

M ICAMT ICOM

ICAMT

49<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

2023

25–27 OCT 2023  
PORTO, PORTUGAL

PROCEEDINGS

UNDOING CONFLICT IN MUSEUMS  
Materiality and meaning  
of museum architecture and exhibition design

# CREDITS

## ICAMT 49TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2023

Undoing conflict in museums: materiality and meaning of museum architecture and exhibition design. Proceedings

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**PROCEEDINGS**

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**I C A M T**

**49<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**2023**

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**UNDOING CONFLICT IN MUSEUMS**

**Materiality and meaning  
of museum architecture and exhibition design**

**25-27 OCT 2023  
PORTO, PORTUGAL**

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# WELCOME NOTE

1

ICAMT (ICOM International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques) is delighted to present this collection of papers that capture the dynamic exchange of ideas that took place at ICAMT 49th International Conference (held in Porto, Portugal, October 25-27, 2023), at the truly inspiring event with insightful presentations and lively discussions.

Throughout its long history, ICAMT – one of the first international committees of ICOM – has always tried to provide a place where information, best practices and ideas combine aspects of architecture, museum building techniques and exhibition techniques. We try to create a forum for our committee members and all other interested parties by organizing various activities, including annual international conferences.

The central theme chosen for the ICAMT 49th Conference – *Undoing Conflict in Museums: Materiality and Meaning in Museum Architecture and Exhibition Design* - sparked thought-provoking conversations about all kinds of conflicts within the museum and the ways of their solving. These proceedings reflect the diverse perspectives and cutting-edge research presented by leading architects, curators, and museum professionals worldwide.

We extend our sincere gratitude to keynote speakers, all the presenters who shared their expertise during 3 days of the Conference; the attendees - who actively participated in discussions; the organizing committee - who made this event a success; the sponsor, all the host institutions and authorities of the beautiful city Porto.

We hope this publication will serve as a valuable resource for anyone interested in the evolving field of museums. I encourage you to delve deeper into the presented papers, explore them and think about the topics presented by the conference participants.

With these proceedings, we hope to inspire the readers to continue thinking and shaping the future of museums with less conflicts inside.

I wish you good reading, and thank you for your interest!

On behalf of the ICAMT board  
Nana Meparishvili  
Chair of ICAMT

The nature of this publication is the result of the generosity and availability of a group of people who organised, sponsored, collaborated and participated in the ICAMT 49<sup>th</sup>

International Conference Undoing Conflict in Museums: Materiality and Meaning in Museum Architecture and Exhibition Design. Each of these entities made this conference possible.

A special salutation to the institutions of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Architecture, both of the University of Porto and, respectively, represented by the research units CITCEM – Transdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space and Memory, CEAU- Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism, Porto Municipal Council, Portuguese Center for Architecture, Casa Comum, National Museum Soares dos Reis, ESAD- College of Arts and Design, esad-idea (Research Center of ESAD), Matosinhos Municipal Council, Serralves Museum, Natural History and Science Museum of the University of Porto, and Sistemas do Futuro, for enabling, both financially and logistically, the gathering of a group of professionals who have been critically reflecting on the different dimensions of museum Architecture and Techniques.

We also acknowledge the scientific and organising committees, led by Alice Semedo (CITCEM-FLUP), Elisa Noronha (CITCEM-FLUP), Marta Rocha (CEAU-FAUP), and Manuel Furtado Mendes (ULHT-Lisboa) together with the ICAMT Chair Nana Meparishvili and its board members Danusa Castro, Alessandra Labate Rosso, Marina Martin, Marzia Loddo, Eeva Kyllönen, Maddalena d'Alfonso, Chang-Hwa Wang, the Executive Coordination by Cláudia Garradas (CITCEM-FLUP), Fabiana Dicuonzo (CITCEM-FLUP), Laura Pinheiro (FLUP), Louise Palma (CITCEM-FLUP) Sofia Carvalho (CITCEM-FLUP), and the collaboration of Catarina Carvalho (CITCEM-FLUP).

We are particularly grateful to the authors who agreed to participate in these Proceedings. Their perspectives challenged established disciplinary theories and contributed to the growth of literature on museum architecture and exhibition design. Also, a word of gratitude goes to all museum and heritage studies students who volunteered to support the organisation

during the conference days. Finally, the last thank you note, but not the least, goes to our audience, whose interest in the theme made this conference successful.



Following the invitation of the International Committee for Museum Architecture and Techniques (ICAMT) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto, through members of the Department of Heritage Sciences (DCTP) and the Transdisciplinary Research Center “Culture, Space, and Memory” (CITCEM) of the same Faculty, in collaboration with the Center for Architecture and Urbanism Studies (CEAU) - Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, organised the 49th International Conference of ICAMT. The Conference, themed *Undoing Conflict in Museums: Materiality and Meaning in Museum Architecture and Exhibition Design*, sought to explore the role of architecture and exhibition design in conflict, particularly its potential contribution to the production of conversational spaces.

We are used to seeing museums as cathedrals of urban modernity, ritual spaces, disciplinary structures, or contact zones. They are seldom seen as conflict zones. Nevertheless, conflict can touch museums, their spaces, and architecture: through destruction, confiscation, the imposition of design/planning, making areas or buildings inaccessible, etc. Besides, conflict is inherited with the very idea of the museum and its many intricate ethical questions. These concerns, for example, collection practices and the politics of the human gaze, establishing the political by translating politics into powerful decisions about inclusion and exclusion, such as: “Who gets to see and who is blinded?”, “Who gets to be seen, and who is invisible?”. Indeed, the many conflicts museums experience in the 21st century, namely historically bound ones, are becoming increasingly present in their daily lives: they are envisaged as places of healing and reconciliation but, at the same time, they occasionally ignite controversy and become contested and occupied spaces, ones that disclose public conflict zones.

In light of this, how can museums experience conflict without diluting dissensions and contradictions, singularities, and the possibilities of resistance? How can museums accept conflict and recognise it as a power that generates other forms of relationship between bodies, spaces, and actions between subjects, objects, territories, and memories?

In contemporary Museum Studies, it is often said that museums are inherently political institutions. But in which ways are “politics” and “the political” produced as conflict zones within architecture and exhibition design?

These questions have led us to the idea of exploring further the role of architecture and exhibition design in conflict, particularly its potential contribution to the production of conversational spaces. Architecture and exhibition design provide an arena where conflicts between the different parties involved are worked out, and, as such, we focused on the physical aspects of the buildings and exhibitions, their visual vocabulary, and the ability to encode politics and the political in material forms. A further theme highlighted the occurrence of conflict between the various parties and *knowledges* played out, both in the creation and throughout the life of the museum, namely in terms of how the socio-cultural role of museums is envisaged and how museum spaces are experienced, both by those who work in museums and by their more transient visitors. It seems to us that acknowledging and articulating conflict in this way is an essential step toward decolonising and radically transforming our museums.

One of the Conference’s main objectives was to strengthen inter-institutional, national and international connections and overcome disciplinary and professional barriers. This aim aims to develop more holistic approaches in far-reaching networks in the field of museum research and practice. Thus, the Conference sought to establish connections between research groups from different universities, supranational museological institutions, local museums, and other cultural agents involved, associating similar or related issues, concerns, and challenges and aiming to update theories and practices. The enrichment of knowledge through interaction between the various national and international players, from an interdisciplinary and critical perspective, has made it possible to learn about new perspectives and models and also to combine interests, stimulating the formation of institutional partnerships and contributing to new approaches in the academic and professional context. Another relevant objective to consider is the sharing of programmes experimented

with in the world of practice, which promote links between theory and practice, universities and museum institutions, their professionals and audiences, and contribute significantly to developing innovative actions in museum research and practice.

The Conference took place between 25 and 27 October 2023 and was organised as follows: the mornings began with a keynote address by a distinguished international guest; the rest of the mornings were taken up by the presentation of selected papers and subsequent discussion (Q&A) in the Almeida Garrett Auditorium; during the afternoons of days, the participants spread out across the city, actively participating in the discussions and case study visits organised by different partners. The Conference's closing session took place in the Matosinhos Town Hall Auditorium.

The enthusiastic response to the call for papers was submitted for evaluation by a group of experts, allowing for the selection of 13 high-quality presentations by professionals and researchers from 5 continents, organised around the following central themes / Hot topics 1 - Dealing with conflict Central theme 2 - Symbols of conflict 3 - Processes and Conflicts 4 - Healing, resistance and the future. In addition, 11 posters and three videos were also displayed online.

General and Executive Coordination Team

## MORNING

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8:30 – 9:00	<b>Accreditation</b>
9:00 – 9:30	<b>Welcome and Opening remarks</b>
09:30 – 10:15	<b>Keynote Lecture</b> <b>Curating Conflict:</b> <b>The Troubles and Beyond</b>  Karen Logan, Ulster Museum and the Ulster Transport Museum, Ireland
10:15 – 10:30	<b>Questions &amp; Answers</b> Moderated by Denise Pollini, Culture Commons Quest Office – University of Antwerp, Belgium
10:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:00 – 12:30	<b>Morning session</b> <b>Key theme #1</b> <b>Dealing with Conflict</b>  Moderated by Luís Tavares Pereira, Architect and Curator, founder and partner at [A] ainda arquitectura studio, Portugal
11:00	<b>“Change is a beautiful thing”</b> <b>said the butterfly. Exhibition design</b> <b>and the circular economy</b> Ilse Lindenbergh, H�el�ene Verreyke and Bob Gelderman, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
11:15	<b>Common Views: Sourcing Water</b> <b>Contradict Historical Narratives</b> <b>constitutes a Museal Exhibition</b> <b>(ACAC, Israel)</b> Irit Carmon Popper, The Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion IIT, Department of Art History, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel
11:30	<b>Photo Elys�e’s move to a purpose-</b> <b>built building: a new context with</b> <b>challenges and implications</b> <b>for conservation and logistics</b> Marina Martin & Nadine Reding, Photo Elys�e – Museum for Photography, Lausanne, Switzerland
11.45	<b>Luminous Conflicts: Navigating</b> <b>Architecture, Light, and Visitor</b> <b>Experience in Museums</b> Charalampia Dimitropoulou, Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, Greece

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12:00 – 12:30	<b>Questions &amp; Answers</b>
12:30 – 14:00	<b>Free time for lunch</b>

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## AFTERNOON

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14:30 – 16:30	<b>Simultaneous museum visits</b> <b>(case studies)</b>  From Casa Andresen to Hall of Biodiversity, Galeria da Biodiversidade – Centro Ci�ncia Viva  Ferreira da Silva chemistry laboratory restoration – the negotiating process, Museu de Hist�ria Natural e da Ci�ncia da Universidade do Porto  Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, visit focused on curatorship  Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, visit focused on museum architecture  Public space and its contradictions. Porto through time, Porto urban tour
17:30 – 18:30	<b>Welcome drink</b> at Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis

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## MORNING

8:30 – 9:00 Accreditation

12:00 – 12:15 Group Photo

9:00 – 9:45 **Keynote Lecture**  
**Two Recent Museum Projects**  
**in Southeast Asia;**  
**the connect and disconnect**  
**of institutional narratives**  
**and architectural spaces**

12:15 – 14:00 Free time for lunch

Jean François Milou,  
 Architect founder at studioMilou Architecture

## AFTERNOON

09:45 – 10:00 **Questions & Answers**  
 Moderated by Nana Meparishvili,  
 Chair of ICAMT, Georgia

14:30 – 16:30 **Simultaneous museum visits**  
 (case studies)

10:00 Coffee break

The Organic Museum, Museu de Serralves

10:30 – 12:00 **Morning session**  
**Key theme #2**  
**Symbols of Conflict**

Light and atmospheres in the architecture  
 of Atelier António Carneiro, Ateliê António  
 Carneiro – Museu do Porto

Moderated by Manuel Furtado,  
 ICOM Portugal, Universidade Lusófona  
 de Humanidades e Tecnologias in Lisbon,  
 Portugal

Reservatório – Museu do Porto

Porto Worst Tour, Porto Architecture Tour

10:30 **The Trend to Go Below**  
**Ground Level: When Swiss**  
**Art Museums Expand**  
 Peter Stohler, Kunstmuseum Thurgau,  
 Warth, Switzerland

10:45 **Postmortem Objectification:**  
**Human Remains in Museums**  
 Helen E. Martin & Elizabeth A. Ronald,  
 University of Tennessee, Knoxville, United  
 States of America

11:00 **Exhibition Design as a Medium**  
**to Form a Narrative Space**  
**for Representing Controversial**  
 Cheng-Yi Shih, National Taipei University  
 of Education and National Taipei University  
 of the Arts, Taiwan

11:15 **When architecture is dominant**  
 Radomíra Sedláková, Czech Technical  
 University in Prague, Association of Museums  
 and Galleries in Czech Republic,  
 Czech Republic

11:30 – 12:00 Questions & Answers

## MORNING

8:30 – 9:00 Accreditation

9:00 – 9:45 **Keynote Lecture**  
**Museums:**  
**Containers versus Contents**

Nuno Grande, Architect, critic, curator  
and Associate Professor at the University  
of Coimbra (DARQ/UC), Portugal

09:45 – 10:00 **Questions & Answers**  
Moderated by Helena Barranha, IHA-NOVA  
FCSH / IN2PAST, Portugal

10:00 Coffee break

10:30 – 11:15 **Morning session**  
**Key theme #3**  
**Processes and Conflict**

Moderated by Danusa Castro,  
Co-chair of ICAMT, Italy

10:30 **Exhibiting the occupation:**  
**How the Italian presence in Albania**  
**has been represented through**  
**exhibitions over the last century**  
Giuseppe Resta, Faculty of Architecture  
of the University of Porto, Portugal

10:45 **Moving Beyond**  
**Depoliticized Representations:**  
**Understanding the Emergence**  
**of Conflicts and Disagreements**  
**in the Exhibition-Making Process**  
Jiayi Chang, University of Leicester,  
Leicester, United Kingdom

11:00 – 11:15 **Questions & Answers**

11:30 – 12:30 **Key theme #4**  
**Healing, Resistance and the Future**

Moderated by Cláudia Garradas,  
CITCEM – FLUP, Portugal

11:30 **Kunal – Museum**  
**for a Pre-Harappan Site**  
Yatin Singhal, Architect & Consultant,  
Department of Archaeology & Museums,  
Haryana, Chandigarh, India

11:45 **Museum collection in historical**  
**building : Perspectives from Sudan**  
Shadia Abdrabo Abdelwahab, National  
Corporation for Antiquities and Museums  
of Sudan, Sudan

12:00 **Conflict, Negotiation, and Indigenous**  
**Subjectivity: A Case Study on**  
**Curating an Exhibition for the**  
**Austronesian Hall at the National**  
**Museum of Prehistory, Taiwan**  
Chun-wei Fang, National Museum  
of Prehistory, Taiwan

12:15 – 12:30 **Questions & Answers**

12:30 – 14:00 Free time for lunch

## AFTERNOON

14:30 – 16:30 **Simultaneous museum visits**  
**(case studies)**

Casa da Arquitectura, visit focused  
on exhibition design

Casa da Arquitectura, Real Vinícola,  
visit focused on museum architecture.

Museu da Memória de Matosinhos

Petrichor, The Smell of Rain (Porto Design  
Biennale 2023), Casa do Design

Critical displaying, Exploratório, esad—idea

17:30 – 19:30 **Closing remarks and cocktail**  
Edifício dos Paços do Concelho, Matosinhos





## CURATING CONFLICT: THE TROUBLES AND BEYOND

Dr Karen Logan  
National Museums NI, Cultra,  
Northern Ireland  
Moderation: Denise Pollini

### ABSTRACT

There are a number of significant challenges in representing contested history within the context of a divided society emerging from conflict, but also important opportunities for addressing the legacy of the past. National Museums NI opened *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition at the Ulster Museum in Belfast on 30 March 2018, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Five years on, this paper will demonstrate the progress that has been made within the dynamic and ongoing process of curating conflict. It will begin by outlining the approach taken to the development of the exhibition and, using examples of the partnerships, projects and collection development surrounding it, further consideration will be given to the role museums can play in the social peace process.

*The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition offers a shared space in which to explore controversial issues through critical narrative and interpretation which presents multiple perspectives and offers the opportunity for dialogue and debate. In its approach to curating conflict, National Museums NI has developed a model which can be applied in a range of contexts based on encouraging dialogue, building understanding, taking a critical approach and representing multiple perspectives. Using specific examples and giving consideration to the structure of the exhibition and the architecture of the Ulster Museum, this presentation will example the materiality and meaning of this approach in a physical sense as well as exploring its impact beyond the confines of the exhibition space. This will include reference to how the Troubles has been interpreted within the Museum in the past, the current visual vocabulary of the space and future plans to extend the boundaries of the exhibition.

### KEYWORDS

Conflict, legacy, interpretation, dialogue, partnership

### BIO

Karen is a Senior Curator of History and manages a team responsible for the History, Archaeology and World Cultures collections at the Ulster Museum and the Ulster Transport Museum. Karen curates the Modern History collection and led on the development of the Ulster Museum's 'Troubles and Beyond' exhibition. Her focus is on the legacy of the past and community history in Northern Ireland. She has published on these themes and curated several temporary and touring exhibitions including *Gay Life and Liberation; A Photographic Record from 1970s Belfast* and *Figures Through the Wire; Artwork by Geordie Morrow*.



## CURATING CONFLICT: THE TROUBLES AND BEYOND

### INTRODUCTION

The decades of civil and political conflict commonly referred to as ‘the Troubles’ in Northern Ireland claimed over 3,600 lives and affected almost everyone who lived here and many others from further afield. There are obvious challenges and sensitivities involved in interpreting such recent, and still unresolved, conflict in a museum setting as the history of what happened continues to be contested.

When the Ulster Museum in Belfast re-opened in 2009 following a period of refurbishment, an exhibition entitled ‘The Troubles’ was launched as part of the new History galleries. Consisting entirely of black and white photographs and text, the impact of the exhibition was limited by the absence of original artefacts and alternative viewpoints. The perspective was comparable to that of a photo-journalist and little or no interpretation was offered. Journalists at the time described it as “bland, safe and strenuously non-controversial” (Meredith, 2009) and “the past defeating the present ... for fear of giving offence [or] causing controversy” (O’Connor, 2009). While in general the public, and particularly international visitors, found the exhibition interesting and well balanced, the lack of social history was apparent and visitor feedback called for the inclusion of objects and personal stories.

In 2015, a successful application was made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to address the limitations of the Troubles exhibition through its Collecting Cultures Programme. A new initiative entitled ‘Collecting the Troubles and Beyond’ was established and it received £370,000 of funding. The aim of the project was to widen the scope of the collection, supported by greater academic and community engagement, in order to enhance our interpretation of our recent past. A cyclical approach to interpretive design was established whereby collections development, supported by consultation and engagement, informed interpretive planning which was then subject to evaluation and review and then the cycle would begin again in response to that feedback. This process remains ongoing and it is important that *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition remains dynamic and offers a platform for representation and engagement.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of inherent challenges in ensuring the ethical representation of a recent conflict which claimed thousands of lives. From the outset of the project a strong ethical framework was established, guided by the principles of ethical remembering, those outlined by the Community Relations Council and the Museum Association’s Code of Ethics for Museums (Community Relations Council, 2011; Museums Association, 2015). There are responsibilities in terms of editorial integrity, providing and generating accurate information for and with the public, engaging with new and existing audiences and treating everyone equally and with respect (Museums Association, 2015). In addition, there is a significant duty of care to victims and survivors. In consultation with the Academic Advisory Group for the project, and in particular Dr Kris Brown from the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University, a set of key principles was established that underpin the project and inform the Museum’s approach:

- To recognise key aspects of the Troubles period and chart their development and evolution.

- To provide context to the Troubles period by examining wider social, economic, and cultural activity and their interplay with the Troubles.

- To allow a range of interpretations of, and from, the period to be displayed.

- To facilitate reflection on our historical understanding of the period, and commentary on the exhibition.

- To engage with a wide range of communities and constituencies in Northern Ireland and beyond.

- To incorporate information drawn from scholarship and apply best museological practice.

These are aligned with the principles of ethical remembering and are intended to address the challenges of interpreting sensitive and contested history by emphasising context, pluralism and critical reflection. The following sections describe how these principles have been put into practice through the Troubles and Beyond initiative in order to better position the



Museum to fulfil its role in interpreting, and addressing the legacy of, our recent past.

### **CURATING CONFLICT**

National Museums NI understands it has an important role to play in encouraging dialogue, building understanding, taking a critical approach and representing multiple perspectives in order to facilitate audience interpretation of our recent past, and the relevance that has today in the context of a divided society emerging from conflict. This approach to curating conflict was developed by the Museum (Logan, 2018) and builds on previous experience, and contributes to a new understanding of the role and purpose of museums in relation to social impact.

A phased approach was taken to the development of *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition, which provided a platform for consultation and engagement. Time was spent working with community groups and representatives to establish the significance of events and objects through workshops and dialogue, resulting in an important element of co-production within the project. Audience involvement was encouraged through events and touring exhibitions that brought collections out to local venues. This both raised awareness of the project and offered members of the public the opportunity to comment on, or contribute to, the proposed content for the exhibition. Press releases and gallery notices made an open call for contributions and the response was measured but significant, spanning a wide geographical area and representing a range of perspectives. At all stages, participant and visitor feedback was collated and an open conversation continues to be encouraged. An Academic Advisory Group was established to advise on overall approach, context, accuracy, inclusiveness and balance. The development of the exhibition was informed by these processes of academic and community engagement and the result affords new opportunities to encourage dialogue within the space.

Conducting research into collections and engagement with them helps people to make sense of the world and their place in it (Black, 2011) and important opportunities exist to build understanding around difficult subjects. While the previous Troubles gallery presented a factual description, which Cameron (2005) would class as a surface level of interpretation, the new

exhibition aims to offer a deeper interpretation, a critical and challenging representation that links intersecting narratives. In that context, the aim is not to achieve consensus, but to encourage narrative hospitality. By interpreting diverse perspectives, in context, alongside original artefacts and information drawn from scholarship, it is hoped visitors gain a greater understanding of the history of Northern Ireland and how different narratives intersect. The facilitation and interplay of diverse narratives can be further promulgated in a structured way to promote understanding. For example, gallery-based learning resources and activities have been developed for school and university groups as well as self-guided visitors. As part of a parallel project 'Voices of 68' (Reynolds, 2018), a series of student conferences have been delivered during which pupils take part in thought-provoking lectures, engaging activities, gallery tours and interactive panel discussion with key figures from 1968. The amalgamation of academic research, museum interpretation, and direct engagement has proved a successful model that could be applied more widely to building understanding around contested history. Consideration is given to the nature of the conflict, its causes and its legacy both locally and internationally. The visitor is presented with a curated selection of objects and a range of perspectives including individual testimonies and must draw together their own interpretation. The approach is intended to challenge ideas, debunk myths, to demonstrate the integrative complexity of the conflict.

Conflict can be seen as a series of processes which evolves over time through periods of latent conflict, the emergence and escalation of conflict, stalemate and the subsequent de-escalation of conflict, negotiation and peacebuilding (Lund, 1996). Examining these processes in more detail enables us to give greater consideration to the causes of conflict and the requirements and conditions for peace and reconciliation. If the Museum is to have a role in peacebuilding it is to challenge visitors to be critical in their understanding of history, to introduce a degree of complexity that ensures multiple perspectives are given consideration. A diverse range of groups representing different sectors of the community,

ex-combatants and ex-service personnel were invited to contribute to discussions around contemporary collecting and to inform and oversee inclusivity. This involved representatives from groups that National Museums NI actively seek to work with including women's groups, the LGBT+ community, and marginalised groups as well as targeting areas that have been particularly adversely affected by the Troubles (identified for priority interventions by the Northern Ireland Executive) (The Executive Office, 2013). Within the exhibition, broader narratives are counterpoised with individual voices, introducing a degree of criticality and subversion whilst maintaining inclusivity.

