of the Salvat Library.<sup>14</sup> This popular book includes an extraordinary interview with Hugues de Varine, in which, among other things, he indicated some innovative practices. Among these was a French case in which de Varine was directly involved: a museum that served 150,000 inhabitants spread over 22 community groups in 22 towns and cities. He then highlighted the network of community and school museums in Mexico and discussed the National Museum of Niamey, in Niger:

Since 1958 [...] there exists [in Niamey] a very original museum, created by a Catalan exile, with no academic or university qualifications, without specialisation, but who was simply guided by the needs and problems of the country. In

<sup>12</sup> Nascimento 1976, 42-43.

<sup>13</sup> See Chagas 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Rojas et al. 1979.

this way, he created an Institute of Folklore and Archaeology that covers a wide range of problems on a surface area of 20 hectares: an open-air ethnological museum, children's park, zoo and botanical garden, a place to relax and stroll, for the African and European fashion parades, and centre for the promotion of quality craftsmanship that fabricates useful objects; it constitutes, after all, the largest literacy school and, when appropriate, a centre for the dissemination of musical programs.<sup>15</sup>

The above-mentioned book included topics such as: Museum and society; New experiences; Pedagogical dimension of the museum; The social projection of the museum; Attempts of formal rupture; Public-museum relations; Analysis of a management model: the Anthropological Museum of Mexico; and the Range of innovations.

In the section 'Attempts of formal rupture', the book presents an account of the Museum of Anacostia, part of the Smithsonian, located on the outskirts of Washington, DC. The museum, along with other memorable acts, hosted a famous exhibition on the Rat. Under the management of John Kinard, the pioneering experiences created at the museum became benchmarks for New Museology and then for Social Museology.

Likewise, the National Museum of Anthropology of Mexico, which had Mario Vázquez Rubalcava as its conceptual and museographic anchor, was presented as an innovative example in terms of management and creative projects. Vázquez Rubalcava played a key role in the renewal of museology in Mexico and other parts of the world. According to de Varine, Vázquez Rubalcava along with Stanislas Adotévi from Benin openly proclaimed at the Ninth General Conference of ICOM held in Paris, Dijon, and Grenoble in the fall of 1971: 'the museum revolution will be radical, or the museum will disappear'.<sup>16</sup>

Another museology was gaining appreciation in Portugal, Spain, France, Mexico, Canada, the United States of America, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Brazil and throughout the world, spread through experiences and texts like the book in question, which, due to its popular character, provided a good reference point. Alongside these experiences, new theoretical approaches were also being developed, especially outside the core of Europe.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> de Varine 1979, 73.

<sup>16</sup> See de Varine 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.

### *New Museology and the boulder in the middle of the path*

In 1984, an international meeting was held in Quebec, Canada that would produce a very simple, objective yet radical document. Internationally known as the *Quebec Declaration*, it gave rise to the International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM), becoming a watershed in the museal and museological fields. In a short time, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the theme and the problems raised by the so-called New Museology spread throughout the world.<sup>18</sup> From the point of view of MINOM, ICOM was frequently cast in the role of the obstacle, rarely acting as a lever for change. There are, however, some instances, especially recently, where this situation appears to have undergone sensitive changes.

The period between 1984 and 1994 was marked by a strong dispute between the supporters of New Museology and the defenders of a traditional, classical or orthodox museology, evidently considered as such from the point of view of its opponents.<sup>19</sup>

According to Mario Chagas and Inês Gouveia:

When the heat of the battle of the first years cooled, a tendency towards indistinction and indifferentiation was gradually established. Even conservative and classic institutions started to incorporate jargon and, in certain cases, specific practices and methodologies of the so-called New Museology. The same happened with certain professionals, without this representing adherence to the ethical and political commitments that underpinned the New Museology. The expression became fashionable and lost power. And some of those who started to speak in the name of the New Museology also started to want to establish defining rules as to what a new museum is, what an ecomuseum is, what a community museum is, what a territory museum is. In that way, they tried to make the New Museology fit within the scope of practices and procedures of the normative Museology.<sup>20</sup>

Since the 1980s, there have been different names given to the so-called New Museology: Popular Museology, Active Museology, Ecomuseology, Community Museology, Critical Museology, and Dialogic Museology, among others. As the expression 'New Museology' lost power especially after the 1990s, the so-called Social Museology or Sociomuseology, as well as Critical Museology gained in strength.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.

There is at least one highly positive aspect regarding these multiple designations; it is evidence of a creative power, a capacity for invention and re-invention of experiences and initiatives. The multiplicity of designations also shows the willingness to circumvent and resist attempts at normalization, standardization and control perpetrated by certain cultural and academic sectors. These undisciplined, impure, in-world museologies go hand-in-hand with life, constantly elaborating their knowledge and techniques in light of the social transformations they experience as protagonists, which is why it is in the ebb, the flow and the counterflow that they are named and renamed, and constantly invent and reinvent themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Yet these different approaches, disputes and misunderstandings act as a boulder in the path of the New Museology. Is there a way through the boulder? Is it possible to go around the boulder and follow the path? In our understanding, the expressions Museology, New Museology, Social Museology, Critical Museology and Sociomuseology say nothing, everything depends on what we can and want to do with them.

### *Social Museology as a field of dispute, or to whom does the 'social' of museology belong?*

Memories, heritage and museums are good for thinking, feeling and acting, and in order to deal with them, it is important to break the backbone of naivety. They are unsafe territories, not conducive to those who are afraid of drowning or plummeting from a cliff and falling into an abyss. But still, sailing and climbing are necessary.

Memories, heritage and museums are fields of struggle, conflict and litigation. In these fields, everything is in dispute. The past, the present and the future are disputed; place, space and territory; friendship, love and attention; freedom, creativity and speech; the noun is disputed, but the adjective is disputed with special interest.

To whom does the 'new' belong, to whom does the 'social' of museology belong? As simple as the question may seem, it has the ability to dislodge us from the commonplace, from our intellectual comfort zone.

From the moment the adjective 'new' was coupled with the term 'museology' and especially used to designate the International Movement for a New Museology, we started to observe an increasingly intense and fierce dispute about what New Museology is and what it is not, about what the new muse-

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<sup>22</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014.



um is and what it is not. In this case, the dispute came to be about positive characteristics, the discursive affirmation of values understood as new. The timeline called ‘Key Moments of the New Museology’ created by Luis Alonso Fernández, although incomplete, indicates many of the disputes to which we refer.<sup>23</sup>

From the moment the adjective ‘social’ was linked to the term ‘museology’, voices in the field started to dispute the adjective ‘social’. Many, especially the young, started to repeat the catchphrase: ‘Social Museology does not exist, all museology is social’. What is at stake, of course, is not museology, but the social. Hence the question: to whom does the ‘social’ of museology belong? In the case of Social Museology or Sociomuseology, the dispute focused on a negativity, or rather, on the denial of the possibility of the adjective ‘social’ indicating a differentiation. But who wants to deny and cancel the power of the adjective ‘social’? What interests feed those who want to disempower the adjective ‘social’? Social movements since the 1960s have faced this same issue.

A simple answer would be to say that the social of museology does not belong to anyone, therefore it belongs to everyone. This answer is simple, but it is false. The social of museology remains in dispute. We can even ask what those who claim that all museology is social understand as social. Despite the interest this last question arouses, the original question remains.

The challenge of working the social into museology is present in many documents of the International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The fundamental issue is not the documents produced at meetings, symposia, seminars, congresses and national and international conferences, these are just documents and nothing more. The bottom line, we repeat, is to know that professionals, teachers, researchers, students, artists, community agents, residents of communities, supporters and national and international institutions are committed to working with and in favour of a museology of a social and participatory nature that goes beyond some documentary records. Who is actually willing to do museology *with* and not museology *for*?

The most sophisticated criticism directed at Social Museology denounces its political and ideological character. Interestingly, this criticism was perhaps the main compliment to Social Museology. There is no doubt: Social Museology has a strong, explicit political accent. Perhaps the question to be asked ought to be another: does museology exist, or will it exist, whatever it may be, free from a political and ideological component?

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<sup>23</sup> See Alonso Fernández 1999, 79-81.

Without exception, the criticisms of Social Museology are all ideological. They are not about the analysis of technical procedures regarding the documentation or conservation of collections, or even the search for a more appropriate technological platform for the development of participatory inventories. The criticisms presented to date are fragile and do not cross ideological barriers.

It is evident that another question hangs in the air: is there a difference, a distinction between Sociomuseology and Social Museology? For all intents and purposes, the present text considers Social Museology and Sociomuseology as synonyms, the difference, the distinction, not yet investigated in depth, would be in the emphasis and in the starting point. It is not our desire, at least at this moment, to conduct that investigation, however important it may be.

As Chagas and Gouveia indicate:

What gives meaning to Social Museology is not the fact that it exists in society, but rather the social commitments it assumes and with which it is linked. Every Museology and every museum exist in society or in a certain society, but when we talk about social museum and Social Museology, we are referring to ethical commitments, especially with regard to its scientific, political and poetic dimensions; we are affirming [...] the difference between a Museology with a fascist or Nazi anchorage and a Museology with a libertarian perspective; we are recognizing that for a long time, at least from the first half of the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century, a practice of memory, heritage and museum has predominated in the western world, and has been entirely committed to defending the values of aristocracies, oligarchies, dominant classes and religions.

Social Museology, from the perspective presented here, is committed to the reduction of social injustices and inequalities; to combating prejudice; improving the quality of life; to upholding dignity and strengthening social cohesion; to using the power of memory, of heritage and of museums in favour of popular communities, indigenous and *Quilombola* peoples, social movements, including the LGBT movement, the MST and others. It would be possible to say that all Museology is social, if all Museology, without distinction, was compromised from a theoretical and practical point of view with the issues presented here.<sup>24</sup>

Looking from another angle, although in dialogue with Social Museology, Pierre Mayrand issued his *Manifesto of Altermuseology* in 2007, in which he states:

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<sup>24</sup> Chagas and Gouveia 2014, 17.

Today, the steamroller of globalisation forces the museologist once again to add his energy to the appeal of the populations and organizations dedicated to transforming the museum scene into a Forum—Agora—Citizen, and also forces him to place himself in the field of altermundism with a didactic, dialectical position, capable, due to the vital energies it generates, of advancing the dialogue between peoples.<sup>25</sup>

Social Museology in Brazil continues to develop at an intense pace. It exists nowadays without reference to the public authorities and without asking for permission to exist, although the obligations and responsibilities of the public authorities in relation to these and other issues should not be diminished. The Cearense Network of Community Museums, the Network of Memory Points and Community Initiatives in Memory and Social Museology of Rio Grande do Sul, the LGBT Network of Memory and Social Museology, the São Paulo Network of Memory and Social Museology and the Social Museology Network of Rio de Janeiro are in full swing.

### *Social Museology: direct practices and experiences*

Below, we present five case studies developed in Brazil in dialogue with the reflections, practices and criticisms of Social Museology:

#### *The Maré Museum*

Launched in May 2006 under the Points of Culture Program,<sup>26</sup> the Maré Museum<sup>27</sup> is the first museum installed in a favela in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and is managed by the residents and former residents of the favela.

The Maré group of favelas is located in the North Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Over 130,000 people live there, occupying an area of 800,000 square metres, distributed among 16 favelas or communities that share between them similarities and differences, pluralities and singularities: historical, geographical, cultural, architectural, musical and more. It is a project that is innovative from the historical, anthropological, educational, museological

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<sup>25</sup> *Manifeste L'Altermuséologie*, an unpublished speech by Pierre Mayrand delivered in Setúbal (Portugal), on October 27, 2007. In this manifesto, Mayrand proposes an Altermuseology, 'a gesture of cooperation, of resistance, liberation and solidarity with the World Social Forum'.

<sup>26</sup> For more information, see <http://www.cultura.gov.br/culturaviva/ponto-de-cultura/apresentacao#main-content>. Accessed July 7, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.facebook.com/museudamare/?fref=ts>. Accessed July 7, 2021.

and museographic point of view and has served as an inspiration for other initiatives of memory and Social Museology in the country.

At the Maré Museum there is a strong articulation between different generations. Many young people participate in the daily life of the Museum, which is divided into 12 non-chronological, but thematic times. The emergence of the Museum 15 years ago shook the Brazilian museological field, reverberated at the international level<sup>28</sup> and provoked enthusiasm in the academic environment.

### *The Living Museum of São Bento*

Launched in April 2007 in the municipality of Duque de Caxias in the Baixada Fluminense (literally 'Fluminense Lowland') of Rio de Janeiro, the Living Museum of São Bento<sup>29</sup> is an innovative experience. It is a route museum, also recognized as a territory museum and ecomuseum, which resulted from the accumulation of reflections and experiences developed by a collective of teachers working in the state and municipal education system and in the State Union of Education Professionals (SEPE).

The Museum was institutionalized within the scope of the Municipal Department of Education of Duque de Caxias, through Municipal Law No. 2224 of 3 November 2008. Unprompted by the Museum itself, the community in which it operates has assigned it the function of mediator in local conflicts. In addition, the Museum develops projects for research, and the communication and preservation of material and immaterial heritage. Among these projects is the Young Heritage Agents Program, created in 2009, coordinated by teachers linked to the Museum.

### *Favela Museum - MUF*

Founded in 2008 by residents of the favelas of Pavão, Pavãozinho and Cantagalo, MUF is a non-governmental organization of communitarian character, conceived as a territory museum, anchored in social memory and in natural and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage.<sup>30</sup>

The principal locus of the museum comprises the 20,000 residents of the community, including their ways of life, narratives, artistic creations, knowledge and practices, as well as the territory of 12 hectares, located on the slopes

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<sup>28</sup> The Maré Museum played a prominent role in the decision to hold the 23rd International Conference of ICOM and the 15th International Conference of MINOM in 2013 in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.museuvivodosaobento.com.br/>. Accessed July 7, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.museudefavela.org>. Accessed July 7, 2021.

of the Maciço do Cantagalo, between the neighbourhoods of Ipanema, Copacabana and Lagoa, in the south zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

MUF is unique and works with a natural heritage that contains stretches of the Atlantic Forest and a Visual Basin with lush panoramas; moreover, it has been working closely with tourism. Its projects, *Despertar de Almas e Sonhos* (Awakening of Souls and Dreams), *Percurso das Casas Tela* (Trail of the Canvas Houses), *Ecotrilha* (Ecopath), *Mulheres Guerreiras* (Women Warriors), *Velhos Ilustres* (Illustrious Old Men), *Afrobetizar* (i.e., teaching the beauty of being black along with the alphabet), *Brinquedoteca* (Toy Library), and *Rede LGBT de Memória e Museologia Social* deserve attention.

### *Nega Vilma Ecomuseum*

Launched in January 2011, the Nega Vilma Ecomuseum is located at the top of the Santa Marta community on the land where Nega Vilma's shack (home) once stood. Nega Vilma (1943-2006), the daughter of Dona Geralda, was a remarkable figure in the community of Santa Marta known for her leadership, her role as a wet-nurse and for helping people in the hills and in the city with popular medical practices, including herbal baths.<sup>31</sup>

The Nega Vilma Ecomuseum is dedicated to the realization of ecological and artistic-cultural activities, such as music workshops, visual arts, theatre, photography, exhibitions, lectures and courses.

At the moment, the Ecomuseum is going through an ebb phase and its future is uncertain. However, an important aspect of social and community museums is that they see themselves as ephemeral. They embody power and incident, so, for them, the idea of failure has no resonance. In this regard it is important to consider the reflections of Hugues de Varine expressed in the interview published in the *CEOM Notebooks*, where he maintains that 'what was called the failure of a community museum (whether it is called an ecomuseum or not) should assume other names', since 'the living process of building a community museum' can lead to at least three different possibilities:

1. 'the museum disappears after having fulfilled its function of mobilising and stimulating the community. It can be replaced by something else: a political, patrimonial, educational action, etc., carried out by other means';
2. 'the museum is institutionalized becoming a classic museum, emanating from the community at the beginning, but now an establishment of diffusion and cultural action, based on a collection and the common activities of museums';

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<sup>31</sup> See Costa, Delambre and de Azevedo Ferrari 2014.