*The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition opened on 30th March 2018 and represents an important step forward by National Museums NI. Journalist Fionola Meredith, who was one of the main critics of the 2009 exhibition, described it as a 'brave move' and a 'vast improvement' on what went before (Meredith, 2018). The response from visitors has also been positive and encouraging with a sense that such an exhibition was expected and overdue. Acknowledging that addressing our violent past is difficult and painful, but necessary, Meredith

(2018) goes on to state that the Museum has a special duty to provide a space for visitors to "reflect on the complicated, cataclysmic events that happened here and how those experiences have shaped us". In the context of the current political stalemate in Northern Ireland and the failure of the government to meaningfully address the legacy of the past, there is an opportunity for the Museum to provide leadership and direction on legacy issues.

#### **USE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN**

In developing the concept for *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition, Redman Design proposed a circular arrangement of decadal structures clockwise around a central feature, with an introduction to consider the nature and legacy of the conflict and a response wall running along one side of the gallery which would address those wider aims of engagement and feedback. The intention was that the gallery should be presented as a platform and should invite contributions from the public. It should use personal stories to promote empathy and there should be areas of development displaying recent acquisitions.



*The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition, Copyright: National Museums NI

The introduction to the gallery sets out that this is both difficult and contested history and explicitly states that ‘while we have a shared past, we do not have a shared memory’. This makes it clear from the point of entry that multiple perspectives will be encountered within this exhibition and that no attempt has been made to achieve any form of consensus or to present an agreed narrative of the Troubles. Opposite the introduction is a video designed to show that we all bring our own history and perspective to the exhibition and while those may differ, there are important opportunities to share our experiences and learn from each other. Each of the decade structures within the exhibition has two sets of text and includes a timeline referencing international events and a slideshow of photographs from the time. Included alongside each of the main texts is a new interpretive device called ‘Stop and Think’, which was designed to deliberately punctuate the narrative with short points of reference or statistics that would challenge visitors’ thinking.

The centrepiece of the gallery is a bomb disposal robot used by the British Army, and this is displayed alongside a metal bin lid that residents in nationalist communities would have rattled on the ground to warn of soldiers entering the area. This demonstrates how two objects with intersecting narratives can be displayed side by side to encourage consideration of different perspectives. There is a bronze sculpture from F.E. McWilliam’s ‘Women of Belfast’ series which represents both the inclusion of artistic responses to the conflict and a visual depiction of the impact of the violence. The *Spitting Image* puppet of Peter Mandelson from the satirical television series is another example of a creative response, in this case using caricature and humour to challenge the political arena. The final object displayed here is a map of Belfast that was issued to the security forces in 1969 and is colour coded to distinguish Protestant, Roman Catholic and mixed areas of the community. In an inverse way it actually demonstrates that the conflict is more layered and complex than the visitor may think and warns against trying to understand it in simplistic terms.

It was decided that *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition should have a section specifically dedicated to the art of the Troubles and that objects from the Art collection should be integrated throughout the exhibition. The Ulster

Museum has the largest, most comprehensive collection of artworks that relate to the Troubles. We have also used our partnership with Conflict Textiles to display quilts and arpilleras made by local women in response to the Troubles. For example, in her textile *Peace Quilt - Common Loss*, Irene MacWilliam expresses the sheer loss of life with each piece of red fabric, deliberately torn to convey a sense of destruction, representing one of those who died.

Along the right hand wall of the exhibition, the response wall is a key component of the exhibition and performs a number of functions. The initial text explains that this gallery is a platform for conversation and debate and acknowledges the sensitivities involved, signposting sources of support for those directly affected by the Troubles. There is an open call for people to identify anything they think is missing from the exhibition and to come forward with their own objects and stories. The next section includes 12 personal testimonies collected as part of the project in a dedicated feature composed of rotatable frames that incorporate a photograph on one side and a short account of the person’s experiences, written in their own words, on the other. This is followed by a space dedicated to the provision of feedback on the exhibition. This is then collated, typed up, and displayed on the screen above. Our aim has always been to facilitate an open conversation.

## CONCLUSION

National Museums NI is committed to fulfilling an important role in building understanding and in helping to address the legacy of the past. *The Troubles and Beyond* exhibition at the Ulster Museum has been designed as a dynamic display which offers a shared space in which to explore difficult issues through critical narrative and interpretation which presents multiple perspectives and provides the opportunity for dialogue and debate. This is extended beyond the museum site through outreach, loans and digital engagement and participation in subject specialist networks. As a result, there are numerous entry points to continued and effective dialogue in terms of sharing lived experience and building mutual understanding within, and between, communities. The exhibition has been open for five years now and



continues to evolve in response to feedback and the development of our collection and collaborative relationships. There is an ongoing commitment to developing a stronger network of Troubles-related museums and heritage sites, to strengthening and deepening partnerships and further internationalising the Museum's approach to interpreting contested history. As the wider Troubles and Beyond initiative develops, the exhibition itself is limited only by the physical confines of its space and a further phase in its development would see that, and its interpretive potential, extended.

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## MODERATOR BIO: DENISE POLLINI

I am a researcher, educator, and curator who lives between Porto, Portugal, and Antwerp, Belgium. I am currently developing a Ph.D. at the University of Antwerp, whose theme, "The Commons and Museums: the Commons as a Pathway to a New Institutional Dynamic," engages with the concept of Commons to conceptualize New Institutionalities in relation to Museums. In the context of this research, I have been a member of the Research Center "Culture Commons Quest Office" (CCQO) in Antwerp since 2022.

Between 2015 and 2021, I was Head of Education at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal. Previously, I was in the same position at the Museum of Brazilian Art, São Paulo, Brazil, between 1999 and 2015.

My academic background includes a Master's in Performing Arts from the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, and a degree in Visual Arts from Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP), Brazil.

**TWO RECENT MUSEUM  
PROJECTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:  
THE CONNECT AND DISCONNECT  
OF INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES  
AND ARCHITECTURAL SPACES**

Jean François Milou, Founder,  
lead designer of studio Milou Architects,  
Paris, Singapore and Hanoi  
Moderation: Nana Meparishvili

**ABSTRACT**

When a museum's role is to hold cultural objects, there are usually tensions, dilemmas associated with singular objects or entire collections. Whether around the ever growing issues of provenance, or around an object's place in history and all it represents, objects and collections can be powerful, informative, inspiring. And in many cases, they can of course be controversial and provocative, political and more.

Around the moving landscape of extraordinary objects, important documents, and layered narratives that characterize many exhibitions, the architectural design can offer a spatial experience that speaks more of simplicity and unity, transcending the complexity of the collections and what they are intended to represent and why, creating an environment within which even the most challenging of topics and narratives, supported by cultural objects, can be absorbed with a sense of calm. This is one of studioMilou's major design objectives when museum – making.

In this paper, we offer some reflections on two of our recent adaptive reuse museum projects in Asia: the Da Nang City Museum, Vietnam, and the National Gallery Singapore. In both case studies, we explore how the architectural design has tackled tensions stemming from the exhibition narratives and the buildings themselves, whether in terms of their colonial heritage, past uses and/or new purposes. We also share brief insights into our preference for legible, calm and beautiful architectural designs, which seek to counter, however modestly, increasingly fragmented human landscapes and experiences.

**BIO**

Jean Francois Milou trained in Paris at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, and founded studioMilou Architecture, a practice specializing in adaptive reuse projects, based in Paris, Singapore and Vietnam. He has worked extensively in Europe and Asia on the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and landscapes and various heritage consultancies for UNESCO and the French Government. Deeply inspired by his interests in archaeology and anthropology, his design approach strives for enduring simplicity and deference to a site's historical, human, natural and built surrounds. Recent major projects include the National Gallery Singapore, *Le Carreau du Temple* in Paris, and in the Da Nang Museum, in Vietnam. A recipient of the French National Order of Merit and multiple design awards, Jean Francois Milou is also a member of the French, Singaporean, Australian and British Institutes of Architecture, and a guest lecturer and judge in various international forums.



## TWO RECENT MUSEUM PROJECTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE CONNECT AND DISCONNECT OF INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVES AND ARCHITECTURAL SPACES

### THE DA NANG CITY MUSEUM, VIETNAM

Among the studio's recent projects, the Da Nang City Museum, which is presently under construction for a 2024 opening this growing port city on the central coast of Vietnam, is one for which the collections relating to war in particular could be experienced as markers of tension and presented in confronting ways. Led by Trung Nguyen, Senior Partner Architect of studioMilou Singapore and Director/Partner for studioMilou Vietnam, our work for Da Nang Museum involves both the architectural and exhibition design, giving the studio the capacity to delve into this relationship between the building and the collections' narratives.

A significant portion of the exhibits is dedicated to showcasing the resilience of the people and culture of the Da Nang region during periods of war, conflict, and political struggle. These exhibits cover not only the American War (commonly known in the West as the Vietnam War) but also conflicts such as the Franco-Spanish invasions of the mid-19th century, which resulted in French sovereignty over three provinces in southern Vietnam, including Tourane (modern day Da Nang). Although Da Nang itself did not witness direct fighting during the American War, it served as a crucial base for American aircraft and other operations.

However violent, unjust, and destructive the impacts of war have been in and around Da Nang, both the curatorial and architectural teams have taken a markedly peaceful approach to how the narratives are presented, and how the architecture supports them.

The curatorial direction has not sought a confrontational or condemning narrative, but instead, to focus on resilience, and without over articulating a given position, but rather, through the nature of the exhibitions themselves, to convey a sense of poise and steadfast recovery over time. To refer to a detachment from the

subject in the curatorial narrative would be inaccurate; there is however a desire to be dignified as the receptor of past trauma, and as the victor. This way of presenting the objects is something the architectural design supports, by enabling visitors a sense of space and serenity, by avoiding grand gestures and rather, seeking a meditative environment in a modest adaptive reuse of the Da Nang Museum's historical French colonial structures, as they expand into the new sections of the institution.

A delicate architectural façade wraps around the entire visitor experience. Inspired by local rattan basket making practices, it creates an enveloping feeling of peace and reconciliation, both metaphorically within the minds of the visitor, and physically with the surrounding landscape and its rich living traditions after 30 years of what was, even by any objective observation, a remarkably cruel war.

Through an elegant casing, a large embrace of even the most challenging topics, visitors are offered a poised distance while meandering, a calm space from which to observe, engage and reach their own conclusions.







The Da Nang City Museum, Vietnam

## THE NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

This project, which opened in 2015, is dedicated to the presentation of modern Southeast Asian art, with its narrative running concurrent to the post-colonial transition of Singapore in the 20th century. The largest visual arts institution in Southeast Asia, the National Gallery Singapore was born from the adaptive reuse of two major colonial buildings; the city state's former City Hall and the former Supreme Court, both built by the British administration and completed prior to the Second World War.

In terms of tensions, the exhibitions in this space don't typically evoke significant tension. If anything, their predominantly two-dimensional formats and often contemplative or documentary objectives—such as those falling under social realism, for example—may feel somewhat undersized for the spaces and rather unprovocative. In this project, the studio's inclination toward crafting tranquil, meditative architectural environments required addressing tensions inherent in the architectural languages of the buildings.

Each of these side-by-side monumental colonial structures is comprised, at a closer look, of a stylistic collage. Neo-classical, Art Deco, and Modernist veins co-exist and create layers of dissonance that could be felt when assessing the original structures, and better understood from archives documenting unresolved ideological conflicts among the British architectural team of the Singapore Public Works Department in the 1930's. In addition then to the challenges of transforming two essentially administrative buildings into an international standard visual art museum while minimizing architectural interventions was the problem of reconciling competing stylistic and ideological design ambitions.

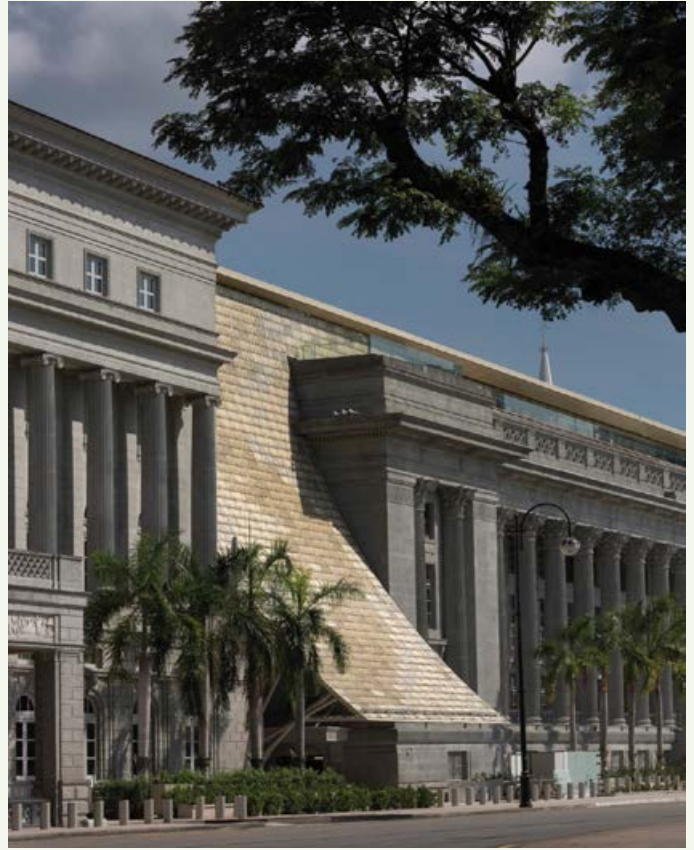
studioMilou's design sought to embrace these layers in such a way as to contain them respectfully within a highly legible, simple and ultimately modest architectural gesture. We proposed a unifying lightweight facade canopy, draped over the two buildings discretely yet with certainty, to unite them as one institution and reveal the existing buildings' qualities, including their layered époques. At the same time, the studio created an internal 'envelope,' that also drew together within a clear and unifying composition the complex fabric of discordant architectural styles, to create harmonious interior spaces, with ease of movement from one to the next.

While meticulously conserving heritage features, the design created a concourse basement to seamlessly link the two buildings. This facilitated the concentration of visitor facilities within the new basement area, leaving the existing structures freer for exhibition areas within walls widened to discretely conceal infrastructural elements. Restrained colour palettes and materials served to unify the spaces within and between the buildings. In this way, the project achieved a meticulous articulation between historical aspects and the new serene, fluid and unified spaces.

The ultimate aim for the studio with our design for this project, as with the Da Nang Museum, has been to create architectural spaces, whether through their adaptive reuse or interior design, which are conducive to visitor reflection, meditation and – to use a word too little used these days in architecture – beauty. In this way, the projects contain and silently dispel tensions, to offer a place of calm and unity in an increasingly complex world.







The National Gallery Singapore

**MODERATOR BIO: NANA MEPARISHVILI**

Nana Meparishvili is an architect, working in the field of cultural heritage, specializing in traditional dwelling architecture and open-air museums. “Cultural heritage management in open-air museums” is the title of her doctoral thesis. She has collaborated on her research with numerous European open-air museums, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington, DC, and Yokohama National University in Japan. She has worked as a consultant for a number of Georgian museums, mostly in the field of museum development, including the open-air museum in Tbilisi.

In 2004, Nana Meparishvili created the first educational course on the architecture of Georgian traditional dwellings, which she teaches to architecture faculty students at two universities (Caucasus University and Ilia State University).

Nana Meparishvili has been an ICAMT board member since 2012, secretary of the same committee from 2016 to 2019, and chair - since January 2020. She has been a fellow of AEOM (Association of European Open-Air Museums) since 2015, an EMA (European Museum Academy) Representative in Georgia, and a member of the Editorial Board of Museum International (a peer-reviewed magazine published by ICOM).

## MUSEUMS: CONTAINERS VERSUS CONTENTS

Nuno Grande, Associate Professor,  
Department of Architecture,  
University of Coimbra, Portugal  
Moderation: Helena Barranha

### ABSTRACT

This lecture will analyse the already long conceptual and spatial conflict that takes place within museums, between their architecture and their political and cultural missions.

Focused mainly on art museums, our narrative begins, almost a century ago, with the creation of Modern (art) museums as an ascetic and aseptic reaction to the eclectic and academic institutions inherited from the 19th century; to then understand the criticism that was made to the “MoMA model”, in the 1960’s, in favour of opening museums to Mass Culture.

The lecture will also focus on the later reaction to that spatial conceptualism – the “Beaubourg Effect” – which led to the return of conservatism in the so called “Postmodern Museum” of the 1980’s; culminating in the analysis of the urban competition for iconic Art Centres that marked the “Bilbao Effect” in the end of the 20th century.

In light of this evolution, it is questioned whether it is possible (or even desirable) to create a “neutral” architecture for a politically “neutral” museum; or, on the contrary, if it is not up to museum directors and curators, as cultural intermediaries, to relate their “contents” (the collections and exhibitions) to the architectural memory of their “containers” (the built spaces), in the search for an interactive fruition of both dimensions.

As a conclusive case-study, we will analyse the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, in Porto, and how it reflects, for the last 25 years, this permanent conflict between container and content, but also between cultural policies and artistic and architectonic practices.

### KEYWORDS

Serralves; Museums; Architecture;  
Spatial Conflict

### BIO

Nuno Grande (Luanda, 1966) is an architect, critic, curator and associate professor at the University of Coimbra (DARQ/UC). He obtained his degree in architecture at the University of Porto (FAUP, 1992) and his PhD at the University of Coimbra (2009), where he became a researcher at the Social Studies Centre (CES). He teaches at the Master in Architecture of the University of Coimbra, and at the Master in Curatorial Studies of Colégio das Artes, where he researches on architectures of culture and exhibition spaces. He is also the coordinator of CoimbraStudio, PhD Programme in Architecture at the University of Coimbra. He curated international exhibitions: at Porto 2001 and Guimarães 2012, both European Capitals of Culture; at the Lisbon Architecture Triennale, in 2007; at the São Paulo Architecture Biennale, in 2007; at the Portuguese Pavilion of the XV Venice Architecture Biennale, in 2016; at Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, in Paris, in 2016; at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, in Porto, in 2019. He is author of several books and essays on Portuguese Architecture, in Portugal and abroad.



**MODERATOR BIO: HELENA BARRANHA**

Helena Barranha is a Professor at Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa, and a Researcher at the Institute of Art History, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, where she is a member of the Museum Studies Group and coordinates the Cluster on Art, Museums and Digital Cultures. She has a Master's Degree in the Management of Cultural Heritage (University of Algarve, 2001) and a PhD in Architecture (University of Porto, 2008). She was the Director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art – Museu do Chiado, in Lisbon (2009-2012). Her current research focuses on cultural heritage, the architecture of contemporary art museums and digital cultures and she has published widely on these topics, both in Portugal and abroad. In 2021, she published the book *Art, Museums and Digital Cultures – Rethinking Change* (co-edited with Joana Simões Henriques).

# KEY THEME 1 DEALING WITH CONFLICT

How can lighting, climate control, storage, and security systems (among other “invisible” systems in museums) produce conflict zones (e.g., conservation/access) or contribute to dealing with conflict in a museum context?

Resignification of interpretative devices with conflict markers through museum architecture and exhibition design.

Climate crisis and environmental sustainability: emerging conflicts and possibilities for action worldwide.

## MORNING SESSION

Moderated by Luís Tavares Pereira, Architect and Curator, founder and partner at [A] ainda arquitectura studio, Portugal.

### MODERATOR BIO: LUÍS TAVARES PEREIRA

Luís Tavares Pereira Lisbon, 1966. Architect (FAUP, 1991), M.Arch (Princeton University, 1996). He is the founding partner of [A] Ainda Arquitectura (Porto, 1998), a studio working primarily with artists, curators and museums. Mr. Pereira is currently the curator, of "Mais do que Casas | More than Housing" (FAUP, 2023-2025), on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the April 25, 1974 carnation revolution, bringing together 25 Architecture, Landscape and Fine Arts schools in Portugal, contributing to a critical reflection on the contemporary challenges of housing and public space in the construction of an intercultural society and the promotion of global citizenship.

Mr. Pereira is also member of the European Culture Parliament, and a freelance curator including projects for the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Lisbon Architecture Triennale, Serralves, or the Georgian National Museum. He was member of the board of the Portuguese Order of Architects (OA-SRN), 2005-2010, and Assistant Professor at Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, 2019-2020.



**“CHANGE IS A BEAUTIFUL THING”  
SAID THE BUTTERFLY. EXHIBITION DESIGN  
AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

Ilse Lindenberg, H el ene Verreyke and Bob Gelderman, University of Antwerp Antwerp, Belgium

**ABSTRACT**

There is a lot of willingness among museum professionals to implement more sustainable practices as to limit negative environmental impacts. There have been efforts to decrease energy consumption, reduce carbon emissions and reuse materials and scenographic elements, such as display cases and modular construction systems. These efforts are often experimental and initiated via a bottom-up approach by exhibition designers and production teams. Multiple sustainable initiatives to reduce and reuse materials associated with temporary exhibition scenography align with principles of the circular economy. In this research, we have examined those initiatives in Flanders (Belgium) to assess the potential for and effect of implementing the principles of circular design in temporary exhibitions. First, we analysed the decision-making processes currently in place to plan and create exhibitions by interviewing the three most influential stakeholders involved in the process: museum staff, designers, and contractors. Second, the tenders that museums put out were analysed to identify to what extent these tenders include criteria related to sustainability and circularity, as well as how the museums interpret these concepts. Third, the case-study of museum M Leuven (Belgium) was studied more in depth. In this case, all data relating to the production of exhibitions were archived meticulously, allowing us to map out the initiatives. Our research has shown that tenders offer an excellent communication tool to align partners' expectations and ambitions towards sustainable scenography design. The case study of museum M Leuven made clear that museums are willing to put time, money, and effort into sustainable choices and that there is a non-exhaustive list of possible initiatives to adapt and improve the sustainability of scenography. Though each case is different and has unique needs and solutions, there are general assumptions that show potential for implementation on a larger scale, including principles that facilitate a circular economy.

**BIOS**

**ILSE LINDENBERGH** is a MA Interior Design (University of Antwerp) and a student of the MA Heritage Studies. Her interest and research lies in exhibition design and the circular economy, where she combines her expertise in both interior design and museum studies.

Assistant Professor **H EL ENE VERREYKE** (University of Antwerp) has expertise in the integration of preventive conservation in museum practice, collection management and museology. She has extensive experience in organising large-scale exhibitions, collection presentations, strategic planning, exhibition scenography and preventive conservation. After finishing her PhD in Archaeology (Ghent University), she further specialised in museology (Erasmus University Rotterdam). She conducted research on how history museums can activate community participation. She put this expertise into practice by developing innovative methods to stimulate co-creation in museum practice. She was a visiting lecturer at the MA Museum and Gallery Practices (University College London) and she currently teaches at the MA Heritage Studies and Conservation-Restoration Program at the University of Antwerp.

Assistant Professor **BOB GELDERMANS'** research activities aim at healthy and regenerative resource-use in relation to architecture and cities. His particular interest goes out to material quality and material-flows, applying an integrated-systems approach across stages: from raw material processing, product design and manufacturing to operational performance, deconstruction and reutilisation. Bob's doctoral research focused on the relation between Open Building and Circular Building, elaborating on the synergistic potential of flexibility in interior lay-out and circularity of associated materials and products. His primary aim is to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical implementation, in order to facilitate a transition of our built environment: from linear and degenerative to circular and regenerative.