3. 'the museum becomes another process, equally of a museological nature, but very different because it is adapted to a new generation, to a community different from that which had created the first museum 10 or 20 years before. It is a new avatar, in the Hindu sense of the term'.<sup>32</sup>

It is possible to consider two additional hypotheses: that the museum enters a kind of sleep, a state of hibernation, becoming seasonal; and that of the museum which, having disappeared, continues to inhabit the imaginary and the social memory.

### *Museum of Removals*

An initiative developed by residents, supporters and friends of Vila Autódromo, the Museum of Removals<sup>33</sup> was launched on May 18, 2016.<sup>34</sup> Its inauguration coincided with International Museums Day, which in 2016 had the theme 'Museums and Cultural Landscapes', as proposed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Located in Barra da Tijuca in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, Vila Autódromo was made up of at least 600 families located (ironically) along Avenida Salvador Allende on the banks of Lagoa de Jacarepaguá. The process of removing the families from Vila Autódromo was perverse and very violent. In the name of big capital and a global mega event (that is, the Olympics), the city of Rio de Janeiro, wholly invested in the interests of powerful contractors, decided to remove the families who had lived in Vila Autódromo for over 50 years and whose land tenure had been regularized.

The removal process was tense, bloody and violently disputed. At least 580 families were removed, but perhaps the city did not count on the resistance of 20 families who insisted: 'Not everyone has a price'.<sup>35</sup> With the help of supporters and friends, these families (re)existed, invented new possibilities of claiming their place in the world and beat the Olympic Games.<sup>36</sup> It was in this context that, between January and February 2016, a cluster of tasks was organized that aimed to create the Museum of Removals from the debris of the destroyed houses, the documentary records and the memories of Vila Autódromo.

<sup>32</sup> 'Entrevista de Hugues de Varine concedida a Mario Chagas' 2014.

<sup>33</sup> See page: <https://www.facebook.com/museudasremocoas/>. Accessed July 7, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Pitasse 2016.

<sup>35</sup> This phrase was drawn with graffiti on the facade of many houses in Vila Autódromo.

<sup>36</sup> See Martínez Sastre 2016.

The Museum of Removals was created by the local populace, the very people that had faced the destructive power of the public authorities. Through their struggle, they discovered their own power and took upon themselves the task and responsibility of telling the story of the removals from the perspective of those affected. The Museum's motto, 'Memory is not removed', became the key to all activities, projects and future courses of action. Of course, this statement implies determination, challenge, a signal and a willingness to fight.

At the launch of the Museum, seven sculptures were shown, constructed from the debris of the destroyed houses by architecture students at Anhanguera University.<sup>37</sup> This was the Museum of Removals' critical response to ICOM's apparently pacific theme, 'Museums and Cultural Landscapes', demonstrating that the main destroyers of the cultural landscape are public authorities in conjunction with big capital, big corporations and large contractors. During the Olympics, the Museum had a very strong and expressive role and especially attracted the international public. Throughout the whole of 2016, the Museum of Removals carried out and participated in actions in Vila Autódromo and in various places around the city of Rio de Janeiro.

### *Final considerations*

In the last four decades we have seen the dispute among different groups around the 'social' of museology. Who were the precursors of museological work bearing a social nature? Who contributed to shifting the interest from the object (concrete museological collections) to socio-cultural actions and manifestations, moving the attention from object-oriented to socially sensitive study subjects in museology? What is the principal locus for the action of Social Museology? To whom does the 'social' of museology belong? These are some of the most frequently aired questions in academies, at seminars and congresses, in the criticism of the community museums, ecomuseums, local museums and favela museums.

In our understanding, these issues and disputes point to the awareness by museums and museology professionals of Social Museology in its theoretical, practical and critical dimensions, as well as to the recognition of contemporary works that value the social good and the socialization of human actions. This process of social empowerment reverberates through society, especially when it is in tune with broad social movements, such as the World Social Forum.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore stimulating to understand Social Museology as a work

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<sup>37</sup> The sculpture project was coordinated by the architect and teacher Diana Bogado.

<sup>38</sup> 'The first WSF was held from January 31 to February 5, 2001 in Puerto Alegre (Brazil) and

tool available for use in favour of movements for human rights, for the right to land and housing, ecological movements, feminist movements, the black rights movement, the indigenous movement, the LGBTQ movement and others.

From the end of the 1960s, in addition to buildings, works of art and rare artefacts, it was the ways of doing and knowing that became the object of museological interest. In this context, New Museology, from a theoretical, practical and critical point of view, did not exclusively address artefacts; its attention also focused on mindfacts, biofacts and social subjects. Thus, in the final decades of the 20th century, the museum was transformed into a centre of expression of the social life of groups that worked with memory, heritage and cultural references. Duncan Cameron in his famous 1971 essay described and comparatively analyzed two trends: the museum as a 'temple of the muses' and the museum as a 'forum of ideas'.<sup>39</sup> Cameron questioned the identity crisis suffered by museums and pointed out that most of them struggled to maintain an identity as a 'temple of the muses', with a focus on the collection, preservation, interpretation and exhibition of artefacts, while new museums moved away from an emphasis on objects and sought to become a 'forum of ideas and forums for public debates' around social, political and cultural issues relevant to society.<sup>40</sup>

There is a very strong relationship between Social Museology and *education as a practice of freedom* especially when the need for political, social and economic transformation is pointed out. Following this path, many museums approach the idea of the museum as a forum, a meeting place for dialogue, debate and actions committed to a libertarian perspective of memory, heritage and cultural action. In the broader context of contemporary processes of economic and cultural globalization, Sociomuseology is confronted with issues of cultural hybridization and the new logics of what we can now understand as communities and new territorialities.

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brought together more than 12,000 people. Since then, it has made sixteen editions, and it has been held in different countries such as India, Kenya, Senegal, Tunisia or Canada. The WSF brings together thousands of people from civil society movements who are opposed to neoliberalism and who seek to be an alternative to the current capitalist model'.

<https://transformadora.org/en/about>. Accessed September 11, 2021. See also <https://www.foranewwsf.org/about-us/>. Accessed September 11, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>39</sup> Cameron 1971.

<sup>40</sup> See also Chinnery, A. (2012) 'Temple or Forum? On Museology and Education for Social Change'. In *Philosophy of Education*, edited by Claudia W. Ruitenberg, 269-276. Urbana, Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society (editors' note).



The notions of culture, heritage, memory, community, education, participation, difference, museum process, diversity and territoriality, so dear to Sociomuseology, need to be (re)designed and (re)contextualized in the light of a critical perspective in order to face the contemporary problems associated with the processes of urbanization and gentrification, cultural commodification and trans-nationalization of cultural goods. We must also confront issues produced by the emigration movements, by the refugees and their memories and assets, by the problems generated by mega-events and also by large investments in mega museums. All this must be done in the face of contempt and disrespect for the dignity of human life, with frequent confrontations between the defenders of a secular-humanist political paradigm and those who advocate for one that is religious, theocratic and monotheistic.

We have set two goals in this article, namely to navigate the debate about social aspects and values of museology as evoked within communities and daily practices, and to identify topics for research and action. If even one of those objectives is met, the authors will feel fully corroborated.

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# Museology, museums and museological training in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century: some background and case studies

*Óscar Navarro Rojas*

## *Abstract*

This chapter examines the development of museology as an academic discipline in Latin America and outlines the process by drawing on three case studies: Costa Rica, Mexico, and Colombia. It begins with a brief presentation of the situation regarding museum institutions and the general aspects which limited their development, as well as some of the ideas prevailing in the cultural environment. It also describes the different contexts (structural, institutional, philosophical) which influenced the development of museology in the region. Finally, the article ends by discussing the main characteristics of the museological curricula in several Latin American universities and their impact on the field.