**“CHANGE IS A BEAUTIFUL THING”  
SAID THE BUTTERFLY. EXHIBITION DESIGN  
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Ilse Lindenbergh, H el ene Verreyke and Bob Gelderman, University of Antwerp Antwerp, Belgium

**INTRODUCTION**

Climate change and environmental degradation are important and returning topics in the heritage sector. Museums have the potential to act as driving social forces to tackle those issues. However, presently there are many energy-consuming practices that are in urgent need of a transformation. Temporary exhibitions are a known source of waste materials. The Circular Economy (CE) is one of the approaches to establish sustainable practices, with a prime focus on the – sustainable – use of materials and resources. The goal is to step away from the linear ‘take-make-consume-throw away’ pattern and close the loop to minimise waste (Bourguignon, 2016). The potential of the CE is also mirrored in the European Union’s 2050 climate neutrality goal. Under the Green Deal (European Commission, 2019), the European Commission proposed a new CE Action Plan (European Commission, 2020), focusing on waste prevention and management. This can be best explained by the butterfly model of circular economy by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2012). One ambition is to extend the lifetime of products by supporting high-value retention through extended product usage, reuse, and refurbishment. Nancy Bocken and colleagues (2016) refer to this principle as ‘*slowing loops*’ (use longer), as part of a more holistic strategy also involving ‘*narrowing loops*’ (use less) and ‘*closing loops*’ (recycle). Figure 1 visualises multiple circular strategies for ‘technical’ products and materials (right), primarily based on service-life extension, and for ‘biological’ products and materials (left).

Increased efforts to optimise infrastructure and the re-use of materials, such as a modular system for scenography design or the reuse of construction materials such as wood and textiles, are already in effect. However, our research has shown that in Flanders, these efforts are often only experimental and are initiated bottom-up by exhibition designers

and production teams (Lindenbergh, 2023). Moreover, there is less attention to material waste than to reducing energy consumption. Although we could identify several interesting bottom-up initiatives in the Benelux area, there are no general criteria or guidelines on what is considered “sustainable practice” within the sector. This leads to different ideas on how to tackle sustainable scenography. Therefore, the impact of these well-intended efforts often remains unclear. Circular strategies, as part of the CE concept, have shown great potential in the building industry, and are expected to provide benefits for museum exhibition design as well.

In three phases this research examined the current perception of sustainable exhibition design in Flanders. Firstly, by interviewing the three main actors being museum staff, scenographic designers and contractors. This generated the idea to further look at tender criteria written by museums done in phase two. Those documents gave insight in the current understanding of sustainability and which principles have priority for museums. Furthermore, in the third phase a particular case study of museum M Leuven was analysed to see what initiatives could have potential for broader implementation.

**RESULTS**

**TENDER ANALYSIS**

A total of twelve tenders were analysed, provided by the museums, designers, and contractors. First, a word count of related words was done and second, more general principles or topics were identified and counted. The word ‘sustainability’ (56) is mentioned most often, followed by ‘sustainable’ (27), ‘reuse’ (14), ‘sustainable materials’ (10) and ‘ecological’ (9). ‘Circularity’ is mentioned only six times, most often in one specific tender. ‘Circular building’ and ‘circular materials’ are both mentioned twice.

There is a large variety in the topics brought forward by museums. ‘Materials’ (7) and ‘reuse of material’ (4) occur the most. Both ‘production’ and ‘scenography’ are mentioned three times. Many other topics are only mentioned once or twice. Two tenders don’t specify what they expect or mean with sustainability. If we look at the award criteria,

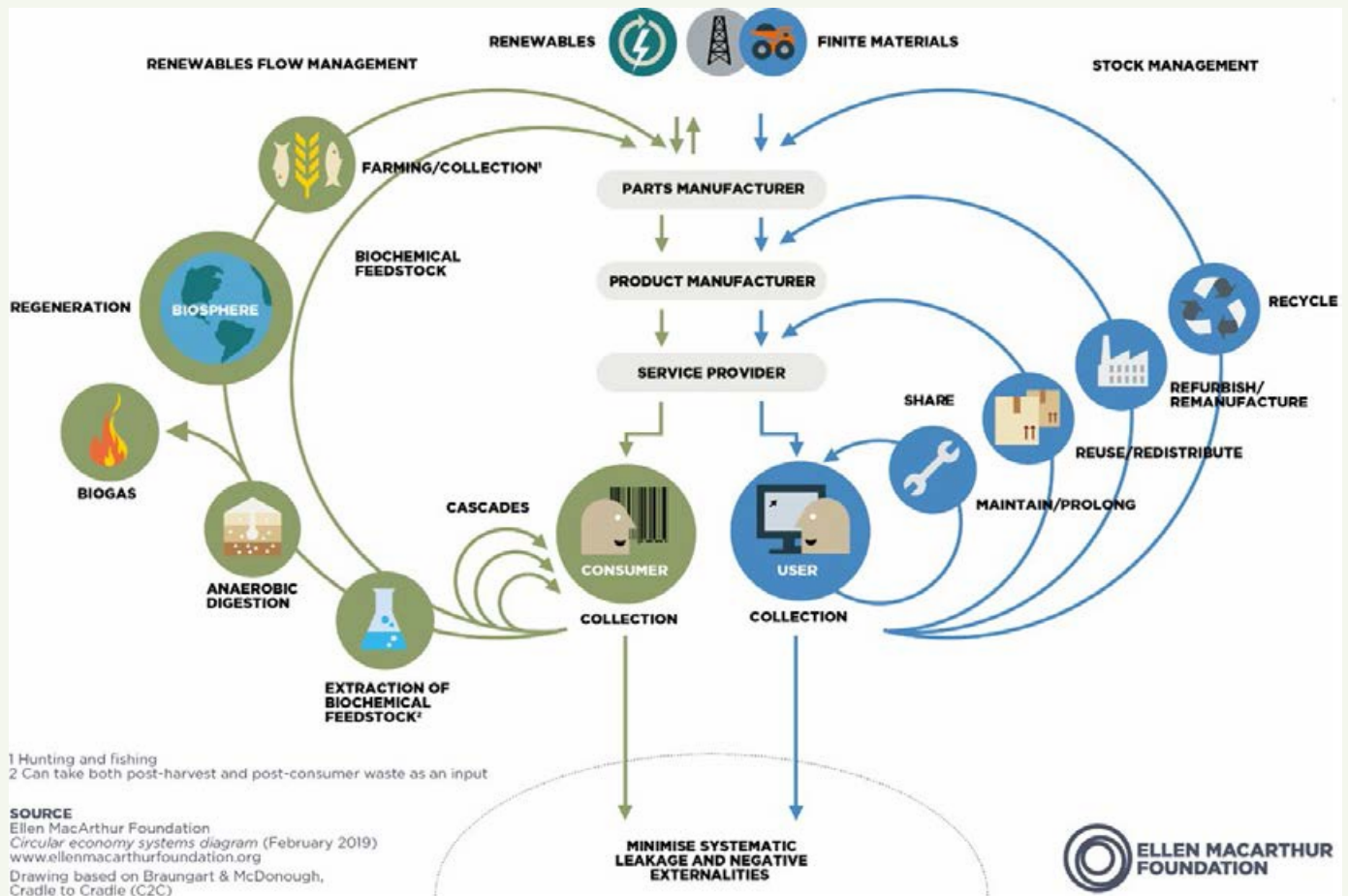


Figure 1: Butterfly model of Circular Economy, designed by Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Source – Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019

which is after all the most binding part of the tender, we can see that most tenders (10 out of 12) mention sustainability in the award criteria, however, only in half of the cases (6 out of 12) sustainability is a separate category in the award criteria (see Lindenbergh, 2023 for more information on the tender analysis). With fifty-six mentions and at least one

mention in all twelve tenders, it can be assumed that sustainability is important within the selected museums. General words linked to sustainability, such as sustainable, ecological, environmental and climate, occur most often. Terms and concepts such as circularity, circular building, recycle etc., are less frequently used. This results in the assumption that sustainability is used as an umbrella term in the tenders, and is not often further defined, leaving space for interpretation. Many topics have occurred once or twice, often only in one tender focusing on two to four aspects of sustainability. Although most tenders mention sustainability in the award criteria, only half of the tenders defined sustainability to be important enough as a separate criterium. This means that only in half the cases, efforts related to sustainability are put in the scale for a substantial percentage when awarding the contract.

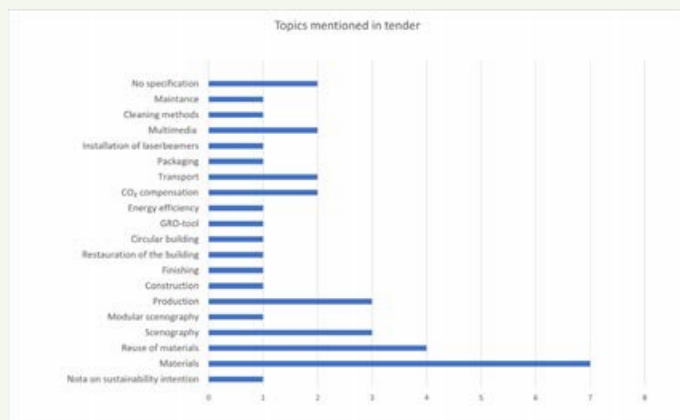


Figure 2: Graphic with all specific topics mentioned in the overall tender documents. (Source: Lindenbergh)



**CASE STUDY MUSEUM M LEUVEN**

Phase three of this research consisted of a case study in museum M Leuven. Semi-structured interviews were set up to map current initiatives and experiences of employees. The interviews consisted of two parts: a short introduction and open questions about the workflow, the initiatives, and possible consequences of sustainable exhibitions. In order to capture all perspectives, different professional profiles were interviewed. The interviewees were: the director, the collection storage manager, the head of exhibitions, two members of the production team and the former head of the old masters department.

The interviews were transcribed and coded. Afterwards, all codes were structured and put together in common themes. For each theme, a record was kept by who and on how many occasions a certain topic was mentioned. This way, it could be identified which topics are essential for which profile within the organisation of the museum. Ten categories came to the fore: Initiatives, Advantages, Difficulties/Obstacles, Consequences, Organisation or Policy of the museum, Driving force, Ideas, Inspiration, External difficulties or obstacles, and Bigger debate on sustainability and museums.

During the interviews, there is extensively spoken about the initiatives to improve and optimise sustainability. As sustainability is linked with many different topics and ambitions of M Leuven, the list of 67 initiatives consists of a large diversity, not only directly related to the scenography of temporary exhibitions, but also general policy choices and small initiatives on the work floor. Nevertheless, it is still meaningful to include all initiatives, as indirect impacts can have significant results too, varying from policy choices to small effects on the work floor. Table 1 is a – non-exclusive – summary of initiatives mentioned during the interviews.

To give an impetus for further research, qualitative suggestions are made as a first step towards quantitative key performance indicators. To analyse the initiatives objectively, a first distinction is made based on the initiative type. Ten categories could be identified: the general policy of the museum, the exhibition policy, reuse of materials, waste management, use of materials, infrastructure, education and research, networks, small initiatives on the work floor and government. In this non-extensive list, the current initiatives and ideas are compiled together.

	Former head of the old masters department	Production team	Director	Collection storage manager	Head of exhibitions	TOTAL
<b>INITIATIVES</b>						
Modular wall system for scenography	3	5	2	1	1	12
Standardisation scenography	1					1
Reuse scenography	3	5	4	6	9	27
Eco-team	2	6	4	10	1	23
LED-lighting	1	1		1		3
Use of inert materials	1					1
Turtle boxes for transport	1			2	1	4
Limit digital installations/AV	1	1				2
Digital tracking loans	1					1
Material database 'Materialenbank'	1	4	1	4	2	12
Include broader perspectives/stories	1					1
Co-creative productions	1					1
Window blinds		1				1
Repair work equipment		4			1	5
Inventories of scenography	1	5		1	2	9
Rent out AV		1				1
Hire employee with focus on sustainability	1	2				3
Use old panels/materials first		1				1
Efficient use of panels/material		4		1	1	6
Washing machine for paint brushes		1				1
Organizing storage	2	2	1	1	1	7
Bee hotel		1		1	1	3
Wildflower garden		1		1	2	4
Better waste management system	1	4	1	8	1	15
Waste calculations/readings				3		3
Het groene boekje, a logbook of green initiatives		1	2	1		4
Reusable trays for lunch		2				2
Studyday/conference	2		1	4	1	8
Limited number of exhibitions	1		1			2
Track ecological footprint	1		8		1	10
Recycling in general	1	1	1	3		6
Better water management		1	1	2		4
Better paper management		2	1	3		6
Taking the stairs			1	1		2
One identity (= huisstijl)			1			1
Installation of cogeneration			1			1
Solar panels			2	1		3
Internal communication		1	3	2	1	7
New depot space			1			1
Reuse of space	1	2	1			4
Sustainable materials		2	1		1	4
Limit energy consumption	3		3	4	1	11
Give the good example			1			1
Green Track Project				1		1
Serve soup on Tuesdays				5	1	10
Rise awareness		2	2	5		9
The Action Plan			1	5	1	7
KiFuture project				3		3
Promote external campaigns				1		1
Sustainable transport	1		2	3	7	13
External expertise	2			3		5
Part of research projects	2			2		4
Promote research				2	1	3
Participate Leuven 2030				1		1
Bizot Green Protocol				1	3	4
Sustainable climate control devices				1	1	2
Networking		1	2	3	2	8
Use cardboard excess for children activities				2		2
Water tap flow				1		1
Vegetarian/Vegan food at activities				3		3
Map carbon emission					1	1
Sustainability in award criteria					1	1
Sustainability in tender			1		3	4
Limit loans					1	1
Less transportation	1				1	2
Cardboard labels				1	1	2
Account on KiCulture				1	1	2

Table 1: Excel table with list of initiatives done by museum M Leuven. (Source: Lindenbergh)

<b>POLICY EXHIBITION</b>
Sustainable exhibition procedure
Include broader perspectives/stories
Co-creative productions
Longer duration exhibitions
Smaller exhibitions
Better contextualisation
Limited number of exhibitions
Sustainability in award criteria
Sustainability in tender
Limit loans
Less transportation
Digital tracking loans
Co-production of exhibition
Incorporate budget ecological footprint in budget exhibition
Cardboard labels
Use of old techniques (Bokrijk)

Table 2: Excel table with list of initiatives related to the exhibition policy. (Source: Lindenbergh)

It can be presumed improving the sustainability of scenography is a complicated matter without straightforward or one-way answers. Both internal and external parameters play a role. A wide variety can be found in the list of initiatives, which indicates there are many possibilities for improvement. This opens potential for other museums and the museum sector as a whole to facilitate initiatives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **(MIS)COMMUNICATION**

Three actors were introduced as the most influential: museum staff, scenographic designers and contractors. All three actors were concerted on tenders sent out by museums. This is the first communication tool between the actors where museums can address and clarify their priorities, including their views and ambitions on sustainability. In the tender, the museum can express their expectations on the level of sustainability of the designers and contractors, their participation in the CE and on the properties of the end product. If sustainability or the CE comes forward as a high priority in those tenders, designers and contractors know this will be important aspects of their responses to the tender. As the tender analysis has shown, sustainability or related topics are often included in tenders in Flanders. However, not every museum further defines what they mean by the term sustainability. Sustainability is a broad term, and although this research focuses on ecological sustainability, other forms have also occurred in the analysed tenders as well. Looking at the topics forthcoming in tenders that more or less defined their interpretation(s) of sustainability, there is no real consensus. A non-extensive list of eighteen topics shows that 'materials', 'reuse of material', 'production' and 'scenography' occur the most, but many topics are only mentioned once or twice. It is noteworthy that four of the most mentioned topics are directly linked to the scenography of the temporary exhibitions. It can be assumed museums see sustainable materials and production as a priority.

A striking outcome of the research is the apparent miscommunication between the actors. When asked about the decision process towards adopting a more sustainable exhibition scenography, each actor referred to the other two actors as most influential. All parties involved do not identify themselves as

having the potential to have the biggest impact. What is also clear is that the possibility to have a separate award criterium on sustainability in the tenders is underused in Flanders. Finally, sustainability is used as an umbrella term in the tenders, leaving room for interpretation. It would be beneficial to clearly state the definition and concrete ambitions of sustainability that are upheld by, for example, referring to the vision on sustainability written in museum policy. External partners should be informed to estimate if the museum's vision is adequate with their own. This limits miscommunication and discussions further on in the process.

### **DEDICATED TEAMS**

The case study at museum M Leuven was initiated to give insight into initiatives to improve the sustainability of the scenography of temporary exhibitions. However, during the interviews, information extended to sustainability in the museum in general. Although it's impossible to draw a general conclusion based on one specific case study, some observations can potentially be of larger importance. Firstly, it would be beneficial if museums would clearly define sustainability and formulate the concrete ambitions in the museum policy. This would be instrumental in translating this vision into concrete actions, and limit miscommunication and discussions with external partners. Second, exhibition planning and the conceptual phase of the exhibition process is crucial to influence the sustainable impact of temporary exhibitions. The scale, length and number of exhibitions organised by the museum affect the ecological footprint of each exhibition. A great influence is whether an exhibition consists mainly of art objects from the own collection or if many loans are needed/preferred. Third, proven efficiency is the presence of an eco-team devoted to improving the museum's sustainability. Developing a well-organised and monitored eco-action plan keeps track of the progress and raises awareness within the institution, but also towards the visitors. An own production team and organised storage space make it possible to reuse own scenography elements such as display cases and maintain a critical attitude towards the design of an exhibition. Reusing scenography is easier when keeping an inventory of all materials, designing

a modular system for the constructions, and using a standardisation of measurement for materials. When it's not possible or preferable to keep certain material or scenographic elements, a solution is to use material databases and reclaimed material platforms to share and facilitate repurpose. In the museum processes, external actors also have a large impact on sustainability including the artists, suppliers, and waste management companies. A focus on sustainability in the museum policy and the presence of an eco-team also creates heightened participation in networking activities, conferences and research projects, in turn enlarging the knowledge on new developments in the broader sector and allowing team members to meet experts who might come in handy when searching for concrete solutions.

### CIRCULAR STRATEGIES

For scenographic materials of temporary exhibitions the first and most efficient solution is to design out waste. The reuse of the scenography as a whole, by the museum itself or by other institutions is the most desirable. An important element in this case is careful

storage, maintaining the materials in good condition, as well as a good network and sharing platform to exchange information. A modular system makes reusing and refurbishing easier. When the scenography is no longer required and the materials need to be dismantled, it facilitates the process when the measurements are standardised, and all pieces can be separated without destruction.

This can be seen in the CE 'Butterfly model' of Figure 1, as well as in likeminded frameworks and approaches (e.g. McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Stahel, 2010; Bocken et al., 2016; Potting et al., 2017; Geldermans, 2020), Important lessons for museum policy makers and scenographic designers lay in specific circular strategies: '*Refuse*' interventions (only design what is essential, be critical as to what is really needed to exhibit the museum objects), '*Reduce*' materials used for interventions, '*Reuse*' products and materials (for example by reusing the product in new exhibitions, share the product with other museums or extend the temporary exhibitions), '*Repair*', '*Refurbish*'



Figure 3: Modular system for the construction of temporary walls designed by the production team at M Leuven. (Source: Fischler)

and ‘*Remanufacture*’ products and materials (essential to extend the lifespan of scenography elements), and lastly, ‘*Repurpose*’ (i.e. dismantle the scenography and give a different function to parts and materials).

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings in this research serve as a first exploration of sustainable initiatives in Flanders. More extensive research is desirable to make general conclusions on a greater scale. It would be interesting to analyse different cases of exhibition processes with all three actors involved. This could be done in research where circular economy principles are compared with exhibition design and preventive conservation. This should all come together in a circular design methodology, combining good practices and lessons learned from the research. These recommendations could then be assembled in a set of guidelines which museums and other actors can use to help them adapt and improve the sustainability of scenography and exhibition design. Participation of museum staff, designers and contractors will be crucial to develop a widely supported set of guidelines within the possibilities and ambitions of said stakeholders.

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**COMMON VIEWS: SOURCING WATER  
– CONTRADICT HISTORICAL NARRATIVES  
CONSTITUTES A MUSEAL EXHIBITION  
(ACAC, ISRAEL)**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Bedouin and Jewish inhabitants of the southern Israeli desert region share a common desert vista. However, they are diverse, multicultural communities who suffer inequity in access to valuable resources such as water. Between 2019 and 2021, Common Views art collective initiated a socially engaged durational art project with Bedouin and Jewish inhabitants entitled Common Views. The art collective seeks to enact sustainable practices of water preservation as a mutually fertile ground for collaboration between the conflicted communities, by reawakening and revitalizing rainwater harvesting, as part of traditional local desert life. Their interventions promote new concepts of Environmental Reconciliation, aiming to confront social-ecological issues, the commons, and resource equity, grounded in interpersonal collaborative relationships with stratified local communities. Their site-specific art actions seek to drive a public discourse on environmental and sustainable resources, while reflecting on the distribution of social and spatial imbalance. They take part in contemporary art discourse relative to socially engaged practices, yet their uniqueness lies in conflictual sites such as the discord arising from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and their proposed model for resolution linking politics with environment. It utilizes renegotiation with histories and heritage, as a vehicle to evoke enhanced awareness of mutual environmental concerns in an attempt at reconciliation on political grounds.

**BIO**

**IRIT CARMON POPPER**, PhD is a curator, researcher, and lecturer emphasizing contemporary art and cultural heritage. She graduated with a BA in Philosophy and Art History, and an MA in Art History from The Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Curatorship and Museology Studies from Tel Aviv University, and a PhD from the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion IIT, Haifa (2019). Her research was awarded the 2020 magna cum laude Ben Halpern Award of ISA, the 2019 Bruno Zevi Foundation Award, the 2019 Study and Research Award by Jabotinsky Institute, the 2017 Elhanani Prize on Architecture & Identity, the 2020 Balaban- Glass Fund Scholarship.

Her latest articles were published in *Arts Journal*, Special Issue “Renegotiating Identity, Reenacting History – 21st Century Art in Israel,” 2022; “Con Gli Occhi da Architetto e L’anima da Artista Marcel Janco e la Colonia di Artisti Ein Hod,” Bruno Zevi Fondazione, Spagna: LetteraVentidue Edizioni, 1st edition, 2021; *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*, (15:1), Summer 2018.

Her curatorial experience ranges from institutions to alternative and public space. She served in a variety of curatorial positions as at The Israel Museum; The Petach Tikva Museum and Umm el-Fahem Gallery. As an independent curator her exhibitions were shown at various museal and alternatives spaces, among others: The Kupferman Collection Museum; Arad Contemporary Art Center (ACAC), Binyamin Gallery and Indie Communal Photography Gallery in Tel Aviv; Musraramix Festival in Jerusalem, Ma’amuta Center at Hansen House in Jerusalem, SpazioOrso 16 Galley in Milano and IKONA Gallery of Photography in Venice.

**COMMON VIEWS: SOURCING WATER  
– CONTRADICT HISTORICAL NARRATIVES  
CONSTITUTES A MUSEAL EXHIBITION  
(ACAC, ISRAEL)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The *Common Views* art collective, led by artists David Behar Perahia and Dan Farberoff, has been involved since 2019 in an on-going socially engaged durational art project, grounded in interpersonal collaborative relationships with stratified local communities worldwide. Their projects evolve through engaging with inhabitants of various communities at given locations, establishing an active public participation during various stages of the making. Their artistic toolbox contains site-specific, socially engaged art and participatory strategies in collaboration with local creative agents and with the local inhabitants of each of the intervening surroundings. These surroundings, characterized by means of environment, habitation, and social status, serve to inspire consistently novel activities.

The paper examines their project *Common Views: Sourcing Water* which took place in the Bedouin settlements of Al Baqi'a valley and the adjacent Jewish town of Arad in 2019-2020. A long-term project in which were involved two communities, one of a Jewish city and the other of unrecognized Bedouin settlements. Despite the diversity and multiculturalism of the two communities in the area, they share a desert vista; nevertheless, there is a disparity between

them, especially when it comes to allotment of natural resources and access to them. (Fig. 1)

The artists have chosen to focus on water as the most precious resource in the desert region, to reflect on a distributive imbalance between Jewish and Bedouin inhabitants regarding water use and supply. They collaborated with local commons and their representatives to revitalize and awaken an interest in the local heritage of the desert tradition of rainwater harvesting, and to enact sustainable practices as a mutually fertile ground for both communities. These actions serve to trigger conversation and public discourse, to provide a possible sustainable future for this desert habitation, and to suggest a solution for future collaboration on mutual grounds. (Fig. 2)



Figure 1. Common Desert Vista of the 'Negev', 2020.  
Photographed by Dan Farberoff.



Figure 2. Socially engaged act at Bir Umm al Atin cistern, 2020.  
Photographed by Dan Farberoff.



## THE NEGEV BEDOUIN: AN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SITE-IN-CONFLICT

Within contemporary Israel, the Bedouin constitute an indigenous Arab-Muslim ethnic minority. In contrast to other areas of the country, the Bedouin had an absolute majority in the Negev region of southern Israel (Suwaed, 2015).<sup>1</sup> Bedouin tribes throughout the Middle East have lived in the desert and followed a nomadic lifestyle that has gradually changed in the last centuries with urbanization and modernization processes, and yet maintain ancient norms and traditional values to this day (Kersel & Maoz, 2018). Since the 1950s, they are a dense population dispersed in tribes, villages, rural settlements, most of which are officially classified as “unrecognized” and “illegal” and their inhabitants are considered “trespassers” on State land. The heart of this land dispute lies in opposing conceptualizations of ownership, possession, and land use. On the one hand, the Bedouin claim land rights based on customary and official laws, possession, and cultivation of the land for generations, and tax payments to previous regimes. On the other hand, Israel, drawing on a highly formalist approach, views many of the Bedouin as illegal trespassers invading State property (Kedar, Amara, & Yiftachel, 2020, p. 5).

The Bedouin Arab population in the Negev is over 250,000, from which about 25%–40% live in 35 unrecognized villages. The residents exist without basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, roads, garbage removal, and without proper access to education or medical services. Although the unrecognized villages meet the criteria of the Central Bureau of Statistics for defining a locality in terms of social characteristics of a place, due to the lack of land ownership arrangement, the state carries the

refusal to develop the sites and to issue building permits and infrastructure (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2019). (Fig. 3)

Cisterns and dug water tanks are an ancient phenomenon that have provided for desert dwellers for millennia (Joseph, 2001, Tzuk, 2005). The Bedouin inhabitants of Al Baqi’a valley used to rely on rainwater harvesting for all their needs. Some carried water on camels and donkeys, which were later replaced with modern tractors and tankers up until the laying of a national water pipeline from the city of Arad to Mount Masada in the 1960s, to which fixed taps were added at the “Kfar HaNokdim” tourist site. From this site, the Bedouin replaced the cisterns with plastic water tanks and an unauthorized network of self-laid, sun-beaten agricultural black PVC plastic irrigation pipes that wind their way for miles, bringing precious water from the official pipeline to the isolated settlements. (Fig. 4)



Figure 3. Bedouin temporal residence in the Negev, 2020  
Photographed by Dan Farberoff.



Figure 4. Desert Cisterns in the ‘Negev’, 2019. Photographed by Dan Farberoff.

Since the State prevents their water supply system from becoming permanent by not allowing an iron pipeline or the burial of a pipeline in the ground, the Bedouin solution for their water supply has become a community self-care system. This has gradually led to the Bedouin deserting their traditional use and maintenance of the cisterns, and these were abandoned and subsequently filled with alluvium so that they can no longer fulfill their purpose and rendering them unusable by the early 2000s. (Fig. 5)

The site chosen for the art action was Bir Umm al Atin cistern, located close to the Hamai'sa family's unrecognized settlement. The cistern dated likely to the Late Ottoman period,<sup>2</sup> includes a settling pond at its entrance and canals to which surface runoff flows along the mountainous topography (Markus, 1984). Nowadays, since the cistern has not been used for years, it has lost its original ability to store water for both human and animal use. Its interior was filled with alluvial soil and the water-carrying canals have been eroded, preventing the accumulation of water in the short wintertime. (Fig. 6)



Figure 5. Black pipes in the 'Negev', 2020. Photographed by Dan Farberoff.

## CONTEMPORARY ART DISCOURSE

The artistic strategies are part of the international contemporary genre of socially engaged art and participatory interventions, dealing with the notion of identity from a spatial perspective and touching upon political and civic issues. These practices broaden the artistic toolbox to include a collaborative dimension of social experience outside traditional institutions, to involve forms of engagement with social groups of both art and non-art communities, in the creative process. West Coast scholars distinguish them as an art genre of collectives that through joint continuous site-specific works, propose alternative models for social activity. Artists who adopt strategies of social involvement seek to contribute to society where other social agents have failed, using their unique cultural capital (Atkin, et al., 2008; Bishop, 2006, 2012).



Figure 6. Bir Umm al Atin cistern, 2019. Photographed by Dan Farberoff.

Although *Common Views* art collective adheres to a participatory agenda, their uniqueness lies in an interdisciplinary dialogue revolving around social and environmental concerns. The collective promotes a new concept, *Environmental Reconciliation*, which juxtaposes the environmental, the civic and the political. Their aim is to drive a public discourse on sustainable resources in the context of the growing global water crisis which has pushed the need for preserving time-honored approaches and creative use of resources to the fore.

The environmental aspect of their artistic work is carried out at conflictual sites, interwoven with civic issues of identity, land and the accessibility to resources. Through this discussion they are able to reflect on a distributive imbalance of social and spatial injustice. By reviving ancient



local traditions, they seek the reimagination and reconstruction of the inhabitants' traditional knowledge for contemporary needs. The concept of *Environmental Reconciliation* offers a creative mode of operation intertwining the past, the local histories, collective memory, and heritage preservation. It aims to use environmentally oriented activity as a civic tool to promote a positive dialogue between contested communities. I focus particularly on the agenda of preservation and reenactment of local heritage to strengthen identity in the repressed community. These artistic strategies in essence reenact historical traditions, allowing participants to reimagine the vernacular practices of smart use of water in a desert environment that were used in the past but are no longer in use today. Reviving past customs, traditions and practices that were part of desert life, mainly through the reuse of water, creates a platform for the local participants to renegotiate their self-determination and local identity regarding a conflictual place.

Since this is a binary space of Jews and Bedouins, the new future identity that can be built, in long-term, will be a complex, layered and hybrid identity, which is characteristic of the Bedouin minority's spatiality as the setting, and the politicization of natural resources in Israel as a site-in-conflict. I explore the artists' actions, which are driven by dialogue promoting the advancement of solidarity and cooperation of a community within its space and catapulting them into the role of environmental citizenship practitioners. Inspired by the Situated Solidarities and the Cultural Action approaches, the artists' strategy is based on dialogue, focused on listening, performing a reflection of cyclical learning, establishing trust, and forging solidarity, simultaneously inviting exploration. These actions serve as catalysts for potential transformation and are aimed at engendering a sense of mutual responsibility and of empathy with the "other" and with the environment (Freire, 2020). As part of the socially engaged art practices implemented at a site-in-conflict, they continuously mediate and create mutually fertile grounds for contested communities or groups, acting as civic practitioners. I explore these modes of art operation as they juxtapose the environmental and the political, offering an alternative mode of sustainable heritage preservation by means of contemporary art. I argue that the collective agenda widens

contemporary art discourse on collectives and their role as environmental citizenship entrepreneurs.

### **CONTRADICTION CONSTITUTES A MUSEAL EXHIBITION**

My position as the curator of the exhibition and a researcher involved in heritage and contemporary art led to a close involvement in the project. I established personal acquaintances with the participants, the various agencies, and stakeholders, which afforded me the opportunity to accompany all stages of the project including collection of materials in the preliminary research, and formation of participatory actions. Collection of materials and documentation was done with critical insight into future research.

The exhibition combined digital and sculptural installations, some of which are site specific new artworks, as well as a special place at the heart of the exhibition dedicated to the presentation of research materials. The collected raw materials were transformed into site-specific, formalistic structures, parts of which extend out into the public space inside and outside the gallery building. All artworks touch on the topics of water in the desert, control and distribution of resources, conservation and relationships between humans and the landscape. The various artworks throughout the space alternate, turning on and off, to create a holistic composition that draws the audience's attention and guides them through the space. The exhibition was designed so that the sound from the various installations combines with spatial sound into a unified, orchestrated soundscape.

The main spatial expression of the gallery "white cube" space consisted of local materials which were collected during the participatory process and subsequently transformed into site-specific formalistic structures, including sculptures, drawings, photographs, video, and sound installations. Site-specific and community-engaged artworks made by the artists for display in the exhibition presented a challenge to the installation and design, which was reflected in directing an imaginary walking route between the various installations which served as sensory experience sites in the exhibition space.

To demonstrate the current Bedouin challenges of water sourcing, to a wider, largely unaware public, a network of water tanks and black pipes, scavenged in the desert, was set up as the main visual symbolic art intervention in the gallery, spilling out into the street below. This was accompanied by a series of sculptures of a “*Rujum*”- the desert way marker traditionally made of piled-up stones, as a practical and symbolic object which became a minimalist sculpture, in the form of a pyramid-shaped metal grid draped in colorful knitted surfaces, created by the women of both Jewish and Palestinian communities. The participatory knitting action was based on a series of colored palettes conceived by the art collective, matching the different countries of origin of the various women, and selected by personal preference according to their traditional cultural style. The series of “*Rujums*” displayed at the exhibition portrays the future trail, placing an emphasis on forming a link between the gallery and the outdoors, between art and life – between the communities sharing a common landscape and looking out onto a common view. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7. The exhibition “Common Views: Sourcing Water”, ACAC, Arad, 2019-2020. Curated by Irit Carmon Popper. Photographed by Dan Farberoff.

Furthermore, an archival room was designed in the heart of the exhibition to present archival materials related to the subject, in addition to the symbolic presence of various art installations. In a living room set design, visitors could explore documentary materials, theoretical and historical background documents, which shed light on the artistic vision and participatory working process. The two spaces were activated as an initial part of the exhibition’s total space - a sensory existence that was evident in visual, material, and auditory experiences was complemented by an archive existence, which was evident in documents, maps, and reading materials, suggesting a deeper understanding of the conflictual layered subject matter. The curatorial design aimed to inspire visitors to act in the future by raising awareness of ethical and geographical injustice. (Fig. 8)



Figure 8. The archival space in the exhibition “Common Views: Sourcing Water”, ACAC, Arad, 2019-2020. Curated by Irit Carmon Popper. Photographed by Dan Farberoff.

## CONCLUSIONS

The case study of *Common Views: Sourcing Water* presents the instruments, techniques, and practices utilized, drawing on the use of socially engaged art practices. It demonstrates how the art collective, by means of its unfolding network with community members, is able by spatial and communal intervention at a conflictual historic site, to flush out civic and political issues, and by doing so, offer an environmental preservation and re-use. The tools utilized by the art collective are not fixed but rather relative, lucid, part of an on-going process of negotiation with various agencies, through which discriminated and appropriated narratives become visible and recognizable, thereby offering alternative solutions to social, spatial, and environmental matters. Through participatory engagements and site-specific agenda, the project demonstrates an artistic vision for communal, social, and environmental change. However, it illustrates how a museum space can accept conflict as a force that leads to new relationships - both between communities and between civic and institutional entities.

## NOTES

1. Although Negev is the standard geographic term used in the study of southern Israel/Palestine, it has not been constituted as a defined geographic unit or as a separate administrative unit under any of the last three regimes that exercised power over the area (Ottoman, British, and Israeli). Negev is a biblical term that refers to a smaller area of land than what is considered the Negev region today. Further, in its earlier English version, the “Negeb” (with a b) used to refer mainly to a climatic unit of a desert region and not to a geographic or politically defined territory (Kedar, Amara, & Yiftachel, 2020, p. 16).

2. Interview Hamai’sa family by artists Behar Pharahia and Farberoff, 2019. [Hebrew].

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**PHOTO ELYSÉE'S MOVE TO A PURPOSE-BUILT BUILDING: A NEW CONTEXT WITH CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION AND LOGISTICS**

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Photo Elysée – Museum for Photography  
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**ABSTRACT**

Photo Elysée - Museum for Photography is one of the most important museums devoted entirely to photography. Founded in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1985 by Charles-Henri Favrod (1927-2017), its internationally recognized collection boasts over a million objects dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Since its inception, the institution has been housed in a historic 18<sup>th</sup> century *Maison de Maître* adapted for museum use, set in a park with an exceptional location overlooking the lake. In 2022, Photo Elysée re-opened its doors to the public as part of Plateforme 10, the new arts district in the heart of Lausanne, bringing together two other museums: the Museum of Fine Arts (MCBA) and the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts (MUDAC). Shared with MUDAC Photo Elysée's new building designed by the Portuguese architects Aires Mateus, was conceived of as a purpose-built museum space and boasts a unique architecture.

The planning process for the new building was based on dialogue between various teams of professionals involved in the project and Photo Elysée. The latter reported the requirements of space planning and equipment to achieve the essential measures for the conservation of works of art. During the relocation of the museum's teams to their new premises, the difference between the projection and reality, between analytical forecasts and the current context, gave rise to a rediscovery of the new building. The aim of this article is to critically analyze the practical and inseparable aspects of conservation and logistics, "invisible" systems that have been subject to change throughout this project, including changes due to budgetary constraints. Secondly, there is also the consideration of the long-term use of the museum, thinking the new ICOM definition, the local and global climate, and sustainable development.

**BIOS**

**MARINA MARTIN BARBOSA** has a Ph.D. in History (line of research Politics, Memory and Cities) from the State University of Campinas and in Art History from the Ca' Foscari and IUAV Universities of Venice (2015). She holds a master's degree in Conservation and Enhancement of historical and cultural heritage, with a focus on industrial heritage, from the University Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne, the University of Évora and the University of Padua (2010). She is Architect and Urban Designer (São Paulo University State) with a training completed at ENSA Paris La Villette (2007). Her professional experience includes the management of art collections, the coordination and design of exhibitions, teaching Expography/Museography, and working with conservation and restoration projects of architectural heritage. She currently works at Photo Elysée in Lausanne as exhibition registrar and is member of the VKKS -ASHHA (Swiss Association of Art Historians) and part of the executive committee of ICOM-ICAMT (International Committee for Architecture and Museum Techniques).

**NADINE REDING** is a conservator-restorer. She completed an apprenticeship (1997) as a photo retoucher, the last of its kind in Switzerland. After an internship, she studied restoration and conservation of graphic art, written material, and photography at the Bern University of Applied Sciences. During her studies she used every free minute to do an internship either in Vienna with a renowned photo restorer or in Rochester with Kodak to learn as much as possible from practical experience. Since 2004 she runs her own studio *Atelier Reding* (formerly [fokore.ch](http://fokore.ch)) for photo restoration. Along the way, she has worked in various institutions and currently she is responsible for the preventive conservation at Photo Elysée in Lausanne. Photography fascinates her again and again.



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**INTRODUCTION**

This article describes the current situation of Photo Elysée, which reopened its doors to the public a year ago. Although exhibition activities have been running since then, the storage rooms that will house the museum's collection, as well as part of the workspaces, are not yet completely ready. In this article, we share the staff's experience of the museum's current operating situation, focusing on conservation and logistical aspects.

It is not a coincidence that Lausanne was the first European city to host a museum devoted entirely to photography: the Musée de l'Elysée. In fact, since the middle of the 19th century, the city has played a leading role in this field, having had important personalities linked to photography, as well as the creation of institutions dedicated to this medium.<sup>1</sup>

Founded on October 11, 1985, by the journalist, writer and historian Charles-Henri Favrod (1927-2017), what is now known as Photo Elysée was housed in an historic 18<sup>th</sup> century *Maison de Maître*, called Maison de l'Elysée, purchased by the Canton of Vaud in 1971, fully restored and adapted for museum use.<sup>2</sup> Located in a park with an exceptional view over the lake, the museum had 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space spread over four floors. Its internationally recognized collection was stored in rooms specially designed to maintain a stable temperature of 18°C and a relative humidity of 40% (Ewing & Girardin, 2007, p. 19).

Under the direction of Charles-Henri Favrod, the museum put together a small team that was fundamental to developing the ambition of becoming a recognized cultural institution. The team has grown over the years, comprising an equivalent of 42 full-time employees in 2018, before it closed in September 2020 in preparation of the move to its new premises (Recher, 2018, p. 47).

It is important to mention that photography is an extremely delicate medium,



Image 1. Musée de l'Elysée - Façade © Reto Duriel

and at the same time, due to its reproducibility, easy to accumulate. Photo Elysée's collection has grown over its five administrations, from acquisitions, donations, and deposits. All this comprises over a million objects, including digital formats and the photographic archives of over 20 artists.<sup>3</sup> Not only does the diversity of techniques and formats reflect the variety of this collection, but its themes are linked to the history and personalities associated with the institution, the acquisitions made on the occasion of exhibitions, as well as to the museum's vision.<sup>4</sup>

From the outset, Photo Elysée's programming has been extremely dynamic and in line with current events. Examples of this include the "East-West Project" following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, "New York after New York" in 2001, and "#Ukraine Images of War" in 2022. In addition to the vast exhibition program and related activities, the museum promotes exhibits outside its walls, as well as traveling exhibitions around the world.

After reopening to the public as part of Plateforme 10, the intensity of these activities continues to demand a great deal of work in terms of the managing and conserving of the works in a new space that was previously only known on paper, leading the team to a rediscovery of the purpose-built building.

**A NEW CONTEXT FOR PHOTO ELYSÉE: EXHIBITING AND COLLECTING**

Plateforme 10, the new arts district in the heart of Lausanne, was initially born out of the idea of finding a new location for the Museum of Fine

Arts (MCBA). After the rejection of an initial proposal in 2008, in 2009 the local government proposed the creation of its new building near to Lausanne station, on a 25,000m<sup>2</sup> site that had previously been used as a railway interchange. The project was divided into two phases, the first comprising the construction of the MCBA, which was inaugurated in 2019, and the second bringing together Photo Elysée and the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts (MUDAC) in a single building, which opened its doors to the public in June 2022 (Canton de Vaud, 2022, p. 1).

Well located, Plateforme 10 is easily accessible to travelers, including those from German-speaking Switzerland. Current visitors are not only interested in the cultural agenda, but also the services on offer, such as restaurants and cafes, as well as the impressive museum architecture.

The building of both Photo Elysée and MUDAC was conceived with a museum program in mind, based on a dialogue between the various teams of professionals involved in the project and boasting a unique architecture by the Portuguese architects Aires Mateus and the engineer Rui Furtado. It was designed to meet the complex needs of two institutions with different requirements, both in terms of exhibitions and conservation. Entering the museum through a shared foyer, access to Photo Elysée's exhibitions is on the lower floor, where natural light is reduced, and to MUDAC on the upper floor, under a luminous ceiling, where large-format objects are exhibited. The foyer houses the public reception services, boutique, and café, which belong to both institutions and are staffed by shared personnel.

Exhibiting and preserving photographic materials presents challenges in a variety of settings. Photo Elysée's workrooms must have as little light as possible to protect the photographs from fading. In parallel with the air conditioning systems, all rooms in which photographs are processed are climate-monitored using data loggers. If changes are detected, which can happen in a new building, it is possible to react quickly and correct.

So far, thousands of artworks from institutions all over the world, along with the museum's collection, have made up Photo Elysée's temporary exhibitions at its new premises. A great effort has been made to ensure that the spaces that house them (temporary storage, treatment room and exhibition plateau)



Image 2. Plateforme 10 - Aerial view © Aires Mateus



Image 3. Photo Elysée building © Matthieu Gafsou

have the equipment and ideal conditions in terms of conservation to preserve the works of art.

The works of art arrive at the loading dock, a space shared with MUDAC. Their way to the temporary storage and treatment room is simple. These connected rooms make it possible to reduce and follow the movement of the objects. Their dimensions of 30m<sup>2</sup> and 16m<sup>2</sup> respectively, with a height of 3.5m are perfect for working with small formats, although working with large-format works is a challenge, including the storage of large-format packaging.

Other workspaces associated with the preparation of works for exhibiting, are the consultation room and the conservation, framing and digitization studios, which are on the same level as the storage and temporary treatment rooms. Critically, some of these spaces are quite tight in terms of size.

As for the passage of artworks from the loading dock or working rooms to the exhibition



space, it is somewhat less obvious, as it involves changing the level of the building as well as the elevator to finally reach this space. The access to most of the building's doors is by badge for security reasons, regulating access. However, the weight of the doors and the short opening time before the alarm sounds can be an obstacle when traveling with objects through the building. This is why it is important to think carefully in advance about the routes the objects will take, especially for exhibitions with hundreds of objects or large formats.

Regarding the exhibition space, it covers 1,400m<sup>2</sup>, with some fixed architectural elements: five pillars that divide the space in two, an elevator shaft and two staircases. It also has two educational rooms for the public. The flexibility of this space allows, if needed, the redesigning of each exhibition season. In addition, as part of the museum's sustainable development agenda, a modular and versatile aluminum wall system developed by the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg has been used since Photo Elysée's inaugural exhibition in this space. It is adapted and reused in each exhibition, avoiding material waste.<sup>5</sup>

The exhibition space also has three glass openings that give access to small interior gardens and a patio, overlooking the outside but not accessible to the public. These openings – which are covered with protective UV filter films and do not allow UV rays to pass through, reduce the lux levels massively without affecting the architecture – are essential for opening up the visitor's experience, since the space is located underground. On the other hand, they pose maintenance problems for the gardens since they can only be accessed from the exhibition space. In addition, when the patio is used for events, the constant opening of the doors causes climate stability and therefore its use is limited.

Another point related to logistics is that Photo Elysée's team is still physically split between the old and new buildings, due to the delay in transferring its collections, which makes some of the operations of the different teams involved in preparing exhibitions somewhat difficult.

As for the spaces to house Photo Elysée's collections in the new building, they consist of five storage rooms with three different climate zones. The total area is 1,020m<sup>2</sup>, with a height of 5.5m. These spaces are located underground and are accessible by elevators and stairs.



Image 4. View of Christian Marclay's installation during the handover of the building's keys in November 2021 © William Gammuto



Image 5. The "wob 3walls" at the first reopening exhibition © Emmanuel Denis

The storage spaces of the partner museum MUDAC are located on the same level.

The storage rooms 1 (1,97m<sup>2</sup>) and 2 (258m<sup>2</sup>) operate under climatic conditions of 17°C +/- 1°C and humidity of 40% +/- 5%. They were designed to store all black and white photographs. Storage 1 is intended for storing framed photographs on rolling rails and shelves, while storage 2 will receive photographic glass plates, among others, which require high levels of stability of the shelves. Likewise, photographs are stored in conservation boxes. To make optimum use of the room height, a mezzanine floor was installed in this space.

The storage rooms 3 (184m<sup>2</sup>) and 4 (268m<sup>2</sup>) work in climate conditions of 10°C +/- 1°C and humidity 40% +/- 5%. They will be used for color photography and have rolling grids, compactus systems and fixed shelving. Some compactus systems are operated electronically and others manually.

Considering possible future energy crises or shortages, manually operated systems are fully sufficient.

Storage room 5 (111m<sup>2</sup>) operates under climate conditions of 6°C +/- 1°C and humidity 35% +/- 5% and has the coldest conditions of all the storage facilities. It will store acetate materials and color slides. Here, the emphasis is not on the colorfulness of the objects, but on their materiality. The objects in this room are mainly stored in preservation containers, since it has a supportive effect on the climatic stability, in addition to the usual protective measures, since slight fluctuations can occur with such cooling. Internal measurements have shown that a very linear climate curve is present in the boxes. Furthermore, if objects from this storage are needed, they can be acclimatized by moving them to the next warmer storage room.

Not all formats can be deposited in Photo Elysée's new storage facilities. Nitrate negatives, for example, are kept in an old military bunker at a temperature of 8°C and 35% humidity in the mountains. Their material makes them a direct danger to the train station.

Before the move, almost all objects were registered and classified by format in view of the new storage furniture by the collections team. This will allow the space to be used to its full capacity.

Currently, the climate in the storage rooms is monitored by an independent system of data loggers. Since the building came into operation, it has not yet been possible to transfer Photo Elysée's collection into the new storages due to delays in acclimatizing these rooms. The main factors are insufficient understandings at this stage of the climate of the building and how it



Image 6. Storage room 2 © Khashayar Javanmardi



Image 7. Storage room 3 © Khashayar Javanmardi

is influenced by building operations and the outside temperatures. As soon as the climate stabilizes, the collection will be transferred from the old museum building as well as from external storage facilities.