**Keywords:** museology, museum institutions, IBERMUSEOS, museological curricula, culture

## *Introduction*

Historically, culture has not been an important part of the national budget in Latin American countries and consequently, cultural heritage was not considered a means for economic development. In Latin America in general, culture has been a means to an end in the political arena, used to further the process of nation building as well as certain values that favour the political class of the country.

According to Cuevas Molina, 'studies on the dynamics of culture in the Central American region are comparatively scarce in relation to those involved in exploring the economic, political and social dimension'.<sup>1</sup> Most studies of the cultural sphere come from professionals in universities and

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<sup>1</sup> Molina 1995, 11.

museum institutions and are related to their own interests on the subject. This state of affairs has changed with the creation of networks such as Ibermuseos<sup>2</sup> created in 2007 under the auspices of the Spanish government, the Ibero-American Secretary General (SEGIB), the Ibero-American States Organization for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID) as well as the Ministries of Culture and museum institutions in several countries. They have become a point of reference for the development of museum policies throughout the Latin American region. Another influence in changing the situation within the museological field and museum institutions has been the development of museum training programs in several Latin American countries. Through these, they have made continuous efforts to develop and enhance the museum institutions through the betterment of their staff, as well as participate in the national discussions related to sustainable development.

### *The Latin American context*

Maria de Lourdes Horta Barretto has argued that museums and museology are cultural facts and processes and therefore must be studied and analyzed within their context.<sup>3</sup> She also proposed that they are cultural phenomena 'in constant relationship with the other aspects of any given culture. They are not external agents but reflect clearly the intrinsic nature of cultural patterns'.<sup>4</sup>

The historical conditions of the region have determined the layout for museum institutions. This idea was raised by Marcelo Araujo and Maria Cristina Bruno:

The historical process of the forming of Latin American countries, on the one hand, excludes huge portions of the population—workers, peasants, artisans, among others—and on the other hand, represses native and African cultural heritages. Against this scenery emerged the museum as a colonial institution, reflecting not the society or the nation, but the authoritarian and unitary state.<sup>5</sup>

So the nature of the museum institution and the perceptions we have of it are inherently related to the conditions of its creation; that is, we have to study the conditions of the society in which the institutions thrive, and this in turn

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iber museos.org/>. Accessed November 22, 2021 (editors' note).

<sup>3</sup> Barretto 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Barretto, 1988, 62.

<sup>5</sup> Araujo and Bruno 1988, 33.

will shed light on our effort to understand the attitudes that guide the behaviour of the people and institutions in the museological field.<sup>6</sup>

Following this idea, we can approach the situation of the Latin American museological community, its institutions and its development by analysing three main contexts: the structural, which includes historical, social and economic aspects; the institutional (professional) or the characteristics of the museological field in terms of the dynamics inside and outside museological institutions; and finally the philosophical aspects of the practice.

### *The Structural Context*

The development of museology as an academic discipline in the Latin American region is a process in which many agents took part, and there are some differences from country to country. An active role was taken by the museological community, the big museum institutions, the government and the universities. They each played a part in fostering the acceptance and recognition of museology as a valid profession and as an academic discipline.

Looking at the change which museum institutions underwent since the 1980s, it is clear that the regional economic environment shaped the transformation of these institutions. It is also clear that some ideas present in the museological community took shape and were implemented in response to the economic situation. Thus, to understand this change, we must examine how the social, cultural, economic and political contexts influenced the way the museological institution worked and developed; we must also pay attention to the characteristics of the museological context in terms of how the institutions are managed and what is their internal organization.

During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, under the structural adjustment programmes following the guidelines established by the Washington Consensus,<sup>7</sup> a wave of economic restrictions swept the region aimed at promoting austerity through neoliberal strategies to reduce the budget for many sectors, the cultural sector among them. So, an already small budget was reduced even further in many countries of the region.

The budget cuts to museum institutions were sometimes hidden behind the argument that these institutions lacked social relevance and were viewed as exclusive. What happened next can be described as paradoxical; on the one hand we have those who never cared about museological institutions or heritage talking about the lack of social relevance of these institutions, and

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<sup>6</sup> Barretto 1988.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Washington-consensus>. Accessed November 22, 2021 (editors' note).

on the other we have the museum professionals themselves, confronted for the first time by people asking them to justify their jobs and their cherished belief about the importance of their activities. Let us explain: every museum professional believes that his or her work is inherently important, essential if you will, and it never crosses his/her mind that there are people who do not agree with this perception.

In Costa Rica, for example, the budget comes directly from the national budget and all earnings from the museological institutions go to a common fund; the budget is fixed regardless of each institution's size. Although this situation has some pros (i.e., the institution receives a fixed budget periodically) it also has some negative aspects common to any bureaucracy, like a lack of interest in continually improving the general tasks within the institution because this is not linked to its survival.

Confronted by the discourse about the lack of social relevance, a great number of audience studies started to appear in the beginning of the second half of the 1980s, and continue today, and new educational programmes for visitors were implemented, provoking a turn from objects to publics while a visit to the museum became an enjoyable learning experience. Thus began the process of transforming museological institutions from 'dead spaces' into 'promoters of continuous learning',<sup>8</sup> making them the 'meeting point of the communities'.<sup>9</sup> This turn fosters the idea of the museological institution as part of the so-called cultural industry, i.e. the museum institution as a provider of goods and services with new exhibitions and educational programmes that follow the national educational programmes. A very interesting outcome of this process is that many communities developed strategies involving the strengthening of local identities through actions aimed at promoting their heritage via cultural tourism.<sup>10</sup> An example of this type of development is the work of the Popular Culture Museum of the National University of Costa Rica. This museum works together with people from the community and, following the 'productive museum' model developed by Georgina DeCarli,<sup>11</sup> Director of the Latin American Institute of Museums (ILAM), they rescue and document the traditions of the community.

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson et al. 2009; Talboys 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Alderoqui 1996; Knell et al. 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Mesén Rees 2000.

<sup>11</sup> DeCarli 2008. DeCarli proposed the idea of a museum working together with the community in actively preserving its heritage, and in so doing, earning an income. This model of museum was put into practice in the Museum of Popular Culture of the National University of Costa Rica. A similar idea can be found in Canada under the name *economuseum*.

Thus, the economic crisis that precipitated the Washington Consensus and the ensuing structural adjustment programmes highlighted the problem of the social legitimacy of museum institutions in terms of the absence of visitors. This was met by the museum professionals with a short term and pragmatic responses: they focused on activities as workshops and seminars centred more on techniques or how to do things quickly, leaving out the historical and theoretical analysis of the institution. We can see both positive and negative aspects of this situation; positive because the response to the crisis created new actions that benefited the visitor and made the professionals see the need for training, and negative in that the solutions, in many cases, were short term and without a theoretical process to guide their implementation. We believe that the answer to the legitimacy question is not to be found solely in terms of *know-how* but also requires an understanding of the historical, sociological, political and economic contexts of the collections, the processes of construction of the different discourses displayed in the museological institutions, as well as the institutions themselves, i.e., the *know-why*.

Nevertheless, as Ximena Varela and Sigfrido Jiménez put it,<sup>12</sup> this crisis brought about changes that would create a new frame of mind. As a result of the fiscal austerity and the idea of downsizing the state, governments started a policy of decentralization that made some museums merge with others in order to survive. One beneficial outcome of this situation was that many museums began to sell products and services related to their collections.

However, this action did not do much to solve the problems facing the museum community. According to Varela and Jiménez, the two main factors affecting the performance of the Latin American museum institutions are structural factors (i.e., budget reductions, decentralization) and institutional factors (i.e., the relations of dependency and the internal organization).<sup>13</sup>

It was not until the second part of the last century, especially during the second half of the 1980s, that the museological community started voicing the need to value not only cultural but also natural heritage. In this period, some ideas that had been introduced and discussed during the Santiago Round Table,<sup>14</sup> such as the political and social role of the museum institutions as well

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<sup>12</sup> Varela and Jiménez 2003, 49-50.