Lastly, the long-term use of the museum must be considered in conjunction with the local and global climate and sustainable development. According to the Swiss Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology, summer temperatures in the Lausanne region are expected to increase by up to 3.5°C by 2060. In addition, the summer season will be up to 40 days longer. This means that it is already necessary to consider how to keep the building cool in terms of energy. One possible option is to add more vegetation, but this could possibly affect the architecture.

## CONCLUSION

Photo Elysée has experienced many challenges since its first move to the new building. Its staff is getting to know a new workplace, learning how to work together with a partner institution (MUDAC), and striving to find more efficient ways to work in this new reality.

The exhibition spaces had to be prioritized to reopen the museum to the public. Other workspaces are still being discussed and developed, such as the conservation studio and the storage rooms, which are being worked on to create optimal climatic conditions. Progress takes time but is sometimes visible: soon, the building will open the library space, which is still closed to the public, to host an exhibition of an architecture prize from French-speaking Switzerland.



It is important then that logistical aspects go hand in hand with conservation and that a good understanding of the new spaces provides new practices in the museum's daily operations.

From planning to use of the new building, eight years have passed, during which time the team has changed, and needs have been adjusted – also in terms of budget. A perfect museum will never exist, but it is still desirable for buildings to be constructed in such a way as to guarantee their functionality and the preservation of the culture and memory for communities, according to the new ICOM definition. The involvement of museum professionals in the planning process is therefore essential.

## NOTES

1. Since the creation of Daguerre's process in 1839, Lausanne has been a center of photography, hosting in 1840 an exhibition of daguerreotypes. Other key events include the foundation of the Musée Historiographique Vaudois in 1896 by the photographer Paul Vionnet (1830-1914) based on his collection. In 1909, the photographer Archibald Reiss (1875-1929) founded the Institut de Police Scientifique. Fleeing Nazism, the German photographer Gertrude Fehr (1895-1996) founded in 1939 the École de Photographie de la Suisse Romande (Ewing & Girardin, 2007, p. 7).

2. Since the early 1970s, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs has presented several photography exhibitions (Frank, 2016, p. 14-15). In addition, the Cabinet Cantonal des Estampes hosted photography exhibitions on one of the floors of the Maison de l'Élysée between 1980 and 1985. The success of these exhibitions led to the foundation of the Musée de l'Élysée (Ewing & Girardin, 2007, p. 7).

3. Daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, glass negatives, contact sheets and flexible negatives, salted paper and charcoal prints, black and white prints on silver gelatin or large format digital color, albums or working prints: these objects constitute a collection of immense diversity, where one can find all the historical, chemical, and physical complexity of the photographic medium (Recher, 2018, p. 33).

4. Travel, reportage and mountain photography, the production since the 1990s, the representation of the body, Polaroid and artists' books are particularly well represented. Vernacular photography and photography by female authors have been the focus of sustained

attention in recent years (Recher, 2018, p. 40).

5. For more information see: wob 3walls. In: <https://www.kunstmuseum.de/en/wob3walls/>

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## LUMINOUS CONFLICTS: NAVIGATING ARCHITECTURE, LIGHT, AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN MUSEUMS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate relationship between architecture and light and its profound influence on the overall museum experience. Focusing on the Yale Center for British Art as a case study, designed by renowned architect Louis Kahn with a philosophical approach, the research delves into the conflict that arises when balancing the original vision of the building, the imperative of preservation, and the desires of visitors. The study particularly examines the tension between Kahn's intentional manipulation of natural light and the need to protect delicate artworks.

The architectural design of the Yale Center for British Art exemplifies Kahn's exploration of light as a transformative element. However, the preservation of sensitive materials within the museum poses a challenge to the building's original intent. The potential harm caused by light necessitates the implementation of control measures, potentially compromising the intended luminous ambiance envisioned by Kahn.

To gauge visitor preferences, a comprehensive survey was conducted, revealing a strong inclination toward the presence of natural light in the museum environment. Visitors expressed a profound appreciation for the ethereal qualities and heightened engagement with the exhibits facilitated by the interplay of natural light within the space.

This research critically examines the tensions and complexities surrounding the delicate balance between architectural vision, preservation imperatives, and visitor expectations, and highlights the museum space as a dynamic field of action. The architectural elements, the configuration of the interior, the lighting, and the movement are all elements in harmony and constant conflict. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between architecture, light, the museum experience, and finally knowledge. It underscores the importance of considering the multifaceted perspectives of preservation, architectural design, and visitor preferences when navigating the delicate balance between these elements in museums.

### BIO

**CHARALAMPIA DIMITROPOULOU** is an esteemed educator specializing in the History of Architecture and Art theory and history. Her passion for museum architecture has been a driving force in her extensive research career.

Charalampia holds a Bachelor's degree from the Athens School of Fine Arts, where her focus was on the History and theory of art, with a specialization in the history of Architecture. Building on this foundation, she pursued a Master's degree in Museum Studies, delving into the intricate interplay between spatial design and the role of light in museums.

In her master's thesis, she explored the nuanced spatial meanings and contributions of light within the museum environment, showcasing her commitment to understanding the symbiotic relationship between architecture, light, and perception.

Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate, dedicating her research to the dynamic intersections of Architecture, light, and perception in contemporary museums. Her academic pursuits have taken her to Yale University, where she had the privilege of expanding her research at the prestigious Yale Center for British Art, supported by a sponsorship.

With a passion for research and a commitment to education, Mrs Dimitropoulou contributes to the advancement of knowledge in her field. Her work bridges theory and practice, informing scholarly discussions and inspiring the next generation of architecture enthusiasts and professionals. Beyond academia, Charalampia serves as a consultant for international organizations, leveraging her expertise to contribute to projects at a global level.

## LUMINOUS CONFLICTS: NAVIGATING ARCHITECTURE, LIGHT, AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN MUSEUMS

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### INTRODUCTION

Museum architecture in the 20th century bears witness to an evolving relationship between form and function, aesthetics and conservation, and the interplay of light as both an artistic medium and a preservation challenge. Iconic architectural designs of this era have not only redefined the visual language of museums but have also presented complex conflicts that demand comprehensive exploration. Within their hallowed halls, they strive to harmonize the intricate interplay between architectural design, curation, preservation imperatives, and the diverse expectations of their visitors. This multifaceted relationship has been the subject of profound inquiry, with scholars and practitioners delving into the nuanced dimensions of museum environments (Henning, 2007). Amidst the rich tapestry of museum discourse, one thread has remained resilient and persistent – the conflict.

Conflict within museums extends beyond discord; it's a delicate equilibrium requiring skillful management of interconnected forces. Architects desire well-lit spaces, curators craft narratives, educators impart knowledge, and visitors seek immersive experiences. These intersecting interests generate tensions in museum environments. Within this complex world, the challenge is transforming conflicts to enhance the contemporary museum experience while preserving culture and art.

Our investigation finds its locus in the iconic Yale Center for British Art, an architectural masterpiece conceived by the visionary Louis Kahn. This building's philosophical underpinnings and meticulous design illuminate the potential of light as a transformative element within the museum environment (Kahn, 1961). Our effort aspires to synthesize a harmonious resolution—an untangling of the conflicts that bind museums. We envision museums not merely as spaces where conflicts are managed but as catalysts for enriched visitor experiences, profound knowledge, and a deeper understanding of

culture and art. Through rigorous analysis and insightful inquiry, we aim to illuminate the path toward a more comprehensive understanding of this captivating symbiosis.

### MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE AND LIGHT

Museum architecture has undergone profound changes in the 20th century, redefining how spaces influence visitors' experiences (MacLeod, 2005). This transformation also relates to how architects use lighting in museums. Scholars like Mieke Bal, in "Exhibition as Film", explore how light plays a crucial role in creating dynamic and cinematic exhibition environments. Bal identifies space, visitors, time, and light as key tools in crafting the architectural and scenic experience (Bal, 2007, p. 74).

Lighting is crucial in shaping the visitor's experience in museums. The evolution of museum architecture, exemplified in works like "Museum Architecture: A Brief History" and "Architecture is the Museum" by Giebelhausen (2006), has shifted from classical standards to more adaptable and technologically advanced concepts. Features like transparent ceilings and large windows have become prominent, transforming the interior space and creating a deep connection between space and experience (Maxwell, 1989).



Figure 1. Drawing by Louis Kahn reveals the meticulous control of light management, placement of artworks, and the pursuit of an ideal visitor experience. University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Housed in the Harvey and Irwin Kroiz Gallery, the resources of the Kahn Collection are used with the permission of The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Kahn Collection, AAUP).

The importance of lighting in museums is highlighted in any comprehensive analysis of space, art, and architecture, lighting consistently emerges as a vital consideration (Newhouse, 2007). This emphasizes that you can't fully evaluate museum architecture, exhibitions, spatial arrangements, or object presentation without considering lighting (Gobbato, 2021). It underscores how integral lighting is in shaping museum architecture and the overall experience.



## LIGHT, PRESERVATION, AND CURATION

The existing body of literature on museum lighting primarily focuses on its role in preserving exhibits. Objects within a museum's collection are fundamental elements, and how they are presented significantly influences visitor engagement. Earlier studies viewed light, often associated with heat, as potentially destructive (Thomson, 1986) (Stolow, 1987). However, contemporary research broadens this perspective, aiming to connect art preservation with the visitor's experience. In their 2007 study, "Museum Lighting: Its Past and Future Development," Druzik and Eshoj trace the evolution of museum lighting, considering both preservation and presentation. They emphasize the challenge of managing light in museums because it is the most visible aspect to viewers, impacting not only objects but also the viewing conditions (Druzik, J. & Eshoj, B., 2007).



Figure 2. William B. Carter, 03/01/1975, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Melon (far left) and Jules Prown (second from left) looking at one of the skylights. MS 1345, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, copyright, Yale University

The concept of lighting has evolved to facilitate collaboration between curators and conservators. This collaboration seeks not only to ensure safer lighting but also to create an atmospheric setting for showcasing artworks. This approach allows for a balanced consideration of the preferences of artists and curators, guided by the expectations of the viewing public (Delgado et al. 2010).

Museums and exhibitions serve as frameworks for communicating with visitors, shaping the significance of material culture in human history (Roppola, 2012). Current research delves into the intricate relationship between lighting, conservation, curation, and the visitor experience. The design of lighting, as part of the orchestrated encounter between visitors and objects, contributes to the interpretation and knowledge-building process (Kaniari, 2014).



Figure 3. The directed encounter of the viewer with the work of art. The sense of light and the visual perception of the space and the artwork with and without natural light. (photo by the author, copyright Yale University).

This evolving understanding empowers museum professionals to develop lighting strategies that not only protect valuable artifacts but also create captivating and artistically faithful exhibitions, ultimately enriching the visitor's museum journey (Dierking & Falk, 1992). As we delve into the influence of lighting on museum environments, it becomes evident that architectural design choices and preservation concerns are intricately entwined with the lighting decisions made within these spaces. To better understand the philosophical underpinnings behind such decisions and their transformative potential, we turn our attention to the architectural philosophy of Louis Kahn, whose visionary approach to light and form sheds light on the conflicts and harmonies we explore in the subsequent section.



## YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART AND LOUIS KAHN ARCHITECTURAL PHILOSOPHY

Louis Kahn (1901-1974) left an indelible mark on the world of architecture, with his masterpiece, the Yale Center For British Art, 1977 (YCBA), standing as a testament to his profound significance in the field. Acknowledged by art historian /architectural critic Vincent Scully as a harbinger of modernity and a beacon in the evolution of contemporary architecture (Brownlee, 1991, p. 14) the YCBA played a pivotal role in perpetuating the modernist movement (Smith, 1995).



Figure 4. Drawing from Louis Kahn, emphasizing the surface of the building. This drawing reveals the detailed study of light, form, and materiality of the structure. (Louis Kahn collection, AAUP).

While our introduction lays the groundwork for exploring conflicts within museum architecture, it's essential to illuminate how Louis Kahn's architectural philosophy directly contributes to these conflicts. Kahn's design principles are deeply rooted in the belief that form emerges not solely from structural necessities but from the inherent will of the building itself. It is from this formless essence that the tangible, concrete built environment takes shape (Brownlee, 1991, p. 17), establishing a direct link between the structural elements of the building and the embodied experience of its occupants.

Kahn's conviction that materials and light possess an inherent longing for self-expression elevates architecture beyond mere functionality to inspirational grandeur (Lewis, 1992). This perspective directly correlates with the conflicts we mentioned earlier, particularly the tension between an architect's vision and the imperative of preservation and curation. Kahn's approach to architectural form, where every design element contains an intrinsic desire to manifest its true nature, mirrors the conflict within museums. Here, curators strive to convey nuanced narratives while preserving delicate artworks.

Just as Kahn's designs at YCBA aim to candidly reveal the structure and purpose of the building, curators aim to communicate the essence of artworks without compromising their integrity. This intersection of desires and aspirations is at the heart of the conflicts museums face.



Figure 5. Drawing originating from the office of Louis Kahn and his collaborators. Evident within this plan is meticulous attention to detail in the management and rendering of light, manifested through the intricately sensitive design lines. The geometric form of the building converges harmoniously with the poetic essence of light, (Louis Kahn Collection, AAUP).

Furthermore, Kahn's emphasis on the interplay between natural light and architecture underscores the conflict related to lighting in museums. His belief that space becomes meaningful when bathed in natural light aligns with the desire for well-lit exhibition spaces (Kahn, 1961). However, the need to protect artifacts from potential harm caused by light introduces a complex tension. Kahn's writings reveal the profound significance he ascribes to the interplay between buildings and light, deeply rooted in an anthropocentric perspective extending beyond the confines of interior spaces to encompass the entire structure. According to his thoughts, architecture bears a societal responsibility to shape the human experience (Brownlee, 1991, p. 25).

This endeavor finds its origins in the recognition of space as an existential realm, which Kahn believes becomes meaningful when bathed in natural light.

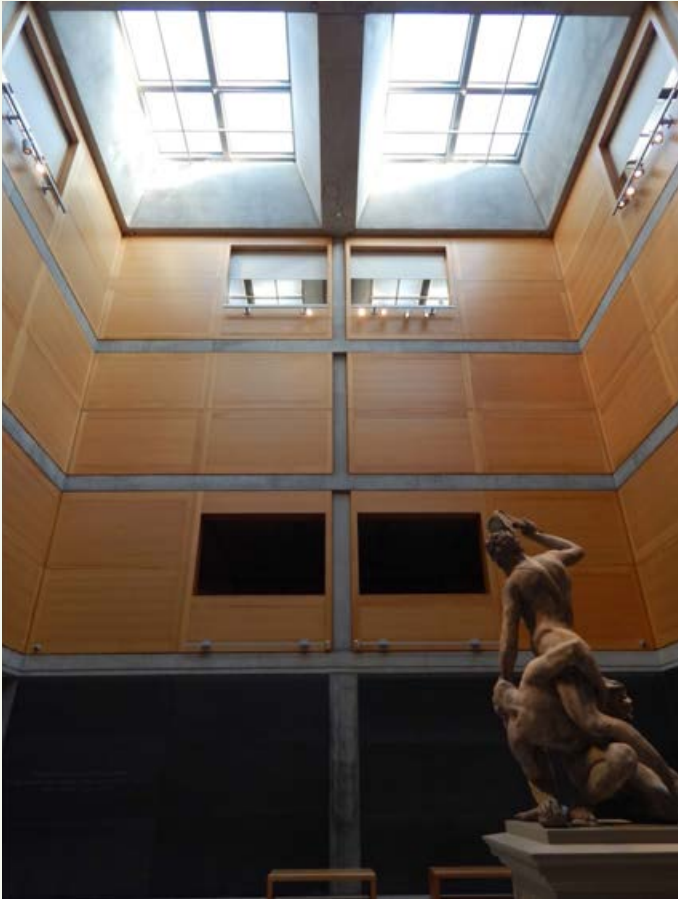


Figure 6. Yale Center for British Art, the entrance courtyard, and the lighting system are evident as well as the facility offered to the structural materials, as well as the lighting choice for the sculpture, shape the visitor's reception environment. (Photo by the author, copyright Yale University).

For instance, at YCBA natural light permeates almost every space, but especially on the unique 4th floor. The pyramidal skylights are followed by the dynamic volume of the concrete base, which contrasts with the linen, the wood, and the carpet covering the floor. If the room is the beginning of architecture<sup>1</sup> as Kahn used to say, the room's configuration at the YCBA represents a new beginning in shaping the museum type and aesthetic experience. Space, light, materials, structure, and construction are qualities that, through the design process, are synchronously realized in the form of the building (Mattern, 2010). Kahn's structure acts as a modulator of light, positioning the reality of design within the mystical dimension of natural light, where design and lighting mutually shape the structural process.



Figure 7. Yale Center for British Art, the harmonious synthesis between materials, light, structure and purpose. The illumination of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, long gallery. (Photo by the author, copyright Yale University).

Louis Kahn's architectural philosophy, with its focus on the inherent desires of materials and light, directly contributes to the conflicts we explore in this paper. It highlights the delicate balance museums must strike between architectural vision, preservation imperatives, and visitor expectations, shedding light on the intricate relationship between architecture, light, the museum experience, and knowledge. Within this framework, architecture becomes the union of two dimensions of existence: the immeasurable inner realm of the soul and the measurable outer realm of the phenomenal world (Burton, 1983). Here, the concept of the soul extends beyond living beings to encompass all entities, including objects and buildings, that possess a desire to express themselves through specific forms.

Thus, light itself seeks to manifest through particular forms, with form becoming the embodiment of light's design, uniting the immeasurable and the measurable within the constructed edifice. Consequently, the building

becomes an aesthetic experience and a lived architecture, harmoniously coexisting with its users (Pallasma, 2016) (MacLeod, 2005). The designed form should ultimately encompass all the symbolic and psychological ideas intrinsic to the building's essence.

**VISITORS PERSPECTIVE**

To comprehensively explore the impact of lighting on the museum experience and gain valuable insights into visitor preferences, we conducted a structured survey based on a systematic research review (Kirchberg, V., & Tronde, M., 2012) (Schindler et al., 2017). The aim of this survey, conducted with 111 participants who visited the Yale Center for British Art, was to understand how lighting influences the engagement and perceptions of the museum's audience. The survey comprised 15 questions, with 43 variables, and was conducted from February 21 to February 25, 2023, coinciding with the YCBA's closing days before a scheduled lighting renovation.

emotions, as well as between the importance of communication and the significance of knowledge. These correlations were statistically substantial, signifying meaningful relationships. In particular, the findings point to the influence of lighting conditions on the emotional experiences of museum visitors. At the same time, it was clear that visitors prefer natural light. Moreover, those who emphasize the importance of lighting for communication purposes also tend to value lighting for its role in enriching their knowledge during their museum visit.

**Correlations**

		Importance in communication	Light and emotion	Importance in knowledge	Attention to light	light effect of movement
Importance in communication	Pearson Correlation	1	,099	,508**	,243*	,046
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,308	<,001	,010	,632
	N	111	109	111	110	110
Light and emotion	Pearson Correlation	,099	1	,124	,253**	,296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,308		,198	,008	,002
	N	109	109	109	108	109
Importance in knowledge	Pearson Correlation	,508**	,124	1	,130	,072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	,198		,174	,453
	N	111	109	111	110	110

Figure 8. Correlations chart, we explore the dialogue between, attention to light, emotion, knowledge, movement, and communication. (This outcome is by spss and refers to five different variables).

In the initial analysis of the survey data, our primary focus was on investigating the interconnections among key variables, particularly the comprehension of museum layouts and the significance of light concerning communication, knowledge, emotion, and perception. During this analysis, we discovered significant correlations between light and

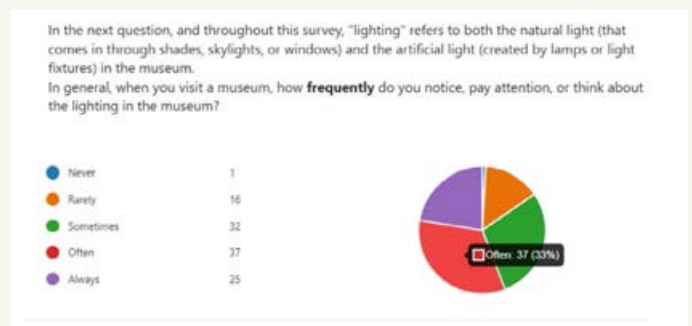


Figure 9. Diagram in the form of a pie chart showing the public's response to museum lighting in general. (Data was collected via Google Forms with physical presence).

Furthermore, a noteworthy but weak positive correlation was observed between the degree of attention directed toward lighting and the perceived impact of light on movement. This suggests that individuals who pay closer attention to lighting nuances within the museum environment also tend to perceive a more pronounced influence of light on their sense of movement. This discovery underscores the intricate relationship between visual stimuli, spatial perception, and the cognitive engagement of museum visitors, highlighting the potential significance of lighting in shaping their holistic museum experience.



Attention to light	Pearson Correlation	,243*	,253**	,130	1	,332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,010	,008	,174		<,001
	N	110	108	110	110	109
light effect of movement	Pearson Correlation	,046	,296**	,072	,332**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,632	,002	,453	<,001	
	N	110	109	110	109	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 10. Table, shows the correlation between the variable's attention to light and movement in the museum space. (The data are obtained from the processing with the SPSS system after the visitors' responses).

## CONCLUSIONS

In the multifaceted realm of museum architecture, curation, and visitor experience, our research journey embarked on a quest to unravel the conflicts that inherently shape the contemporary museum experience. Through our analysis, we've uncovered the pivotal role of light, in the interplay between architecture and museum spaces, recognizing it as a transformative element that impacts the visitor experience profoundly.

In the diverse realm of museum architecture, curation, and the visitor experience, conflicts can serve as catalysts for positive change. This understanding suggests that museums have the potential to evolve into spaces where conflicts are not mere challenges but transformative forces, propelling culture, art, and knowledge to new heights. In this context lighting transcends its utilitarian function, becoming an artistic medium and a preservation challenge. It guides the eye, shapes emotion, and influences perception. This understanding underscores the importance of lighting in crafting immersive and enlightening museum experiences. Furthermore, our study reveals the intricate interplay between the quality of light and the emotional resonance it invokes. Our research underscores the significance of lighting in creating ambiance, setting the tone, and ultimately enriching the visitor's encounter with art and culture.

In essence, our journey through the multifaceted landscape of museum architecture and curation has illuminated a path forward. It's a path that acknowledges conflicts as integral to progress, embraces light as a transformative element, and envisions museums as dynamic

spaces of enrichment and understanding. As we conclude this chapter of inquiry, we look ahead to museums where conflicts are not obstacles but catalysts, ensuring that culture and art continue to flourish and inspire generations to come.

## NOTES

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**EXPLOITING CONFLICTS IN DESIGNING MUSEUMS IN HERITAGE BUILDINGS: ONGOING EXPERIMENTATIONS IN THE PORTUGUESE AREA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Museums have always had a special relationship with heritage buildings (i.e. structures bearing historic, artistic or architectural values, originally dedicated to different functions), as through the centuries they have often accommodated the collections, programs and settings of this cultural institution. The insertion of new display systems and functions into the historic rooms represents a highly complex project, where several conflicts coalesce and are performed. These involve the multiscalar and multifaceted clash between the conservation of the site's tangible and intangible features and the transformative actions that are needed to adapt it to fit new tasks and standards, the complicated coexistence among the manifestation of the building's history and values and the conveyance of the museum's contents and collections, the potentially contentious combination of the enjoyment of the spatial experience and the integration of digital devices that mediate the relationship with the environment, etc. The partial or strong prevailing of one conflicting stance over the other (or the search for their balance) plays a key role in shaping, characterizing and positioning the project within a specific cultural frame.