<sup>13</sup> Varela and Jiménez 2003.

<sup>14</sup> An online publication by the Brazilian Institute of Museums (IBRAM) together with the Ibermuseos Program contains not only the original documents and Round Table publications, but also the comments, fifty years later, of people present at the conference as well as current museum authorities from Chile and Brazil. The two-volume publication can be found at the following addresses: <http://www.iber museos.org/recursos/publicaciones/8962/>



as the idea of the ‘integrated museum’,<sup>15</sup> were revisited. New ideas emerged about the nature, the possibilities and the reach of museums, an example of which is the idea of the productive museum mentioned above.<sup>16</sup> Although some new experiences were created following the Santiago Round Table, not much changed in the subsequent years.<sup>17</sup>

Another milestone in the development of the museum institution field was the Hemispheric Summit of the Museums of the Americas, entitled ‘Museums and Sustainable Communities’ held in Costa Rica in 1998. Professionals from the museum field as well as from governmental institutions of natural and cultural heritage gathered to discuss the relationship between museums and sustainable community development. It constitutes an important effort to bring together the continent’s representatives of the museological field and government officials to exchange experiences on problems and solutions. The discussion dealt with the possible role of museum institutions in economic development and, specifically, the sustainable development strategies aiming to link cultural and natural heritage with economic wellbeing, ‘[creating] a broad field of action in support of sustainable development’.<sup>18</sup> Also, the meeting showed the need to change or improve cultural policies across the continent as well as the museological institutions; in a way the Summit demonstrated the need to change the philosophy of the institutions in charge of the protection of natural and cultural heritage.

Among the positive results of this summit we can mention:

1. It was the first gathering to involve all of the Americas and to link the institutions in charge of cultural and natural heritage with development strategies, providing case studies from a variety of countries;
2. There were discussions on the differences in meaning of certain concepts (e.g. community) across the region. Various working groups discussed ideas such as ‘eco-development’, ‘sustainable development’, and the need to protect the knowledge of the first peoples of the continent;
3. The Summit placed the work of the museological institutions in the centre of the aforementioned actions.

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and <http://www.iber museos.org/recursos/publicaciones/8970/>. Accessed November 22, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> IBRAM 2012, 87.

<sup>16</sup> DeCarli 2008.

<sup>17</sup> de Varine 2012, 99.

<sup>18</sup> Garfield et al. 1998.

Standing out among all these ideas was the proposal for a radical change in the way our Latin American societies relate to cultural and natural heritage as well as relations with other nations. The discussions also suggested a more active way for museological institutions to do their work and advocated for a change in how these institutions portray the heritage of the societies they serve.

The Summit documents demonstrate the museological community's desire to become a means for affecting social consciousness, for improving and empowering the people of the communities they serve. And they want to do this by reinforcing the view of the museum institution as a political, social and economic entity so as to 'create the conditions of respect, equity, freedom and inclusion that foster human development'.<sup>19</sup> Although the Summit was full of good intentions, however, the governmental responses were far from what was expected by the participants. After an inspiring meeting, the participants had to come back to the social, political and economic realities of their countries.

In the first decade of the 21st century another important meeting took place that changed the situation of the museum institutions. This was the First Ibero-American Museum Meeting, held on 26-28 June 2007 in the City of Salvador, Bahia. According to its organizers and participants, this meeting can be seen 'as a contemporary heir of the Round Table of Santiago de Chile, held in 1972, and also of the theoretical and practical contributions of the so-called popular museology, social museology, ecomuseology, new museology and critical museology'.<sup>20</sup> Among the participants were the Ibero-American General Secretary (SEGIB), the Ibero-American States Organization (OEI), the Latin American Institute of Museums (ILAM), the Brazilian Association of Museology (ABM) and the ICOM-Brazilian Committee (ICOM-BR).

At the end of the meeting, a declaration was signed by the participants appealing to the Latin American governments to 'allocate sufficient resources to the area of museums for their proper functioning, development and fulfilment of their missions'.<sup>21</sup> They also ask the national governments of Latin American countries 'to implement public policies of museums, which include, among other aspects, communication, education, preservation and scientific research of cultural and natural heritage'.<sup>22</sup>

A document signed at this meeting, known as the 'Salvador Declara-

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<sup>19</sup> Garfield et al. 1998.

<sup>20</sup> IBERMUSEOS 2007, 18.

<sup>21</sup> IBERMUSEOS 2007, 27.

<sup>22</sup> IBERMUSEOS 2007, 27.

tion', set some guidelines and courses of action. As a result, the following institutions were created: the Ibero-American Network of Museums, the Ibero-American Registry of Museums, the Ibero-American Observatory of Museums and the IBERMUSEOS Portal. Additionally, the meeting affirmed the need to promote the professionalization and training of museum staff in the region.<sup>23</sup> The declaration was ratified by the Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Culture in Valparaíso, Chile in July of 2007. In October of the following year, it was signed during the Head of States and Government in San Salvador, and with this act an 'Institute for the promotion and articulation of a museological public policy for Latin America' was created.<sup>24</sup>

Since its creation, the IBERMUSEOS Network has made visitor studies of the museums of the region;<sup>25</sup> its reports gathering information and analyzing the official resources and initiatives dedicated to producing information in the museological field are available on the Internet.<sup>26</sup> Such programs aim to improve the level of professionalization and organization in the museums of the Latin American region, addressing the structural and institutional factors.

### *The institutional factor*

At the institutional level we can identify two major groups of museum institutions: those that are 'large' such as national museums or central bank museums, related to the so-called 'high culture' of the country, and those that are 'small', i.e. community museums, community centres, etc., representatives of 'popular culture'. Being large or small is of great significance as the assigned budget is related to size.

According to Georgina DeCarli,<sup>27</sup> the situation of museum institutions in Latin America is cast by three main factors: the professionals who work in the institutions; the training policies for these professionals; and the budget.

For many years, the professionals working in Latin American museum institutions have had little museological training; they mostly have a tertiary level of education in scientific fields related to museum work (e.g. zoology, archaeology, botany, etc.) Exacerbating this the fact that the institutions lack specific training policies, an absence also felt at the national level, and furthermore, the institutions do not have a budget for training. What this means is that those working in museological institutions must resort to their own

<sup>23</sup> IBERMUSEOS 2007, 26.

<sup>24</sup> IBERMUSEOS 2007, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Observatorio Iberoamericano de Museos 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Observatorio Iberoamericano de Museos 2013.

<sup>27</sup> DeCarli 2006.

means to get an education in the museological field. A corollary issue is that many countries do not recognize a Museology degree as fulfilling one of the categories of professional services, and in some, it does not even appear in the list of professions of the civil service system.<sup>28</sup>

Another factor that can be a stumbling block in the effort to improve museum institutions is the verticality of the organization; for example, in some countries museological institutions, especially those related to history and archaeology, are managed by a central authority, such as the National Museum or the Ministry of Culture. This jeopardizes the autonomy of the institution, since it means that museum professionals are not allowed to change policies or activities based on the realities of each institution. It can also affect how middle-level professionals in museum institutions access scholarships to participate in seminars and workshops organized by such bodies as ICOM, because the information does not necessarily trickle down from the director's office.

### *The philosophical context*

The philosophy behind the museological institutions is framed by the environment in which these institutions operate at a national as well as regional level. In Latin America, museum professionals have a very definite view of the scope and aims of museology and museological institutions. Due to the political characteristics of the region, the majority of professionals believe in the social commitment of the institutions toward their communities and identity. This idea has been present in the discussions among museum professionals, as Araujo and Bruno expressed years ago:

Museology has an irreplaceable role to play in the developing countries for it works upon a set of codes—the language of objects—more comprehensive than other languages, as for example the written language, thus reducing the distance between those who produce culture and dominate, and those who learn and consume, and providing alternative solutions for the educational process.<sup>29</sup>

According to the authors, this is possible because museology can ‘promote a wide socialization of knowledge what makes the Museum a supportive institution of the self-determination process’.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In Costa Rica, there is a civil service catalogue of the professions required for government institutions. This catalogue establishes the hiring process, and stipulates procedures such as promotions, salaries and categories or levels of importance.