Throughout the decades, both theories and practices developed around these topics have been widely mutating – and yet no definitive position or formula has been univocally defined. The elastic nature of this field is related to its complexity, operating at the crossroad between restoration, museography, technology and architectural design, but also to everchanging disciplinary revisions and constant cultural and/or technical advancements, as well as to the unique nature of each specific site and project. These “conflicts” and the search for their solution remain open, and actually represent a driving force for a continuously reinvigorated work.

**BIOS**

**BARBARA BOGONI** is Associate Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano. She has widely investigated and published around Portuguese architecture culture, with a special focus on its contemporary development.

**ELENA MONTANARI** is Assistant Professor in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano. Her research work is mainly focused on the development of museographic culture at its intersections with other disciplines.

The paper aims at reflecting on the latest direction of this research, with a particular focus on the innovative positions that are currently emerging from the practice of some young Portuguese architects (DepA Architects, Spaceworkers, CVDB Arquitectos).

# EXPLOITING CONFLICTS IN DESIGNING MUSEUM IN HERITAGE BUILDINGS

**Museums** have always had a special relationship with heritage buildings; throughout the centuries, these cultural institutions have often arranged their collections, programs and settings into structures previously dedicated to different functions (such as castles, palaces, convents and monasteries), usually bearing historic, artistic or architectural values. The insertion of new display systems and activities into these historic rooms represents a highly complex project, where several conflicts coalesce and are performed. These involve the **multi-scalar and multi-faceted clash** between the conservation of the building's tangible and intangible features and the transformative actions that are needed to adapt it to fit new tasks and standards, the complicated coexistence among the manifestation of the site's history and values and the conveyance of the museum's contents and collections, the potentially contentious combination of the enjoyment of the spatial experience and the integration of digital devices that mediate the relationship with the environment, etc. The partial or strong prevailing of one conflicting stance over the other (or the search for their balance) plays a key role in shaping, characterizing and positioning the project within a specific cultural frame.

Throughout the decades, both theories and practices developed around these topics have been widely mutating – and yet no definitive position or formula has been univocally defined. The elastic nature of this field is related to its complexity, operating at the **crossroad between restoration, museography, technology, architectural and interior design**, but also to everchanging disciplinary revisions and constant cultural and/or technical advancements,

It is possible to observe the application of this strategy to the buildings' adaptation in the **Museu do Megalitismo, which is housed in the former Mora railway station restored by CVDB arquitctos (2016)**.

The project combines the preservation of the historic structures (through a careful rehabilitation and the enhancement of their volumetry and of the original configuration of the roof) and the addition of new bodies, i.e. two volumes at both ends of the complex and a covered gallery, operating as a unifying conceptual element, interconnecting the different programs and managing the circulation. The new elements are embraced by a "skin", made up of panels cut out of lacquered aluminum, whose iconography is based on the interpretation of geometric figures recovered from the archaeological finds, referring to the megalithic period. By running throughout the base of the whole structure, this new architectural layer not only serves as a reference to the museum's content but also establishes a dialogic relationship with the historic volumes, that are engaged in a competition between the permanence of the site's history and the value of its new task, which digs into a deeper past but weaves new interplays with the physical and social present life of the area.



A different application of the strategy, focused on the transformation of interior spaces, can be observed in **depA Architects' rehabilitation of the eighteenth century Bishop's Palace of Pinhel into a Cultural House (2014)**.

The proposal balanced between the assurance of permanence of the original matrix of the building (and its former nobility and coherence) and the injection of new elements and finishings aimed at triggering unexpected meanings. For example, the layout and decorative features of the rooms were untouched, but all the surfaces were painted white, hence setting a dialogue between the retained roots, distinctive forms and tactile characteristics and the clean aesthetic and the abstract atmosphere generated by the (absence of) colour.



as well as to the unique nature of each specific site and project. These "conflicts" and the search for their solution remain open, and actually represent a driving force for a continuously reinvigorated work. The paper aims at reflecting on the latest direction of this research, with a particular focus on the innovative positions that are currently emerging from the practice of some young Portuguese architects – namely depA Architects (Carlos Azevedo, João Crisóstomo and Luis Sobral), CVDB Arquitectos (Cristina Verissimo and Diogo Burnay) and Spaceworkers (Carla Duarte, Henrique Marques and Rui Dinis).

In the last years, these teams have variously engaged with the **creative adaptation of historic buildings to house cultural purposes**; a critical analysis of their work seems to highlight the development of a special approach to the "conservation through transformation" concept, that is based on the elaboration of an **"agonistic" relationship** between the old architectural structures and the additional elements integrated to enable new functions and meanings. This relationship draws on the set up of a **special dialogue between old and new** special dialogue between old and new layers, based on the enhancement of the historical building (through a preliminary rigorous restoration project, usually starting from the extraction of all superfluous parts, on the critical conservation of significant scars and textures, and on the retrieval of original characters), and on the subsequent design of an intervention aimed at integrating new elements, designed to compete with a selection of the original features. The tensions produced by this strategy, that can be performed at a formal, material and/or symbolic level, eventually contributes to make the complexity of the sequence of chapters that continue to enrich the life of the site even more sharp and clear.

A more specific museographic application of the strategy can be observed in the **Museu Damião de Góis e das Vítimas da Inquisição, designed by Spaceworkers in Alenquer (2017)**.

The intervention is focused on the creation of a display structure inside a restored Church in Alenquer. The antagonism between the new elements (organized along a fragmented nucleus that receives and organizes the exhibition and the visitors) and the "container" is played around the geometry of the latter's vaulted ceilings and performed through a material clash. The resulting space is thus provided with its own identity, ensuing from the competition between the rigorous texture of the brick walls and vaults and the plastic value of the arched dark structure producing a counterpart of the historic spatial features and, at the same time, enhancing the continuity and materializing a new chapter in the life of the building.





### ISLAMIC ART AND THE MUSEUM; CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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#### ABSTRACT

In the last two decades, the world has witnessed a significant refugee crisis, primarily driven by migrants from unsettled Muslim countries seeking asylum in Europe and North America. Following September 11, there has been a surge in the radicalization of Islam and Muslims, resulting in extremism, Islamophobia, and struggles related to the integration of migrants into their new communities. In response to these complex dynamics, museums and cultural institutions in both the Western and Arab Islamic worlds have turned to their Islamic art collections in search of answers and solutions. This has led to the creation, renovation, and expansion of Islamic art museums, the relocation of numerous Islamic art collections, and the organization of exhibitions and conferences dedicated to Islamic art and culture. However, curating Islamic art poses substantial challenges, primarily because the presentation and representation of Islamic art collections in museums are profoundly political, reflecting the complex and unsettled relationship between the East and the West. Fundamental questions like ‘Who is represented in the museum?’ and ‘How are they represented?’ infuse different meanings and values into objects and, by extension, the people and civilizations that produced them.

This paper delves into the intricate challenges encountered by museums and curators when dealing with Islamic art collections. It considers the historical context of the academic field of Islamic art and its profound influence on the exhibition of Islamic art objects. The study aims to illuminate the difficulties curators face when presenting Islamic art collections to diverse audiences. Furthermore, it examines potential solutions to address these challenges, solutions rooted in the colonial circumstances that shaped the establishment of the discipline of Islamic art in Europe.

To gain a deeper understanding of the complexities at play, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, blending a comprehensive literature review with interviews

#### BIO

Art, heritage, and museum researcher, **DINA TURKIEH** is an experienced historian of art, specializing in Islamic Art, and a museum expert. She currently works at the Louvre Abu Dhabi’s Department of External Outreach and Cultural Engagement, where she oversees the research collection and provides training to both internal and external staff on best museum practices.

With in-depth knowledge of museums, galleries, and the heritage industry, as well as the Eastern and Western history of art and archaeology, Dina is well-versed in planning, managing, and tracking museum projects that focus on inclusivity within the museum space, art and engagement, and art community building. As a refined communicator, she is fluent in Arabic, English, and French.

Dina earned her BA in History of Art and Archaeology with distinction from Paris Sorbonne University in 2014, where she received the best student award for her exceptional academic achievements. She later obtained her MA in Museum Studies with distinction from the University of Leicester, winning the prestigious Professor Suzan Pearce Prize in 2022. Her MA research project, centered around gallery objects and collections, achieved the highest scoring dissertation ever to receive this honor. Currently, Dina is working on her PhD dissertation proposal.

In her free time, Dina loves to travel and explore museums and archaeological sites, nurturing her passion for art and history.

Furthermore, museums grapple with the ethical dilemma of displaying religious objects in a secular setting, risking the potential deprivation of these objects’ original meanings.

To tackle these multifaceted challenges, several key solutions have been proposed. Scholars advocate for the adoption of a new chronological framework for Islamic art history that runs parallel to the Western timeline. This framework would encompass all significant events in the Muslim world. Implementing such a chronological order in museum displays can provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic art and culture. Furthermore, enhancing the study of Islamic art and museum narratives can be achieved through interdisciplinary



of key stakeholders. The primary data collection method entails conducting semi-structured interviews with two prominent curators working in museums housing Islamic art collections. Yannick Lintz, the former Director of the Department of Art of Islam at the Louvre, Paris, represents a European encyclopaedic museum; and Nicoletta Fazio, curator of Iran and Central Asia lands at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, exemplifies an Arab Islamic art museum. The choice of these two case studies allows for a comprehensive comparison of the challenges faced by museums in diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

In parallel, an exhaustive literature review surveys existing scholarly works on the discipline of Islamic art, the historical context of its evolution, and the influence of museums on shaping the field. This review also encompasses studies focused on museology, particularly the transition from traditional museology to the new museology. The triangulation of data from multiple sources fortifies the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring a nuanced and robust examination of the research topic.

The research outcomes underscore several challenges encountered in curating Islamic art objects at museums, with a particular focus on the major challenges. First and foremost, the term “Islamic Art” itself proves problematic, as it often carries an inherent ambiguity that can mislead visitors into assuming it predominantly consists of religious art. However, most Islamic artworks are secular in nature, necessitating the quest for an alternative terminology. Furthermore, the diversity of Islamic art, spanning various periods, regions, materials, and techniques, presents a significant challenge for curators tasked with accurately classifying objects and providing pertinent information about their origins. Additionally, effectively communicating Islamic art values to a diverse audience of museum visitors is a pressing challenge. Visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds necessitate curators to adapt their narratives and approaches accordingly. The absence of universal theories and methods for decoding Islamic art further compounds this challenge. Visitors may struggle to comprehend inscriptions or interpret Islamic artworks differently due to their own cultural contexts. Crafting engaging and informative labels for Islamic artworks calls for seamless collaboration between curators and museum educators.

collaboration with scholars from various fields, including sociologists, Islamic studies experts, and theologians. This approach can yield deeper insights into the contexts of Islamic objects and reveal their diverse meanings. Contextualizing collections will also ensure a balanced presentation that appeals to both local communities and a global audience.

Inclusivity and representation play pivotal roles in addressing the challenges faced in curating Islamic art. Museums must consider the diverse identities and experiences of their audiences, encompassing Muslim communities and individuals from non-Muslim backgrounds. Involving curators from Islamic countries in museums with Islamic art collections can add value and amplify the voice of the represented culture. Collaborating with communities and embracing diverse perspectives can lead to more inclusive narratives and representations within museum spaces. Finally, curators shoulder the responsibility of clarifying some misconceptions about Islamic art and culture. Through educational efforts, museums can combat stereotypes and prejudices associated with Islam and Muslims. Presenting Islamic art in a manner that humanizes the culture and counters negative narratives can foster understanding and bridge cultural divides.

To conclude, in today’s world, the old political frameworks no longer suffice. To address the challenges related to Islamic art, it’s essential for museums and academic institutions to break free from their colonial legacies. This transformation would breathe new life into Islamic collections and empower Islamic communities to express themselves. Museums must embrace self-critique and innovative approaches to fulfill their missions. Depending on their specific vision, collections, and audiences, each museum should craft inclusive frameworks that encompass all segments of society.

**AUTHOR**

Dina Turkieh

# ISLAMIC ART AND THE MUSEUM: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART - BY STILL EPSILON IS LICENSED UNDER CC BY 2.0.

## INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, global refugee crises and integration challenges for migrants from unsettled Muslim-majority countries in Western societies have fueled interest in Islamic art collections in museums. This has led to the creation of Islamic art museums, collection relocations, and exhibitions. However, curating these collections is complex due to political factors and representation issues. This research explores these challenges within the historical context of Islamic art academia and its impact on the presentation of Islamic art in museums.

## OBJECTIVE

Understand the challenges faced in curating and exhibiting Islamic art in museums and identify some of the suggested solutions.

## METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach involved interviews with two prominent curators: Dr. Yannick Lintz from the Louvre and Nicoletta Fazio from the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, representing different museum contexts. These interviews complemented a literature review covering Islamic art, its history, and museology, ensuring a comprehensive analysis.

## MOST IMPORTANT FINDINGS:

1. The challenge of defining "Islamic art": The term "Islamic art" is ambiguous and misleading, often leading visitors to associate it with religious art, although most Islamic artworks are secular. The search for an alternative term like "Islamicate" arts has not been universally accepted.
2. The temporal restriction in defining Islamic art: The traditional definition of Islamic art is limited to a historical period, which excludes contemporary art. This limitation can distance Islamic culture from today's visitors and frame it as a dead culture.
3. The diversity and classification challenges: Islamic objects vary greatly in terms of origin, time, materials, techniques, and purposes, making classification and curating difficult. The absence of a universal classification system adds to this challenge.
4. Interpreting Islamic art: The challenge of interpreting Islamic art for the public, including decoding inscriptions and providing relevant information on social, cultural, and historical contexts.
5. Ethical challenges: Issues related to exhibiting sacred or religious objects in a museum, potential subjugation of certain groups, and the need to consider the voices of the Muslim community.
6. Communicating Islamic art values: The challenge of communicating the values of Islamic art to a diverse audience and addressing misconceptions, especially in the context of increased Islamophobia.

## KEY SOLUTIONS:

1. Revised Chronological Order and Specialization.
2. Interdisciplinary Collaboration.
3. Contextualization.
4. Community Engagement.
5. Dispelling Misconceptions.
6. Engaging Narratives.
7. Social Responsibility.

## ANALYSIS

The research identifies challenges faced in defining Islamic art, curating and classifying Islamic objects, interpreting them for the public, and addressing ethical concerns. It also emphasizes the need for museums to adapt and be relevant to their visitors' needs and to consider the political and social responsibilities of exhibiting Islamic art, especially in light of contemporary issues such as Islamophobia. Additionally, it suggests collaborative approaches involving curators, museologists, sociologists, Islamic studies scholars, and theologians to better understand and present Islamic objects in their contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural institutions, such as museums, are at a pivotal moment, driven by a resurgence of interest in Islamic art amidst global changes shaped by historical ties and contemporary shifts. The research identified three core challenges for Islamic art curators: grappling with colonial legacies, navigating the vastness of Islamic heritage, and fostering effective public engagement. Museums are now in the midst of a profound transformation, evolving into dynamic spaces that transcend their role as knowledge repositories. This transformation involves recognizing the importance of multiculturalism and decolonizing the museum space, challenging traditional narratives. Crucially, the inclusion of curators from Islamic countries is vital in enriching perspectives and undoing conflict within collections, fostering inclusivity and innovation. In the end, museums are collaborative spaces, offering accessible narratives that respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of visitors. Amid this ever-evolving cultural landscape, museums have a unique opportunity to transcend colonial legacies, undo conflict, and illuminate the richness of Islamic culture for a global audience.

## KEY THEME 2 SYMBOLS OF CONFLICT

Architectural and exhibition design processes, particularly experiences developed around difficult/contested/controversial heritage.

How architecture and exhibition design incorporate processes associated with the slow memory of places and its conflicts. How is slow memory defined in these contexts?

The role of museum architecture and exhibition design in the processes of revealing, concealing, and transforming conflict.

### MORNING SESSION

Moderated by Manuel Furtado, ICOM Portugal, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias in Lisbon, Portugal

#### MODERATOR BIO: MANUEL FURTADO

Director and Scientific Curator of the recently created Museum of the Templar Order (MOT), in Tomar. Professor at ULHT - Lusófona University of Humanities and Technologies in Lisbon. He has a PhD in Museology from ULHT - Lusófona University of Humanities and Technologies, Lisbon. He is a researcher registered at CeIED – Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Education and Development. Recognized by the Order of Engineers of Portugal as a Specialist in Construction Direction and Management, with extensive experience in the area of rehabilitation and conservation of built historical heritage. He published several articles in specialized magazines. He participated in several cultural events abroad and in Portugal. He received several awards in the area of historical heritage rehabilitation in Portugal. He works in the areas of Engineering and Technology with an emphasis on Civil Engineering and Social Sciences. In his professional activities, he interacted with several collaborators in co-authoring scientific works. He has experience in renewable energy applied to cultural buildings.



**THE TREND TO GO BELOW GROUND LEVEL: WHEN SWISS ART MUSEUMS EXPAND**

Peter Stohler, Kunstmuseum Thurgau  
Warth, Switzerland

**ABSTRACT**

Switzerland – a nation of 1000 museums, 1300 km of tunnels and 8000 bunkers. Interestingly, there is a connection between museums and the underground. Over the last two decades, Switzerland has seen several museum extensions. This happened in the wake of the Bilbao effect, with one big difference; even if money is abundant, the architecture remains discrete. Three extensions in Zurich, Chur and Ittingen have gone or plan to go completely underground: The museum Rietberg, an ethnographic museum administered by the city of Zurich, is located in a beautiful park dating back to 1855. Its exhibition rooms are housed in two industrialist mansions. In 2007 Viennese architects Alfred Grazioli and Alfred Krischanitz built an extension dug deep into the hillside; all that can be seen is the so-called “Emerald”, the entrance with the shop. Like the museum Rietberg, the Art Museum Graubünden in Chur also uses a splendid mansion to exhibit the art. When it became too small, an extension was built in 2016 – all but one of the new exhibition halls by Spanish architects Barozzi Veiga are on several levels below the ground. Last but not least, the Museum of Art Thurgau, located in a former 12th century monastery, is planning to go underground after a project to expand the above ground museum halls in 2013 was prevented by an appeal to the highest court. The new project, to be built in 2026–28, specifies new exhibition halls completely below the ground. Based on these case studies, the following questions will be explored: Where does the penchant for the subterranean come from? Is it due to Switzerland’s geography, or has it practical reasons? Is it caused by criticism by residents, historic preservation or heritage protection? Or is it a typically Swiss form of conflict avoidance? An expression of Helvetic mentality?

**BIO**

**PETER STOHLER** (born 1967 in Belp, Switzerland) is a curator of contemporary art, a museum director, and an author and consultant based in Zurich. After graduating in art and film studies from the University of Zurich, Stohler worked in museums and galleries, setting up thematic exhibitions (e.g. ‘Body Extensions’, 2004, or ‘Risk and Allure’, 2006) and curating solo shows with contemporary artists (e.g. Karim Noureldin 2014, Rachel Lumsden, 2018, Necla Rüzgar, 2019). He has also edited numerous publications, including collection catalogues (‘From Anselm to Zilla. The collection of P. and E. Bosshard’, Lars Müller 2018), interview collections (‘Tomograph’, Arnoldsche, 1999), and monographs, most recently ‘My Name Was Written on Every Page. Necla Rüzgar’, modo, 2021). Stohler has managed various art and cultural history museums in Switzerland and Germany, most recently Grimmwelt in Kassel. For the past year and a half, he has worked as a freelance author and consultant. Peter Stohler is the designated director of the Museum of Art Thurgau (Kunstmuseum Thurgau), a job he will start in autumn 2023.



## THE TREND TO GO BELOW GROUND LEVEL: WHEN SWISS ART MUSEUMS EXPAND

Peter Stohler, Kunstmuseum Thurgau  
Warth, Switzerland

## IN THE LAND OF MUSEUMS, TUNNELS AND BUNKERS

Switzerland is the land of museums – according to the Association of Swiss Museums, there are now more than 1000 museums, many of them dedicated to art. In the last two decades, quite a few of these museums, especially art and ethnography museums in larger cities such as Geneva, Basel and Zurich, have expanded. It is striking, however, that none of these expansions tried to imitate the “Bilbao effect”, quite the contrary: instead of marking the new with an eye-catching, spectacular gesture to attract crowds of visitors via city marketing, the new buildings are constructed not above but below ground level.

The largest and probably most expensive extension project is that of the Kunsthau Zürich, designed by David Chipperfield. The 200-million Swiss franc extension is mainly above ground. However, an approximately 100-metre-long passage below the museum square connects the old with the new building, thus flirting with the underground. In fact, the architecture of this very long corridor leaves one somewhat perplexed, despite Olafur Eliasson’s intervention.

But let me focus on those Swiss museums that have expanded completely underground or are planning to do so. My question is: Why go underground at all? Why dig yourself into the ground if the aim is to offer visitors attractive exhibition spaces?

In my opinion, going underground is, on the one hand, a typically Swiss characteristic: the underground has long held a great fascination for the Swiss. As we will see, this also has to do with the fact that we Swiss have had a history of “low conflict” for centuries. We have been spared the two world wars, which is somewhat surprising given our geographical location in the heart of Europe. Our political system, which always aims for consensus, is also designed to avoid conflict, and potential conflicts are to a certain extent identified in advance and neutralised through lengthy negotiations before

the actual confrontation takes place. We Swiss are conflict-averse and do not impose ourselves. Building underground could therefore also be a very Swiss way of avoiding conflict.

## THE UNDERGROUND – METAPHORICAL AND CONCRETE

Sylvia Rüttimann, curator of one of the few exhibitions on the underground (Altdorf, 2007) and editor of a book with essays and numerous works by artists (Rüttimann & Hardmeier, 2007), explains the fascination for the underground with a general statement on the underground: “The ‘underground’ is both a concrete place and an abstract metaphor. As a metaphor, the underground is ambivalent; on the one hand, it stands for ‘protection’ and ‘security’ for ‘the mother’, on the other hand, the underground is also frightening. It represents hell, evil, darkness. Of course, this power of mystery also fascinates; one wants to discover the underground and its secret. It is also interesting that there are myths that say that life originated underground.”<sup>1</sup>

## THE SWISS FASCINATION WITH THE UNDERGROUND

But what could be the reasons for a specifically Swiss fascination with the underground?

Most of the almost 9 million inhabitants live in a small area, the so-called *Mittelland* (the central part of Switzerland), while larger parts of the country, the mountain regions, are hardly inhabited. So do we Swiss suffer from “population density stress”? Does the country have too little land to expand above ground? This is certainly a major reason for many new underground buildings in Switzerland. Yet, there is more to it. In Luxembourg, for example, a dwarf state in Europe, the new building of the Mudam art museum has a monumental hall 33 metres high – built, by the way, by no other than I.M. Pei: such an impressive size would hardly be conceivable in Switzerland, although it has both more space than Luxembourg and sufficient financial resources.

The geography of my home country certainly plays a role when it comes to the historical reasons for the expansion of the underground. The mountain regions in

Switzerland are almost insurmountable bulwarks between north and south, west and east. In order to make them passable, people began to drill through the mountains; Switzerland became the land of tunnels (1300 tunnels with a total length of about 2000 km, the Gotthard Tunnel the most famous of all. It measures 57 km and became famous in the summer of 2023 because of its partial destruction by a derailed goods train). The Gotthard Tunnel opened in 1880 and was made possible by the Swiss railway pioneer Alfred Escher. Prior to that, Escher had founded the *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt* (Credit Suisse) in 1856 – which, by the way, went down miserably a few months ago. Tunnel construction and banking are thus closely intertwined and have contributed to Switzerland's economic success. In fact, Switzerland's wealth today certainly also makes it possible to build underground facilities, because no construction method is more expensive than drilling underground.

Speaking of tunnels: In 1952, the famous Swiss novelist and playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990) published a surreal short story entitled “The Tunnel”: a student travels by train between Bern and Zurich, when one day the train does not come out of the tunnel it normally passes in five minutes. The engine driver, realising that they are doomed, jumps off, but the student stays put as the train races into the bowels of the earth (Dürrenmatt, 1952). The short story was also made into a film in 2017.