<sup>29</sup> Araujo and Bruno 1988, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Araujo and Bruno 1988, 37-38.

In this sense, the majority of Latin American museologists will agree with what Josef Benes said in the late 1980s:

Every nation needs museums as institutions which, preserving the mobile part of its cultural heritage, create and implement national cultural identity as an existential attribute of every nation; and through their specific role in the development of culture, science and education and in continuity with the past, museums help to create the preconditions for the future.<sup>31</sup>

We can see the importance of the ideas surrounding the role of the museological institutions and how they have evolved over the years in the document published by ICOFOM-LAM,<sup>32</sup> entitled 'The Latin American Museological Thinking. The ICOFOM-LAM documents. Charts and Recommendations, 1992-2005',<sup>33</sup> as the late Norma Rusconi writes in the introduction, the concepts presented in this compilation are ordered in terms of two main ideas that comprise the basic perceptions of the professional community. The first idea is that museums are places of power that can interfere with the actions of other societal institutions, and the second is that the power of the museum resides in a range of roles, from being responsible for rescuing and safeguarding identity to being an agent for the sociocultural development of the communities.<sup>34</sup>

These ideas form the base for the idealistic and political approach of most museums in Latin America. Recently, the ideal has been translated into educational programmes for socially excluded communities and schools from poor neighbourhoods, encompassing the idea of museum institutions as entities possessing a social function and commitment toward their communities.

Through the many conferences and workshops organized by ICOM, ICOFOM and its Latin American organization ICOFOM-LAM, the participant museologists have developed a theoretical discourse to support the idea of the museological institutions as agents of change in the social, political and economic spheres. Interestingly, however, a majority of these same professionals are employed in state institutions that promote what they call *official history*, a concept that goes against the idea of agents of social and economic change. Thus, they are caught between the idea of potential actions that museum institutions could implement in order to foster the development of the

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<sup>31</sup> Benes 1988, 90.

<sup>32</sup> ICOFOM-LAM (Latin America) became ICOFOM-LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) in 2019 with the inclusion of the Caribbean nations.

<sup>33</sup> Decarolis 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Rusconi 2006, 10-11.

communities they serve, and the pragmatic approach which requires them to follow a political agenda with which they do not agree in order to ensure the government-sponsored budget.

In a sense, there is a cognitive dissonance manifesting as a chasm between practice and discourse, produced by the fact that not many museological professionals have the required museological knowledge to go beyond the stage of *know-how* to *know-why*. This absence of knowledge arises from the very organization of the museological sector itself: on the one hand, many professionals only have the knowledge of their scientific disciplines and a pragmatic level of understanding gained from years of working in museological institutions, and on the other, there is a lack of institutional and national strategies for training and updating this knowledge. If they want to study, a majority of professionals have to do it on their own. In the case of museum professionals we could speak of an *institutionalized mentality* that in turn institutionalizes the theoretical discourse making it easy to work with.

### *The development of museology as an academic discipline in Latin America*

Despite the limitations in the practice of museology, theoretical museology and museology in general have greatly developed in the region since 1992 mostly because of two factors. The first is the creation and development of successful university programmes that cover different levels of education, i.e. certificates at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The second factor lies in the role played by the Latin American division of ICOFOM, namely ICOFOM-LAM, which has promoted the importance of museological theory through conferences and seminars.

Nowadays, ICOFOM and ICOFOM-LAM, under the direction of François Mairesse and Olga Nazor, respectively, organize several workshops in the region to update theoretical museology. They seek not only to create a culture of museological research based on the accumulated knowledge in theoretical museology but also to help close the gap between theory and practice sometimes mentioned by the professionals of museological institutions.

Their meetings discuss different approaches to museology and the role of museums, aiming to find the best possible way of carrying out museum work according to their principles. According to Fernando Almarza Risquez, new ideas such as New Museology and Critical Museology have also appeared in the region; new museology spread throughout Latin America through the work of professionals like Felipe Lacoutoure Fornelli of Mexico, and critical museology is found in the works of researchers from Brazil and Argentina.

We must acknowledge a very interesting and sometimes hidden factor in

the organizational structure of museological institutions and ICOFOM in Latin America: both are composed of an overwhelming number of women. A vast amount of museological institutions have a great number of women among their ranks, some even as directors, while ICOFOM has been in the very capable hands of women like Nelly Decarolis, Tereza Scheiner, Gladys Barrios and recently Olga Nazor. Not only active in the development of theory and its subsequent dissemination from directorial positions, women are also present in the 'trenches', working with colleagues to produce new ideas and approaches. Museologists like Norma Rusconi, Mónica Gorgas, Diana Farjala, Luciana Menezes de Carvalho, Maria Cristina Rodríguez, Yoli Martini, Lucía Astudillo and many others have contributed to the advancement of the field since the first meetings of the ICOFOM-LAM in 1992. The work of this group can be found in the publication *El pensamiento museológico latinoamericano. Los documentos del ICOFOM-LAM* compiled by Nelly Decarolis; it contains letters and recommendations produced during the group meetings.

### *The educational programs in Latin America: some representative cases*

The recognition of museology as a profession and its development as an academic discipline in Latin American universities has been a long and winding road, travelled by idealists as well as pragmatists who never lose track of the importance of museological institutions for the region nor of the need to improve knowledge and thus the work undertaken within them. Museum professionals have always held that the museological institution as a political and economic agent, a meeting place where the future resides.

Since the second half of the 20th century, Latin America has established a number of well acclaimed university programmes in the field of museology, a testament to the hard work carried out by academics and museum professionals. Each programme is centred on its own interests, but does not lose sight of the more general conditions of the region and recent advances in related fields. Some of the countries with university programmes in museology are Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Ecuador and Costa Rica.

#### *Mexico*

The case of Mexico is paradigmatic. According to Andrés Triana Moreno,<sup>35</sup> the path towards the development of museology as an academic disci-

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<sup>35</sup> Triana Moreno 2015.

pline began with work in areas related to the basic activities within museum institutions; the first courses in Mexico focused on restoration, conservation and museography. In this respect, the first and most important school was the School of Conservation, Restoration and Museography 'Manuel Castillo Negrete' (ENCRyM), founded in 1966. Later, between 1972 and 1978, with the signing of a cooperation agreement between Mexico's government and the Organization of American States (OAS), the ENCRyM housed the Inter-american Courses of Restoration of Cultural Goods and the Interamerican Courses on Museography Training, consolidating its presence in the region.<sup>36</sup> In general terms, the museological education at ENCRyM focuses on the 'acknowledgement of the social role of museums that entails a bias toward the communication and educative processes and the social treatment of patrimony'.<sup>37</sup>

Several generations were educated at ENCRyM with a Latin American perspective, contextualizing techniques within the regional conditions. Moreover, this school gave rise to a unique museographical tradition influencing the exhibition methods in various Latin American museological institutions. From the 1970s onwards, more Mexican institutions became involved in training future museum professionals, such as the National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature, the National Council for Culture and the Arts as well some private institutions.<sup>38</sup>

Triana Moreno identifies three key moments in the professionalization process in Mexico: first, the professionalization of museography; second, the transition from museography to museology as a subject of study and a field of professional development; and finally, the acknowledgement of museology and museography from the perspective of their formative process, i.e., their recognition as academic disciplines.<sup>39</sup> The author also emphasizes that this development is accompanied by the development of public museums in Mexico.

The tradition set by ENCRyM at its beginnings was followed by the implementation of the Permanent Seminar of Museology in Latin America (SeP-MA), where museum professionals meet nowadays to discuss developments and experiences about museology.

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<sup>36</sup> Triana Moreno 2015, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Triana Moreno 2015, 50. Translation by the author.

<sup>38</sup> Triana Moreno 2015, 42.

<sup>39</sup> Triana Moreno 2015, 44.