Besides being the land of tunnels, Switzerland is also the land of bunkers, and this has a lot to do with the Swiss need for protection and conflict avoidance. There are an estimated 8000 bunkers in Switzerland. Almost every new post-war building was fitted with an air-raid shelter due to legal requirements that arose as a reaction to the Cold War. Bunkers, by the way, can also be found abundantly in the Alps (Auf der Maur, 2017). The idea of the underground as a place where one is protected and spared from conflict was also taken up by the Swiss author Hermann Burger (1942–1989). A fictional clinic in the Gotthard massif, where the unfortunate protagonist wants to be cured of his urological ailments, is the subject of the novel “Die Künstliche Mutter” (the artificial mother); a book that, after great success, is largely forgotten today. In Burger's novel, published six years before his suicide, the mountain interior

promises healing (Burger, 1982).

Against this background, let us now look at some examples of underground extensions in the museum sector and ask ourselves what the reasons for building underground might be.

### **AN EMERALD AS A GATEWAY TO THE UNDERWORLD**

The ethnographic museum Rietberg has been housed in the industrialist villa Wesendonck, located in an idyllic parc, since 1952. The complex is also known for the fact that Richard Wagner lived here from 1857 to 1858 and was a possible lover of Madame Mathilde Wesendonck. The municipal museum for art from Africa, America, Asia and Oceania was extended in 2006 by the architects Alfred Grazoli and Adolf Krischanitz. Only the so-called *Smaragd* (emerald), the entrance pavilion with ticket office, shop and cloakroom, is visible. Measuring a mere 190 m<sup>2</sup> in size, most of it is buried in the hill. That the extension should be underground was not a requirement of city of Zurich who commissioned the building, but a decision of the architects. While the old building offers about 800 square metres of exhibition space, the two new underground storeys contain about 2500 square metres, i.e. about three times as much. The construction was demanding, as parts of the existing buildings had to be secured by means of a steel construction above the excavation pit. The costs amounted to 46 million Swiss francs.

The city writes that the interests of the preservation of historical monuments were in favour of the museum, praising it for forgoing any “grand gestures” (Kurz, 2006). The column-free exhibition halls display luminous ceilings that simulate daylight. Most of the time, however, the museum shows temporary exhibitions in semi-darkness, emphasising the exhibits with spot lighting. According to the museum director, dark rooms lend themselves to more dramatic staging (Swiss Architects, 2007).

In case of the Museum Rietberg it is therefore not very noticeable that the extension is underground. The architects, in fact, put a lot of effort into giving the entrance area a classy appearance by choosing precious materials: the ceiling is made of onyx, the sculptural staircase

consists of fine oak. This suggests upper-class comfort as in the old Villa Wesendonck. The floor of the two new exhibition halls is also paved with oak parquet, which again contributes to a pleasant atmosphere.

Only the outer, greenish shimmering glass pavilion with its crystal grid appears cooler and more contemporary from the outside. It appears to be a discreet intervention, but takes up the exact width of the adjacent farm building and also adopts the grid of the villa's conservatory – both harmonise the intervention. Passing through the new building, the visitors come back up through a display collection into the old building. This is also where the museum café is also located. The staging of the exhibitions, especially the permanent exhibition, is conceived as a presentation of valuable, exquisite non-European treasures – which is perfectly suited to a presentation deep inside the “protective” earth.

### **THE VILLA AND THE CUBE**

The extension of the Chur Art Museum, a cantonal institution of the Grisons (the collection includes renowned expressionists, for example Ernst Ludwig Kirchner), was a long-held wish that only became possible after a generous donation. The museum had been located in the Planta industrial villa since 1919. As early as 1981 a competition for ideas for a new building was launched, but discontinued after loud protests. From 1987 to 1989, Peter Zumthor and two other architects renovated the villa (among other things with intimate underground exhibition rooms for the print department, and a walkway to the neighbouring National Park Museum, which was demolished for the new museum building). This villa continues to be used today and, as in Zurich, houses the museum café. The competition was won by Fabrizio Barozzi and Alberto Veiga (Barcelona). The extension cost around 30 million Swiss francs and was opened in 2016. As with the Museum Rietberg, the aim was to connect the old and the new building. Also, constructing underground was not a direct requirement of the commissioning party. But an above-ground connection between old and new was ruled out due to reasons of historical building protection, and in addition, the site area is very modest. What we see now is a new entrance that consists of a rather high building (the height of the foyer is also due to the fact

that lorries need to pass through to unload art). The museum director writes: “The new building ... is a sign of a new era for the museum without negating tradition” (Hochbaumt Graubünden, 2016, p. 13). The cube also contains an exhibition space, rooms for the art education department and the museum technicians. But the real exhibition rooms are underground. The staircase made of somewhat gloomy and therefore uninviting concrete. The two underground floors (the first for the collection, the second for the temporary exhibitions) have luminous ceilings, as in the Rietberg. In Chur, however, the exhibitions – following the convention of the “white cube” – are mostly shown in bright light. However, the lighting can be dimmed for sensitive exhibits. Here, too, the exhibition space is doubled compared to the original villa. Access to the Villa Planta is via a staircase with a generously dimensioned skylight.

### **STRUGGLING FOR MORE SPACE**

The third example is the Thurgau Art Museum, a cantonal institution in eastern Switzerland, about an hour from Zurich. The museum was opened in 1983 in a Carthusian monastery, the Kartause Ittingen (Ittingen Charterhouse). It contains an important collection of naïve art and outsider art. In 2013, a renovation and extension project ready for construction (architect: Regula Harder) was fought all the way to Switzerland's highest court because of its financing and the museum's complicated ownership structure. The project was then dropped. A new competition in 2022 was won by a team of three architectural firms (Keller Hubacher, BBK, Harder Spreymann). One of them had already built the restaurant in the 12th century monastery complex.

The winning project is called “Scala” and envisages a prominent cascade staircase leading to the new underground exhibition hall, located deep below the existing museum. Apart from a new delivery entrance above ground, the renovation and expansion will be almost invisible. In addition, the access through the park will be made wheelchair accessible. The project is expected to cost about 20 million Swiss francs, its inauguration is planned for 2028. In the case of the Thurgau Art Museum extension, it certainly plays a role

that an intervention in the historical ensemble is difficult and fraught with conflict, especially since the canton owns the museum, but not the outdoor spaces. Although the restaurant was also newly built, its architecture does not impose itself.

### ONWARD INTO THE UNDERGROUND

Are there practical advantages to going underground? Yes, says the director of the museum in Chur. He stresses that daylight can often be a nuisance, and the ceiling lighting certainly has the quality of daylight (Hochbaumt Graubünden, 2016, p. 13). But this seems to me to be an exaggeration. Respect for existing structures is certainly one reason for building underground. This goes hand in hand with an almost pre-emptive avoidance of conflicts. How the visitors feel is not addressed, although in my opinion it should be the focus. I assume that building underground is also a question of Swiss mentality, even if not all the architects involved are Swiss.

On the other hand, in Switzerland one also sees an effort to make better use of increasingly scarce land reserves by going underground: as early as 1974 there was the so-called SwissMetro project, with a view to transporting people at lightning speed in underground tunnels under partial air pressure. This project failed, but a new project called “Cargo Sous Terrain” is looking to build an underground transport system that can transport at least goods across the country, and there is no doubt that there will be many more underground projects. “The future of Switzerland lies essentially underground” we read in a paper recently presented by the Swiss government outlining a strategy for using the underground that also addresses legal questions about who owns the underground (Departement für Verteidigung, et al., 2022). This sounds like science fiction, but who knows how much stronger the Swiss urge to go underground might become.

### NOTES

1. Conversation with Sylvia Rüttimann, June 2023.

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**POSTMORTEM OBJECTIFICATION:  
HUMAN REMAINS IN MUSEUMS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Museums are conflict zones in which the politics of the human gaze must be artfully negotiated. Displaying human remains in museums is a nuanced dance of permission that can easily tip into spectacle. Museums are in a challenging position of balancing the conflict of duty to the dead with the needs of researchers and expectations of visitors, while also operating in an increasingly sensitized and multicultural context. The ethical and intellectual frameworks vary between exhibits, leading to different approaches to displaying human remains. Museums incorporate curation and design choices that communicate to the viewer what is deemed respectful handling of human remains. Cases and barriers in exhibits have both physical and symbolic purposes. They function as a way to maintain physical distance between the viewer and the human remains to preserve and protect the latter; barriers can also purify the display of the body and make the viewing experience culturally acceptable. Other exhibition design choices to be examined include photography permission, no-touching signage, the lack of guidance in exhibit halls, the display descriptors, and the space dividers between exhibits. For this purpose, the permanent *Körperwelten* exhibits in Germany as well as the touring retrospective of Isamu Noguchi's work in Europe will be utilized. It is not uncommon for collections originating from one country to be displayed in another, and this practice requires additional scrutiny for material of unclear provenience, as is the case for the Noguchi example. For this, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of the United States should be considered. Slow memory manifests as scientific entitlement in regard to access to human remains, thus necessitating the question: what is enough justification for human remains to be exhibited in museums?

**BIOS**

**HELEN E. MARTIN** completed her Master of Arts in Anthropology and Master of Arts in German at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2023. The focus of her Anthropology thesis was secular change in metacarpals, and the focus of her German thesis was human remains in museums in Germany. In the future, she would like to pursue a Ph.D. in Biocultural Anthropology with a focus on Critical Museum Studies. As a graduate student, she was actively involved with the Forensic Anthropology Center, worked in the UTK Donated Skeletal Collection, and was a teaching assistant for the Anthropological Field Recovery course. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Spanish with a minor in German from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2019.

**ELIZABETH A. RONALD** is a current doctoral student in Biological Anthropology advised by Dr. Ellen Lofaro, the Director of Repatriation at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She matriculated from the Master of Arts program at UTK advised by Dr. Dawnie Steadman. She graduated from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota with a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Biology with a minor in Forensic Science advised by Dr. Sue Myster. She is the current Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) graduate research assistant under Dr. Lofaro, where she assists in claims and inventories for repatriation efforts in the Office of Repatriation. She has conducted repatriation related work for over eight years during her academic career involving the legal aspects of the act to the physical transfer and escort of ancestors and their belongings home. Her dissertation work focuses on biological anthropologists' involvement in the implementation of NAGPRA through a community based participatory research methodology involving Native Nations bringing their ancestors home.

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Museums are public-facing collections-based institutions. Their roles include the transmission and preservation of knowledge, culture, and history for all generations. As a result, museums require the public's trust, which is maintained by making sound ethical judgments in all areas of work. The reasons for including human remains in a museum exhibit are for educational and scientific communication purposes, provoking controversy or conversation to accrue more visitors, shrinking the perceived physical and temporal distance between viewer and subject to make the past relevant again, and fundraising through increased participation in museums. The tension between life and death, attraction and repulsion, and personalization and depersonalization generates attention, crowds, controversy, and income (Brooks & Rumsey, 2007). The presence of human remains in an exhibit has the potential to both intrigue and unsettle the viewer. Several social influences inform the focus on human remains, including the scientific view of the body, the body as a site of identity, and the location of the body as a site of power and struggle (Jenkins, 2010). These influences work in conjunction with each other to impact how people consider the display and research of human remains. Displaying human remains in museums becomes problematic when the museum context is not considered legitimate by the viewer (Jenkins, 2010). Some believe the very presence of human remains in museums and museum collections is evidence of scientific entitlement (Simpson, 2001).

Human remains, the individual's history, and possible descendant communities should be treated with the utmost respect. The Deutscher Museumsbund's guidelines define human remains as "all the physical remains attributable to the biological species *Homo sapiens*" (Deutscher Museumsbund, 2021, pp. 12) applying to human remains originating from anywhere and any time period. The circumstances of the individual's death and the acquisition of their remains by museums are also key factors in relation to their care,

as the individual may have been a victim of injustice and their body was obtained by force or coercion within the hierarchy of an unbalanced power structure against the will of the original owner(s) or the descendant group (Deutscher Museumsbund, 2021).

The sensitive nature of the subject means that delineating definitions for human remains is complex. With critical reflection on the past and how it manifests in the present, these definitions are continuously being reassessed and renegotiated. Per the Deutscher Museumsbund's current definition, the individuals included in the *Körperwelten* (Body Worlds) exhibits and the skeletal remains featured in Noguchi's artwork are, without a doubt, human remains and much more than just objects. Museum exhibitions train visitors in a specific type of viewing (Laukötter, 2013). This 'training' is a consequence of curation and design choices, the presence or absence of guidance offered to visitors, and the promoted purpose of the exhibition. A method for ensuring the preservation of the human dignity of the individuals on display is fostering an environment in which visitor behavior consists of respectful interactions between the visitor and the exhibits. Unfortunately, exhibits can embody attitudes of scientific entitlement and objectification and communicate these to the viewer. Museums are in a challenging position of balancing the conflict of duty to the dead with the needs of researchers and expectations of visitors while also operating in an increasingly sensitized and multicultural context. To ensure respectful handling of the dead, it is necessary to assess the purpose and impact of including human remains in an exhibit. For this paper, we will discuss two examples of the display of human remains, the reasons for their inclusion, and whether their presence is integral to communicating the exhibit's purpose.

**NOGUCHI**

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was a Japanese-American sculptor known for his experimental and political works. In the spring of 2022, Museum Ludwig in Köln, Germany, hosted a comprehensive retrospective of his work ("Isamu Noguchi"). One of the featured sculptures was "Monument to Heroes" (1978), which is the second of two identically named pieces

(1943 & 1978). In 1942, Noguchi voluntarily entered the Poston War Relocation Center, the largest Japanese-American internment camp in the United States, for six months. He created the first of the two “Monument to Heroes” pieces a year later, and it has been called “one of the most specific and melancholic examples of Noguchi’s time at Poston” (Bailey). The sculpture exhibits “the bones of the unknown – the residue of bravery, blown by wind” (*Monument to Heroes*, 1978). The materials included in these sculptures are “plastic, paint, bovine bones, wood, and string” (*Monument to Heroes*, 1978). However, two of the three bones in the piece are human bones (a femur and a fibula). The documented provenance for these materials is the estate of the artist (*Monument to Heroes*, 1943 & 1978). For Noguchi, the use of bones “carried deep meaning and suggested an intrinsic connection with the past” (Bailey). In fact, bones were a frequent motif for the artist, and he sourced some from a storage attic at New York’s Museum of Natural History (“Oral history interview with Isamu Noguchi”). This brings up a bevy of questions, including: Who do these bones belong to? How did they end up at the Natural History Museum? What is the respectful treatment of human remains that are dispossessed, meaning bones that are deprived of their identity, connection, and context from the living person they belonged to?

The protocol for ethical treatment of dispossessed human remains has been an ongoing point of contention. Many dispossessed human remains, especially those of minority groups, have been stripped of their identities and choices for their mortuary rights. For example, for decades within the United States, Native American human remains were desecrated, collected, and studied as they had become dispossessed from their connections and the context of their living descendants (Mihsuah, 2000). Scientific entitlement allowed this practice to continue for generations, including displaying Native American human remains and funerary objects in museum exhibitions and institutional classrooms for educational purposes. These actions persisted until the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). NAGPRA requires federally funded agencies, institutions, and museums to repatriate all Native American human remains and objects from their collection(s) to the

respective federally recognized tribes (Chari & Lavallee, 2013). As such, this law has allowed dispossessed human remains to be reunited with their identities and for descendant groups to make the proper decisions regarding their mortuary rights. While this law has continued to be contentious within various academic fields, political discourses, and tribal nations, new relationships have formed with descendant communities and those who wish to study these bones to create stronger and more ethical connections between the parties (Chari & Lavallee, 2013). While NAGPRA does not legally apply to Noguchi’s exhibit based on the known information, the ethical components of the law and what they stand for bring into question the moral use of dispossessed human remains in any context, including artwork. As these bones are of unknown origin and a prime example of the intricacies of using human bone in any context outside of formal burial, one must consider: could Noguchi have made the same statement with these sculptures without using real bones, especially unwittingly using real human bones?

## KÖRPERWELTEN

*Körperwelten* are a series of exhibitions of dissected human and animal bodies preserved through plastination, a process that removes water and fat from the tissue and replaces them with plastics. The *Körperwelten* exhibits have been internationally controversial, and numerous legal, ethical, and moral concerns have been raised since its inception. Three permanent exhibits currently exist in Germany in Heidelberg, Berlin, and Guben. According to their own statements, *Körperwelten* is a site of education where the layperson can learn about anatomy in a way that aims to inspire more self-awareness. The stated intentions of the exhibits are to strengthen one’s sense of health, show the potential and limitations of the body, and cause reflections on the meaning of life (“Philosophy”). To this end, the individuals on display exist simultaneously as humans and art pieces.

Several curation and design choices unify the *Körperwelten* exhibitions. For example, glass cases, physical barriers, and signage regarding not touching the individuals on display are inconsistently used throughout



the exhibit spaces. Upon admission to the exhibit space, visitors are informed by signs that the individuals on display are the authentic human remains of donors and that photography for private use is allowed in these spaces. The exhibits feature many interactive displays that encourage visitors to physically engage with the material. Another characteristic of all the exhibitions was the sparse presence of labels for anatomical structures. For exhibitions whose proposed purpose is education, it would follow that anatomical labels to help instruct and guide the viewer would be plentiful. Instead, the labels and audio guides offer only superficial instruction about the anatomy, and the placards and audio guides often veer into philosophical reflections of anatomy and life. No guides were present in any of the exhibition spaces, which also influences the efficacy of any educational pursuit of the exhibit.

The spaces occupied by the three permanent exhibitions are distinct from one another. For all three, it is evident as a visitor that the exhibitions are simply occupying a space originally intended for something different, with only slight modifications in certain areas to accommodate the creation of the exhibits.

The Heidelberg *Körperwelten* exhibit is housed in the space of a former indoor swimming pool and is arranged across two floors. The visitor accesses the exhibit via a staircase that leads to a central platform encased by a mesh fabric through which the rest of the exhibit hall can be seen. The tour of the exhibit hall progresses from the balcony walkway on the outer edge of the hall to the first floor, where the space has been divided to guide the visitor towards the exit. Cases of human body parts and full-body individuals are located throughout the entire exhibit. Aside from the sheer paneling around the first space, there is only limited visible separation between displays and exhibit sections. The walls erected in the lower section of the hall seem to serve primarily to delineate the direction of walking through the hall instead of functioning as a privacy divider. The sole purpose of the privacy dividers as directional indicators is apparent due to the lack of coverage from the top, meaning that the entire hall can be viewed without obstruction from the elevated walkway of the second floor.

The Berlin *Körperwelten* exhibit is in a central building on the Alexanderplatz.

The entrance to the exhibit hall is located immediately next to the ticket counter, and the space is divided by a red cord, which functions as a division in a symbolic sense more so than in a literal sense because it is easily possible to look through it into the exhibit itself prior to entering the space. As human remains are located in the first part of the exhibit hall, this means that they can be viewed without any preface or buffer. Mirrors and red cord are stylistic choices that continue throughout the entire exhibit, thus creating an environment in which the viewer is frequently observing both an individual on display as well as themselves simultaneously.

The Guben *Plastinarium* (Plastination Laboratory), both a *Körperwelten* exhibit and a fully operational plastination laboratory, is housed in a former cloth factory. The exhibit stretches across the entire lower level of the factory building as one long hallway subdivided into smaller sectors. The plastination workshop is located midway through the entire exhibit, and visitors must pass through this room to progress to the rest of the displays. This laboratory space is filled with ongoing dissection and plastination projects, and visitors are encouraged to enter the glass-encased dissection lab and speak with the anatomists while they are working. Signs in this space discourage photography in the plastination workshop to protect the privacy of the employees, not to preserve the privacy of the donors.

*Körperwelten* was featured at the California Science Center several times over the past two decades, and several distinct curatorial and design choices were implemented for these exhibits. These included, among other things, the inclusion of text panels next to all full-body individuals featuring explanations for the pose, the placement of the reproductive section of the exhibit in a separate, clearly marked area with age-restricted access, guidance for parents for discussing the exhibit with their children, the informing of visitors about the content of the exhibit prior to admission, the availability of time and space for guests to acclimate to the exhibit, and the exclusion of certain exhibits whose “science educational value did not outweigh community and cultural sensitivities” (“Body Worlds”). It is to the detriment of the proposed educational purpose of the permanent *Körperwelten* exhibits



in Germany that these suggestions were not implemented at all exhibition locations. For example, in Heidelberg and Berlin, visitors are not provided with sufficient acclimation time and are quickly, without warning, confronted with the first full-body individual upon entering the exhibition due to the layout of the space. In Guben, visitors can sit on a couch placed underneath an individual suspended from the ceiling, giving the spectacle even more dimensionality. No staff or guides were present in the exhibit space to provide guidance, leaving guests, including entire school groups, to their own devices. The poses are often only loosely justified, with some description panels completely excluding any hint of educational purpose behind a pose, leaving the visitor with the impression that the pose was merely the result of a design whim. Anatomical descriptions of substance are frequently missing. The supposed reverent, educational, and reflective atmosphere the exhibits are intended to foster is juxtaposed by design choices, questionable poses, and patronizing philosophizing about life that not only trivializes the fact that the individuals on display are real human beings but also significantly undermines any educational value of these exhibits.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, museums and their exhibits embody the intentionality of the curators and researchers, and communicate these intentions to the visitors through design choices. As potential conflict zones, the inclusion of human remains in exhibits should be considered carefully so as to be respectful of the individuals, their communities, and the visitors of the museum. Exhibits such as *Körperwelten* and Noguchi's artwork walk the fine line of art versus science. This blatant use of human remains to further unknown science or artwork risks the promotion of scientific entitlement while trivializing the humanness of the individuals on display, thus necessitating the question: what is enough justification for human remains to be exhibited in museums?

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### EXHIBITION DESIGN AS A MEDIUM TO FORM A NARRATIVE SPACE FOR REPRESENTING CONTROVERSIAL

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#### ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on the development process of exhibition design, how to combine curatorial intentions with content research, and to make exhibition design become a medium for communicating controversial issues by taking the exhibition *First Wave – Contemporary Australian-Taiwanese Indigenous Fashion* as a case study.

The origin of this exhibition began when Bendigo Art Gallery in Australia gathered a number of contemporary Australian Indigenous fashion designers and craftsmen/women to launch the exhibition, *Piinpi- Contemporary Australian Indigenous Fashion*, held in Australia. In July 2022, it was invited by the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan and the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP) to exhibit in Taiwan. At the early stage of planning, the curatorial team of NMP was moved by the exhibition's wearable art designs, which conveyed stories about indigenous cultural tradition, acknowledged their country (homeland), and represented the reflection on their colonial past and transformative justice. The NMP decided to conduct a research project on contemporary Taiwanese indigenous fashion design in order to facilitate conversations with the Australian exhibition. The juxtaposition of contemporary fashion design from both regions intends to convey that being oppressed in the political, economic and social aspects in modern times, First Nations communities strive to find their own cultural subjectivity and reveal contemporary status/identities through delicate design pieces.

The essay attempts to analyze the development process of the exhibition design that was not only a process of form making, but also aimed to demonstrate the value of equality and mutual respect and to convey the hardships of fighting for indigenous cultural subjectivity. Exhibition design served as a medium to assist audiences to understand the long-term difficult status of indigenous people through exhibiting stunning fashion design garments. It provided a narrative space for presenting controversial issues and engaging in a dialogue with the public.

#### BIO

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, **CHENG-YI SHIH** is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Cultural and Creative Industries Management, National Taipei University of Education (NTUE) as well as an adjunct assistant professor at Graduate Institute of Museum Studies, National Taipei University of the Arts. He has a PhD in Museum, Studies, University of Leicester, UK. His research focus on museum planning, museum architecture and space, museum curation, narrative environment design, and museum-related design thinking.