### *Brazil*

Museology programmes also exist in Brazil: the Postgraduate Programme in Museology and Patrimony at the University of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) and the Postgraduate Interunit Programme in Museology at the University of Sao Paulo (USP). The former was implemented in 2006 and, according to its website, is the result of the cooperation between UNIRIO and the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences. The Master and Doctoral programmes have a theoretical approach and two main lines of research: a) museum and museology, and b) museology, integral patrimony and development. The programmes also issue the *Journal of Museology and Patrimony* where professionals and MA and PhD students publish their research.

The programme at USP was created and approved in 2012, the product of an internal dialogue among museum professionals at USP. It is administered by the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (MAE), the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), the Paulista Museum (MP) and the Zoology Museum (MZ). The courses are focused on areas such as conservation and documentation of heritage, planning and organization of exhibitions and cultural activities, as well as research and protection of cultural heritage.

Those two programmes reflect the continuous discussion taking place in Brazil's museological community since the early 1970s and 1980s vis-à-vis theoretical and practical matters about the work of museums and related institutions.

### *Colombia*

In Colombia, as in other countries with museology programmes, the development of the discipline required arduous work because museology itself had been a more or less marginal discipline outside the main scope of the universities, as Marta Combariza explains.<sup>40</sup> According to Combariza, museology begins its journey into Columbia's universities after the creation of the Colombian Association of Museums (ACOM) in the 1980s: 'during the [1980s], this institution led a series of actions directed precisely towards the opening of qualifications for the administration of museums'.<sup>41</sup>

The team of museum professionals at the National Museum of Colombia is the other agent in this process. They promoted the implementation of seminars and workshops on museology and also managed to introduce some regulations into Colombian cultural law. The team's inspiring work has been

<sup>40</sup> Combariza 2015, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Combariza 2015. Translation by the author.

made available to the public through a series of texts on subjects related to the general management of museological institutions published on the Internet.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the efforts of ACOM and the National Museum of Colombia are joined by the National University and the Master Programme in Museology and Heritage Management in collaboration with the National Bank.

The Colombian professional initiatives have benefited many museologists and museums in the region through the bulk of work produced and disseminated. The publications in question include a museography manual, a management and competitiveness manual, a manual of good practice regarding museum accessibility and a manual on museum marketing.

### *Venezuela*

The first steps in Venezuela towards the training of employees working in museums and related institutions were taken in the 1960s, led by the National Art Gallery. This was followed in 1986 by the creation of the General Directorate of Museums of the National Council of Culture.<sup>43</sup> Currently there is an undergraduate and postgraduate programme in museology at the Jose Maria Vargas University in Caracas (Graduate Programme in Museology and Art History) and a Master in Museology at the National Experimental University Francisco de Miranda. Venezuela also sponsors an ambitious programme focused on cataloguing the Latin American collections through the Virtual Museum of Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>44</sup>

### *Costa Rica*

The School of Sociology at the National University of Costa Rica created the Virtual Master Programme in Museology (MVM) in 2004,<sup>45</sup> becoming the region's first online educational programme in the field of museology, reaching professionals from several countries who participate without having to travel to Costa Rica. Its curriculum is based on the principles stipulated in the 'Agenda for Action' of the First Hemispheric Summit of Museums.<sup>46</sup> The programme is currently inactive pending an updating and restructuring process.

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.museoscolombianos.gov.co/materiales/Paginas/Materiales.aspx>. Accessed December 7, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Gagliardi 2015, 90-91.

<sup>44</sup> González Hernández 2011.

<sup>45</sup> The MVM of Costa Rica is online: [https://www.directorio.una.ac.cr/?wpbdp\\_listing=museologia-maestria-virtual-en](https://www.directorio.una.ac.cr/?wpbdp_listing=museologia-maestria-virtual-en). Accessed December 7, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Programa de Museología 1998, 31.

### *The impact of museology in Latin America*

The development of museology as an academic discipline and the recognition of this field as a profession is due to the actions of three main groups: museology professionals; museological and other state institutions; and universities and university museums. Due to the economic circumstances and the state of museum institutions, the process of recognition and professionalization was mainly directed towards actions focusing on communication and education, because they were easily recognizable as professions. In other words, it was easier for the general public to understand what a museum educator does than a museologist.

In Latin America, training balances a theoretical approach with more practical aspects; every practical aspect is analyzed from a theoretical point of view, keeping in mind the ethos of museological institutions as agents of change and improvement for the communities they serve. Nevertheless, students in such programmes mainly focus on areas relating to the *know-how*, a fact which possibly reflects the economic situation of the 1980s during which people were obliged to face and overcome concrete day-to-day problems.

There are at least three important aspects present in all museology programmes (and ICOFOM-LAM meetings) that have greatly influenced the work of museological institutions: a theoretical element; the need for a deepening in the related disciplines; and the idea of a museological practice committed to the community.

In regards to the theoretical component, the curricula of the various museum study programmes contain a discernible interest in contextualizing the work of the museological institutions in terms of their political, economic, social and historical frame, employing the perspectives of New Museology as well as Critical Museology. The historical component has been important in understanding the present situation of museological institutions, making the social and political aspects behind these institutions visible, as well as the social representations activating their imagery. At the same time, theoretical knowledge serves as the unifying element for diverse museological processes and activities, such as documentation, collection management, conservation, and others, giving them a clear objective under the all-encompassing vision of museums as social institutions.

From a practical point of view, the theoretical component seeks to promote a holistic analysis of the museological work understood as an interdisciplinary field. This means that museology is an inter- and multidisciplinary practice where the museological functions are seen not as part of a particular discipline (e.g. botany, zoology, archival studies, etc.) but an integral part of

the process called *musealization*. In this respect, ideas such as the ‘integral museum’<sup>47</sup> proposed at the Santiago Round Table, or the ‘productive museum’ previously discussed, acquire concrete social meaning.

In order to enrich the relationship between the museological institution and the community, a deepening of the disciplines in museum institutions is proposed. As mentioned above, the understanding of museological institutions as agents of change obliges us to focus on their educational and communicational aspects. Thus, subjects such as psychology, theories of education, marketing and theories of communication find a place in museology. The impact of this approach can be seen in the quality of activities and exhibitions as well as in the improvement of the educational programmes in museums across Latin America, revealing a leap forward in enhancing the experience of museum visitors.

The theoretical approach of a museology committed to the community regards museums as socially responsible institutions, an idea that constitutes the basis of most student courses and pervades all actions within museum institutions themselves. Museological practice is seen not as a set of techniques and strategies to manage the institutions, but is rather guided by the desire to promote the wellbeing of the community and the institution. A holistic approach is taken, comprising both the theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge production.

The three aspects outlined here are present in the actions of the museological institutions and are beginning to have a positive impact: museums are improving their educational services, creating better management plans and including their communities in their activities. On the academic side, some things still need to be done. Studies must be made regarding the impact these ideas have on students, and how they are subsequently implemented by them in their respective jobs. Access must be improved as well, so that the professionals of the museological field can study, advancing their knowledge and capabilities.

Thus, in general, the field of museology been positively impacted by its professionalization and the development of museology as an academic discipline, especially considering the previous situation in Latin America. The students who graduate from university museology programmes are well prepared not only to solve current problems but to innovate, to expand the possibilities for museological work within a wider arena.

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<sup>47</sup> For the concept of the integral museum, see for instance <https://eulacmuseums.net/index.php/resources/database/bibliography/details/1/87>. Accessed November 22, 2021 (editors’ note).

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## A glimpse of the ambiguous future

*Stefanos Keramidas*

In the summer of 2019, I was involved in organizing a temporary archaeological exhibition on Koufonissi, the smallest inhabited island of the Cyclades. On a beach directly in front of the old Primary School which now serves as the archaeological museum, a group of good friends were enjoying the sun and blue-green sea. The conversation among my friends, all of whom are artists but not dedicated museum-lovers, eventually evolved into a discussion on the point of such an exhibition, and in particular the audience to whom it was intended. Aside from their ambivalence as to whether the local population would ever visit such an exhibition—which, as it turned out, they were right to question—they were particularly incredulous of the fact that the museum expressly forbade entry to visitors wearing bathing suits. They refused to accept that a public museum located right on the beach would limit access to an interested public who, a few metres away, would naturally be enjoying the sea half-naked. ‘So, you are not interested in having the public at large visit your exhibition?’ they asked. The conversation took a dramatic turn, with words such as *system*, *rules*, *hypocrisy*, *freedom*, *access* being tossed about. And despite the fact that the exhibition was successful and received favourable feedback, I continued to worry over our inability to attract non-visitors, especially in light of additional, unexpected restrictions limiting our audience. The question remains unanswered: Who are museums for? What is the role of museology in taking note, analysing and resolving these limitations?

If a casual conversation about a minor temporary exhibition on a tiny Greek island gives voice to such important issues, in a larger but parallel international context, the subject of attracting sponsors inevitably becomes another thorn in the museum world’s side, and in the inexorably political way in which museums function in modern society. The Sackler case in particular raised uncomfortable questions among major museum organizations, as it cast doubt on the validity of earlier decisions and created the demand for an investigation into their practices, even those vital for survival, such as attracting sponsorship and raising financial capital.<sup>1</sup> Along the same lines, an intense

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<sup>1</sup> Charlesworth, J.J. (2018) ‘The ethics of sponsorship in art: is there such a thing as bad mo-

debate was sparked by the sponsorship of certain prestigious, well-attended international museums by large oil producing corporations such as BP<sup>2</sup> and Shell,<sup>3</sup> especially since in several cases these sponsorships came with interventions and directives that clearly contravened the museums' self-evident autonomy and expression. The allegations of racism recently made against the Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, Canada,<sup>4</sup> the insinuation that the University of Manchester was pressured by a group of lawyers (!) to dismiss the director of the Whitworth Art Gallery,<sup>5</sup> as well as a number of other cases vividly highlight the issues surrounding equal treatment of women, minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and others, and magnify the image of a museum world in search of an ethical framework for its practices. The field of ethics must form the main axis in contemporary museological approaches, aiming to analyze, understand and propose sound theoretical readings capable of creating analogous practical and functional perspectives.

The same climate of questioning the truly different—even conflicting—approaches can be seen in the recent attempt to reform the definition of the museum, a process that started already in 2007. The International Council of Museums (ICOM), as the organization responsible for this endeavour, was in for a great surprise when in the fall of 2019 at the General Conference held in Kyoto, the proposal for the new definition was scuttled as a consequence of strong objections and reservations. What followed was even more dramatic: the resignation of the former ICOM president along with members of relevant committees. Subsequent work has led to a new proposal which will be put before a vote at the General Conference to be held in Prague in August 2022.

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ney?'. *ArtReview*, Features, 17 December 2018. Accessed July 4, 2022. <https://artreview.com/ar-september-2018-feature-aesthetic-judgement/>.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, G. K. (2021) 'Heritage professionals call on British Museum to end BP sponsorship'. *Museums Association*, 12 November 2021. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2021/11/heritage-professionals-call-on-british-museum-to-end-bp-sponsorship/>. Accessed July 4, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Redmond, A. (2021) 'Science Museum used "misleading" tool to justify big oil sponsorship'. *ArtsProfessional*. <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/science-museum-used-misleading-tool-justify-big-oil-sponsorship>. Accessed July 4, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Porter, C. and I. Austen (2020) "'Racism Is Pervasive and Systemic" at Canada's Museum of Human Rights, Report Says'. *The New York Times*, 6 August 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/world/canada/museum-of-human-rights-discrimination.html>. Accessed July 4, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Adams, G. K. (2021) 'University urged to give clarity on Whitworth director's "dismissal"'. *Museums Association*, 3 March 2022. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2022/03/university-urged-to-give-clarity-on-whitworth-directors-dismissal/#>. Accessed July 4, 2022.

This is not the place to compare the various proposed definitions or analyze the different approaches and dynamics within ICOM, but it is important to note that the proposal put forth at Kyoto had an almost activist tone, placing at the centre of the definition some 'difficult' political issues that underscore a post-colonial Geist, an effort to be multi-vocal and inclusive rather than elitist or otherwise restricting access. Clearly, there were other problematic areas in the definition; some objected to the wording, others to the absence of 'traditional' museum values such as museum collections and their educational character, and still others to its politically-correct overtones. The revised proposal aims to smooth out these rough spots, on the one hand making a gesture of compromise in the context of an international organization such as ICOM, and on the other setting the boundaries of subversive reasoning, however crucial this might be for several of its member countries. Regardless, this adventure clearly demonstrates the fluidity of the concept of the museum, and along with it, the science of museology that attempts to describe and analyze its contents and corollaries. It also underscores that there is ultimately a common axis to these diverse readings, which even if they are a reflection of practice, or interpret academic discourse, still revolve around issues of inclusion, ethical conduct and political substance.

Yet within this general climate, museology continues to be a scientific field that deals with the multitude of managerial matters faced by museum organizations. The numerous parameters composing a given museum's reality, from its collections to its architectural presence, its organization and promotion, involve a series of other sciences forming the interdisciplinary category of heritage practice that we see flourishing in Anglo-Saxon universities and elsewhere in other academic settings around the world. Though practical, the application of these institutional systems nevertheless encompasses and understands the significance of the theoretical discourse crystallized in them, as it is shaped by the specificity and complexity of cultural organizations such as museums.

As a rough development of such an analytical approach to the functional aspect of museums and, above all, to the academic directions towards a comparative view beyond the museum artifact and the collections that store them, the inclusion of museology in the wider field of cultural studies makes reference to earlier, almost generative, theoretical inquiries of contemporary museum thought, which hatched in the regions of Eastern Europe. In this scientific frame, the essence of the various museological approaches lies in a general system of analysis and valuation that addresses cultural traces beyond their tangible or taxonomic categorization.

The theoretical framework proposed by Eastern European thinkers coin-

cided with the birth of an equally strong movement of renewing museological reality and thought, condensed in the expression *nouvelle muséologie*. The demand for museums that will reject their classicistic underpinnings, move beyond the traditional grouping of the objects they house and offer them via a multi-layered consideration to a broad public was already strongly expressed in the 1960s. At the same time, this creative theoretical mist gave rise to branches of museological thought that underlined the fundamental importance of incorporating the museum into the reality of its space and its natural and cultural environment, and, above all, within the communities that surround it and can, or must, form its basic stakeholders. All of this palimpsest of theory, and the growing need to connect with the functional reality of the museum, was reorganized, reformulated and reformed in previous decades through expressions that highlight different parameters on a case-by-case basis, always under the umbrella of a democratic narrative.

Yet the question remains: What is the future of museological theory, given all that has been postulated up to now, both in an academic setting as well as in the arena of museum practice? We saw at the beginning of this brief journey that the museum world is still plagued by issues touching on questions already scrutinized under the lens of theory. We all agree on the need for cultural organizations that are accessible to all, that actively seek to focus on the non-visitor, that interact with the communities surrounding them, that do not shy away from creatively critiquing the objects housed in their collections and especially their historical and political context. Yet museums will never cease to be profoundly conservative entities, strongly affected by traditional values and structures, notwithstanding the few examples that struggle against this background. Given these circumstances, ought we slow the march of museological theory to fall in step with the slow transformation of museum organizations? Quite the opposite! Theoretical inquiry must always lead the way in analysing and inspiring the newest proposals, which have as their ultimate underlying goal the democratic museum. The strengthening of a museological system that places the visitor at its centre, as the absolute recipient of the aura of the past, is a clear priority and will certainly be put to the test in the most innovative formulations, even if these are expressed in the context of activism, however much they may conflict with the prevailing national, political or economic situation. Ultimately, the future of contemporary museum reality does not rely on the vigorous activity of theoreticians of science, whatever direction they may take, but on the mobility of museum professionals and those variously involved in shaping the cultural environment and its reflection.





## **ICOM new museum definition (August 2022)**

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.

Prague, August 24, 2022, adopted by the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM





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