He loves to combine practice and theory. Inspired by his cross-disciplinary background – sustainable design, building and environmental planning, he has hosted or participated in museum curatorial projects for different types of museums such as national museums, local cultural centers, or quasi-museums, especially with the focus on integrating diverse methods of curation in different phases of curatorial process, such as research and fieldwork, exhibition content development, audiences evaluation, finding big ideas and writing museum narratives, creative exhibition strategies and exhibition design planning, to make an engaging and inspiring museum exhibition with contemporary views. Through the process, he enjoys exploring the combination and interconnection among curatorial approaches, content and interpretation, people, objects, design media, and space.

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#### THE EXHIBITION ORIGIN AND CURATORIAL INTENT: THE CREATION OF A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE

After more than 30 years of effort, in recent years there has been a growing focus on the issue of indigenous transitional justice in Taiwan. This issue has evolved from the recognition of cultural subjectivity to the acknowledgment of the historical oppression faced by indigenous communities on the island of Taiwan by mainstream society and various political powers. The political, economic, and even legal inequalities of indigenous communities have started to receive national attention. Furthermore, research on the “Austronesian peoples” has placed Taiwan back within the framework of oceanic culture. The statement “A ship is an island; the sea is a road” was a key narrative in the 2003 reopening of the Austronesian Hall exhibition at the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP). The exhibition led Taiwanese people to realize that the indigenous people of Taiwan, who currently make up only 2.5% of the population, had already engaged in cultural, linguistic and trade interactions with various islands and nations in the Pacific, as well as the Indian Ocean hundreds of years ago. This connection has linked Taiwan to the world’s Austronesian cultures, opening up a new perspective on indigenous cultures.

In the southern hemisphere, the Bendigo Art Gallery (BAG) in Australia held an exhibition called *Piinpi - Contemporary Australian Indigenous Fashion* curated by Shonae Hobson. This exhibition brings together the creations of dozens of Australian indigenous designers, clothing brands, and artisans. These beautiful garments seamlessly blend indigenous culture and stories with fashion, transforming traditional indigenous culture into wearable art. Each piece combines the designer’s cultural identity and creativity, as well as the culture of their respective indigenous group and region. It can

be described as representing a fusion of tradition and contemporary, while promoting cultural, environmental and economic sustainability.<sup>1</sup> This marks an important moment in the history of Australian fashion design (Bendigo Art Gallery, 2020).

In 2021, the Ministry of Culture in Taiwan began planning to invite Piinpi to exhibit in Taiwan, to be held at the National Museum of Prehistory, which has a long-standing interest in the research of Taiwan’s indigenous cultures. The term “Piinpi” is an expression that the Kanichi Thampanyu (First Nations people from the East Cape York Peninsula) used to describe changes in the landscape across time and space.

This reflects the indigenous peoples’ observations of the environment and seasons, where they understand and appropriately utilize nature during different seasons, generating a wisdom of living in harmony with nature. This wisdom is passed down through storytelling and pictorial methods. Although different ethnic groups have their own descriptions of the seasons, this exhibition is divided into four sections based on four seasons that are collectively recognized by different indigenous groups. These seasons are: *KAYAMAN* (Season of Fire and Burn, featuring garments using the colors and woven materials of the dry season). *NGURKITHA* (Season of Rain, including many designs with hand-painted fabrics and vibrant colors, creating pictorial records and conveying culture). *PINGA* (Season of Flowers, interpreting the wisdom of land observation and understanding of bushfood into fabric designs). *PIICHA PIICHA* (Season of Cool Winds, the season for engaging in hunting and gathering activities, weaving with dried fruits and plant fibers, and reflecting on the use of fur). Additionally, there is a section on *STREET WEAR* (Blak and Deadly), exploring urban indigenous contemporary black (blak) culture and diverse gender identities (Bendigo Art Gallery, 2020).

#### EXHIBITION STRATEGY:

##### CONTENT DEVELOPMENT WITH THE AIM OF A TAIWAN - AUSTRALIA DIALOGUE

During the early stages of exhibition preparation, the National Museum of Prehistory decided to adopt the concept of a “Taiwan-Australia Dialogue” as its curatorial strategy.

The exhibition planning conducted research on contemporary indigenous fashion designers in Taiwan, examining the similarities and differences between Taiwan and Australia. The research team collected data, identified designers and visited indigenous design studios in various locations to explore the connections and inspirations between clothing design and indigenous culture.<sup>2</sup> The framework for categorizing the garments of contemporary Taiwanese indigenous designers was based on the perspective of the Atayal indigenous people of central Taiwan regarding the seasons. The designs were categorized into the following four seasons: *Mahala'iy* (Snowfall), *Tngatu abaw* (Budding Leaf), *Abagan* (A Season of Sweltering Fecundity), and *Masahuw abaw* (Fallen Leaves). Additionally, the "Returns" section corresponds to Australia's urban indigenous culture. The garments of contemporary Taiwanese Indigenous designers were arranged in connection with the connotations of each season (Huang, 2022).

Following the research, the curatorial team was aware of indigenous groups (First Nations) worldwide experiencing oppression in modern times, and the process of obtaining recognition that has continued to resonate like waves in the post World War II era. This insight inspired the exhibition's title: *First Wave – Contemporary Australian and Taiwanese Indigenous Fashion*.

### **THE EXHIBITION DESIGN'S MATERIALITY AND EMBODIED VALUES**

The selection of items for the exhibition also guided the curatorial strategy. In contrast to the cultural artifacts typical of museums, the fashion designs displayed in the exhibition belong to "contemporary collections." The selection of these items reflects how designers from various indigenous groups, who have long faced colonialism or governance by mainstream society, use fashion design to express their cultural identity and heritage. The designs themselves are the narrative, as their patterns and colors convey the recorded observations of the environment, representing the interpretation of traditional culture into contemporary expressions. What matters is not how old or historic the items are, but rather the ingenuity and wisdom of traditional culture and craft techniques passed down through these garments, realized through the creativity and concept of the designer. Therefore, value

creation and meaning making in contemporary heritage becomes even more crucial.

Furthermore, from an anthropological perspective on material culture, objects themselves carry information and tell stories (object-information package), thus generating broader educational, social, or political implications (Dudley, 2011). From this perspective, these garments represent a form of "resistance" to long-standing issues of conflict. This exhibition brings together over 100 designs from both regions, while the curatorial intent is framed around the values of "equality, respect, and dialogue". The exhibition aims to achieve "cultural recognition" and highlight the heritage and celebration of environmental and cultural sustainability through fashion design. The exhibition design team decided to present these stunning and wearable designs in a bold and direct manner, following the presentation style of contemporary fashion. This approach not only continues *Piinpi's* original exhibition design style in Australia, but also integrates the newly added Taiwan section, creating an exhibition that can incorporate both regions and facilitate a meaningful dialogue.

The exhibition design team extensively used soft materials to create an immersive atmosphere for the display settings, enhancing the thematic ambiance (scene-making), while mannequins were arranged in a frank and confident manner within each display. For example, the design team placed the "Season of Rain" and "Season of Flowers" sections side by side in front of a large image of the Australian landscape. Mannequins are spread out with a circular platform in the center, upon which the mannequins are arranged like runway models walking towards the audience, creating a sense of intimacy.





Image 1. Australia section “Season of Rain” and “Season of Flowers” display areas.

### EXHIBITION DESIGN SHAPING THE NARRATIVE SPACE: TRAFFIC FLOW

One of the most important exhibition design considerations was the question of how to facilitate a dialogue between the designs from Taiwan and Australia, particularly in consideration of the existing display structure and narrative of the Australia *Piinpi* exhibition. During the design process, several “dialogue-oriented” exhibition layouts were considered. Initially, the larger Australian section formed an outer perimeter, with the smaller Taiwanese section placed in the center, resembling a large circle encompassing a smaller one, as if representing a dialogue between a big island and a small island. However, as visitors moved between the two countries, there was potential for confusion as they tried to simultaneously absorb the display structure from both sides.



Image 2. Exhibition floor plan and traffic flow diagram (final version), provided by National Museum of Prehistory.

Considering that the narrative of both regions follows the cycle of the seasons (time), a new layout was developed, featuring separate Taiwanese and Australian sections.

At the entrance of the exhibition, a meeting point was established, where the most captivating exhibits from both regions faced each other, as if engaging in a visual dialogue. The layout is divided into two main areas, with the Australian section on the right and the Taiwanese section on the left. The traffic flow was designed to resemble an infinity symbol, allowing visitors to return to the meeting point regardless of which section they visited first. This layout ensured that both sections could be explored independently and without missing any exhibits.



Image 3. The Introduction area of PIINPI and TAIWAN (the meeting point), provided by National Museum of Prehistory.

Main visual design is another important design consideration for introducing the core idea of the exhibition. Echoing the exhibition’s title ‘First Wave’, as well as taking inspiration from the diamond-shaped patterns commonly found in Taiwanese indigenous weaving, a contemporary and minimalistic style was used to transform these elements into arrow-like waves. Models from Taiwan and Australia’s indigenous communities were used as imagery. The poster design allows for two posters to connect and follow each other, creating a sense of continuity portrayed by the waves. This allows the main visual poster to be displayed individually or continuously in a series.

In this analysis of the exhibition design, we can reference the concept of “narrative environment” proposed by Suzanne MacLeod et al. (2012). The characteristic of a narrative environment is to provide audiences with “experiences which integrate objects and spaces - and stories of people and places - as part of a process of storytelling that speaks of the

experience of the everyday and our sense of self, as well as the special and unique.”(MacLeod, Hanks & Hale, 2012) Thus, the ultimate goal of exhibition design is not the “design” itself, but the narrative, the storytelling that relates to our everyday experiences and our sense of identity. For this reason, creating a narrative environment is not limited to any specific area of design, while the materiality of exhibition design is focused towards serving effective storytelling, guiding the audience to interact with real exhibits in an immersive space. The purpose of such exhibition spaces is to convey “concepts”, or in other words, to create encounters between concepts and audiences through a storytelling environment.



Image 4-5. Main visual poster design (two versions), provided by National Museum of Prehistory.



Image 6. The main visual poster to be displayed continuously in a series, provided by National Museum of Prehistory.



## EXHIBITION DESIGN RECONCILES ADDRESSING CONFLICTS AND CONTEMPORARY REALITIES

In the past, exhibitions about indigenous communities often highlighted conflicts and tragedies. *First Wave* does not portray historical conflicts from the perspective of victimhood or use a preaching tone. Instead, it showcases the accumulation of beauty and creative capacity within contemporary indigenous communities, emphasizing contemporary creativity and culture as its starting point. However, this approach does not mean that it erases or glosses over conflicts of the past. On the contrary, within the narrative environment are various interpretive design elements incorporated to remind the audience of the historical difficulties, while displaying the vibrancy and elegance of contemporary indigenous fashion. For example, in the video playback area behind the introduction of the Australia section, visitors can experience the actual work of designers and artisans, and gain an understanding of the natural landscape in Southeastern Australia.



Image 7. Australia acknowledgement of the First Nations display panel.

They can see women artisans posing as they wear the clothing they have designed or created and enjoy the cultural fruits of their craftsmanship. While at the end of the Australia section, there is an acknowledgement of the First Nations display panel. It juxtaposes models wearing the exhibited clothing with a brief overview of the historical conflicts in Australia. The panel serves two purposes: on the one hand, it dispels the stereotype of indigenous cultures as backward or incomplete by showcasing the beautiful fashion designs. On the other hand, it intentionally places the panel at the end of the exhibition, so that visitors can realize the garments they encountered throughout the exhibition were born from a weighty and difficult history, highlighting the significance of

these designs. Finally, to accommodate a diverse audience, the curatorial team developed two interpretive texts. One is an exhibition brochure primarily aimed at adult visitors. The other is a learning booklet intentionally designed for children aged 6-12. It guides children to observe the exhibits and discover how indigenous communities from both regions observe the environment and seasons, comparing this with the mainstream seasonal classifications of spring, summer, autumn and winter.



Image 8: Australia section "Season of Fire and Burn" display areas.



Image 9. Taiwan section "Returns" (left) and "Fallen Leaves" (right) display areas, showcasing contemporary Taiwanese Indigenous fashion designers' garments.

## CONCLUSION

This form of exhibition breaks away from the National Museum of Prehistory's traditional approach to collection and display, shifting towards the curation of contemporary collections (works of art and design). It combines contemporary themes and dialogue in a collaborative curatorial approach. The role of exhibition design here can be seen in three layers: the first layer creates an atmosphere by using softer materials that resonate with the exhibition objects and themes. It portrays the colors and textures observed by indigenous people in their surrounding environments, like the yellow of the "Season of Fire and Burn" display. The second layer is the exhibition layout, providing a sense of freedom but also allows for continuous circulation, aligning with the narrative structure. It cleverly ensures that the displays from both regions can stand independently while also allowing for dialogue. The third layer uses a vibrant and diverse approach to present contemporary indigenous cultures, shifting away from the previous tendency to focus on conflict and sorrow in addressing indigenous issues. As visitors explore the exhibition, they encounter various forms of media and narrative design, highlighting the close connection between creating designs, artistic concepts, cultural recognition and issues of transitional justice.

## NOTES

1. Many of the works are handcrafted by indigenous women artisans from remote areas, not only promoting cultural heritage but also generating income to support the livelihoods of women and their families.

2. The author of this essay was a member of the research team and later became the curatorial consultant for the First Wave exhibition.

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### WHEN ARCHITECTURE IS DOMINANT

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### ABSTRACT

Functionalist building from 20th of the 20th century was reconstructed after the fire in 1974 for National Gallery in Prague, for collections of modern and contemporary art. Architecture of the building is very simple, from the basic constructive materials, almost without walls, with windows to every side. To make exhibitions here it means to solve the problems not only how to close the completely open space, but also what to do with strong functionalist expression of it.

### BIO

**RADOMÍRA SEDLÁKOVÁ.** Born in 1950, historian and theoretician of architecture, architect by education (Prague technical university). From 1985 worked in National Gallery in Prague, found the Collection of Architecture. Prepared Czech participation in Biennale di Venezia in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, many exhibitions about contemporary Czech architecture, published books about architecture of Prague, Czech architecture of the 20th century and plenty of articles about the same theme. Lecturer of history of architecture at Prague technical university.

**WHEN ARCHITECTURE IS DOMINANT**

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In 1928 there was Trade Fair palace open in Prague (1 – Trade Fair Palace, general view from the end of 1920<sup>th</sup>, author's archive). Designed by Oldřich Tyl and Josef Fuchs it was not only the biggest construction of coming new architectural style (120 x 60 metres), it meant the excellent functionalist building, in today's language almost minimalist architecture: reinforced concrete: columns, beams, ceiling's slabs, staircases and windows, almost no walls. Two halls – one for heavy machinery, called Great hall (2 – Great Hall, view from the end of 1920, author's archive), one, called Small Hall (3 – Small Hall, historical view from the end of the 1920<sup>th</sup>, author's archive) for offices, with galleries in six floors around the open central hall. Offices never were used, as far as there were so many companies which wanted to be presented in new palace, that everything was given to the main function. Except that there used to be cinema, few restaurants, cafe, billiard club ... And open terrace with cafe on the last floor.

In original function it was used till 1951, than it was changed in the administrative building. In 1974 it was damaged by fire. And then it stood for almost 6 years empty, open to wind and rain. And looking for answer: what to do with it. First idea was: to demolish it. Fortunately it was not possible, as far as it was listed monument. For future function there were many strange, almost obscure ideas: to change it into the hospital, student dormitory, museum of workers revolution movement, to town hall of Prague district ... For everything it was too big. And then the excellent idea came: to get it to the National Gallery in Prague as a seat of Collection of modern and contemporary art. It was in 1980.

In this text there will be no explanation about complicated process of reconstruction of reinforced concrete building injured by fire and water, standing so long period without any maintenance. Reconstruction, designed by team of architect Miroslav Masák, was supposed to be finished in 1988, but in fact it was finished

only partly at 1995 (three floor were open with exhibition of Czech art of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it means only paintings and sculptures) and definitively at 2000 (with architecture, decorative arts and industrial design).

After the reconstruction which was held under strict condition of heritage programme, the building look a little bit different. From the street – it was still huge, attractive, but not beautiful construction. Rows of windows, rows of parapets, but somehow – empty. But inside it was quite different. Space was almost all in white: white floors, ceilings, columns, few of walls also in white colour. Exclusive space experience – on one side Great hall approx. 20 x 70 metres, 15metres high, with glazed roof, on the other side Small hall approx. 12 x 30 meters, for 6 floors high, also with glazed roof. Especially this hall was somehow intimate with soft corners, giving the feeling as view on ship ... Strong architecture, space sculpture by itself, biggest exhibit of the future gallery ... Spaces around the Great hall were more quiet, prepared for new exposition, but after some moment visitor started to feel that anything is not quite regular – difference in width of every wing is approximately 1 meter between southern and northern ends of the floor.

But from the beginning there were problems how to manage expositions in such relatively simple space. Art needs something other comparing industrial trade fair, later administrative space as well. Architecture of the palace is very simple, it is held only by basic elements of construction: columns, beams, ceiling's slabs, staircases and windows, almost no walls. Strict, but in fact very irregular grid of columns: 5 – 8 – 5, 20 times (in fact intercolumniums are differing by centimetres in every field, as far as plot of the building is irregular, so architects had to make some "camouflage"). Height of the floor – not more than 3,50 metres from floor to beams,. Ceiling with rich space graphic of beams in two direction. Later there was air condition system installed, which brought another line under the ceiling ... Doors only 1,97 metres high, as maximum 3 metres wide. Windows to all sides, except northern, three fully glazed facades. North facade of the building (for designed, but never n fact built offices) is full, with regularly positioned square windows. In exhibition floors

windows were made unopenable. To make exhibitions in such space is a hard struggle among architecture of the building, ideas of architect and curator and art.

Typical exhibition floors go in three wings around Great hall (4, 5 – view from regular exhibition floor, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023). Originally it was organized as wide streets for visitors with small exhibition spaces on both sides. Now there was completely empty space. Filled with the light. Due to better climate conditions windows were covered by blue plastic foil – space started to be heavy and somehow heavy. Some windows were completely covered by panels – exhibitions need at least some walls. But still there was and still is that strong space graphic of the ceiling which is dominating.

Small hall has not so complicated ceiling, there are only beams between columns 5 x 5 (but again it is differing a little bit), nothing more. But it is open to the central space – and it means that it is possible to see from every floor to all others. It means – all expositions should be somehow in harmony, in dialog. If they are prepared independently, they could have negative influences anyone to another. It is not a question only of space composition, but it is a question of light and also of colours. And the other problem is with climate – this high, from all sides full of light space is hard to keep in necessary air conditions, so for instance there is not possible to exhibit paintings, works on paper, photographs, fragile and delicate materials. (6, 7, 8 – view of Small Hall, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023)

In situation when every floor has separate exhibition with its own curator and with its own architect and with its own graphic designer – who certainly want to prepare their exhibition as best as possible, it can mean the problem. Such space needs supervisor, “chief architect” who would give general rules. Everyone who works or used to work on position of curator, knows, how hard it could be ...

But in any case – the Trade Fair Palace is for the National Gallery Prague not only building, seat of its collections and exhibitions, but it is not only the biggest, but also very important exhibit. (9 – Trade Fair Palace from the east-north, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023).

It is interesting that there are not such problems in historical buildings with closed, separated spaces – from renaissance through baroque to 19<sup>th</sup> century (usually).

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Figure 1. Trade Fair Palace, general view from the end of 1920th, author's archive



Figure 2. Great Hall, view from the end of 1920, author's archive)





Figure 3. Small Hall, historical view from the end of the 1920th, author's archive



Figure 4. View from regular exhibition floor, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023



Figure 5. View from regular exhibition floor, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023



Figure 6. View of Small Hall, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023



Figure 7. View of Small Hall, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023



Figure 9. Trade Fair Palace from the east-north, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023



Figure 8. View of Small Hall, photo Radomíra Sedláková, 2023

**DE-ACTIVATING CONTESTED LAYERS  
OF MEMORY IN HISTORIC MUSEUM  
BUILDINGS: ONGOING EXPERIENCES  
AT MUSEO DELLE CIVILTÀ IN ROME**

Elena Montanari, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

**ABSTRACT**

Within the complex field revolving around the relationship between museums and heritage buildings, a specific section pertains to those institutions that are located inside architectural structures embodying or stemming from contested histories, which often convey a layer of meaning that may be dissonant with the effort that these cultural agents are doing to become “democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures”. Sometimes the actual or potential friction between the “content” (the museum and its collections and programs) and the “container” (the venue) merely ensues from “difficult memories” somehow associated to the building, while in some cases it is possible to detect a specific conflict between the two – as, for example, is the case of many ethnographic museums, that are often located in palaces whose architecture bears witness of the colonial past that had set the basis for their foundation. Along the major revision path that these institutions have undertaken in the last decade, this issue started to be problematized and tackled.

The paper aims at reflecting on the ongoing work that is being carried out around this theme in Italian cultural institutions, where the “conflict” between the museum’s mission and its building’s identity emerges in various contexts. In particular, the experimentations designed and realized in the last decade in Rome, at *Museo delle Civiltà* (housed in *Palazzo delle Scienze* and *Palazzo delle Tradizioni Popolari*, a monumental complex built during the 1942 World Fair, a renown architectural symbol of the Fascist Regime and its colonial stances) exemplify different strategies enabling the re-appropriation, re-use and subversion of dissonant architecture, variously tackling the contested memory narrated by spaces and structures through multi-disciplinary actions merging museographic, architectural and artistic interventions.

**BIO**

**ELENA MONTANARI** is Assistant Professor in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano. Her research work is mainly focused on the development of museographic culture at its intersections with other disciplines.





Palazzo delle Scienze and Palazzo delle Tradizioni Popolari in the EUR neighborhood in Rome, Italy housing Museo delle Civiltà.

## De-activating Contested Layers of Memory in Historic Museum Buildings: Ongoing Experiences at Museo delle Civiltà in Rome

Elena Montanari | Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Within the complex field revolving around the relationship between museums and heritage buildings, a specific area pertains to those institutions that are located inside architectural structures embodying or stemming from contested histories, which convey layers of meaning that may be dissonant with the efforts these cultural agents are doing to become "democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures". Sometimes the actual or potential friction between the "content" (the institution's collections and programs) and the "container" (the venue) ensues from "difficult memories" associated to the building's origin or previous uses, while in some cases it is possible to detect a specific conflict between the two.

For instance, this is the case of those European ethnographic museums that are located in palaces whose architecture bears witness of the colonial past that had set the basis for their foundation. The birth of most of these institutions is indeed rooted in the 17th and 18th century colonial practices that many Countries developed along their establishment or advancement, leading to the construction of wealthy collections, that were often arranged through the construction of display systems and buildings specifically designed to disseminate national or imperial statements based on asymmetric power relations.

In the last decades of the 20th century, following the colonies' independence, the ethnographic discipline's evolution and the spread of post-colonial studies magnified by Frantz Fanon's, Edward Said's and Homi Bhabha's theories, these assemblages of anthropological materials have become highly contested spaces, and are now the object of a process of progressive revision aimed at questioning and rewriting their history, their institutional ideology, and their pedagogic and representation methods. As widely documented by a relevant body of theoretic and practical work, this process is mainly performed through new interpretation strategies and multi-vocal narrations, often based on co-creation projects involving reference communities and/or contemporary artists. Nevertheless, the ongoing "revolution" that is taking place in ethnographic museums is producing massive changes also in their museographic and spatial programs, that are meant to enable as well as to "exhibit" the thorough self-reflexive work that is being carried out. First and foremost, this effort results in the renovation of original exhibition settings, which are upgraded and/or conserved only in specific rooms intended to critically unfold the history of the museum, and are generally substituted by new devices aimed at arranging innovative curatorial strategies and fostering audience engagements – but also at "washing away" the controversial memories associated to these institutions' past (in the same way that the term "ethnography" was removed from their names).

Along with the upgrade of the presentation and use of their collections and contents, those institutions housed in buildings which represent a further product (and dissemination tool) of a colonial context are striving to develop a decolonization process also around their evocative "containers". This task is made particularly difficult by the complexity of these architectural systems as well as by the multiple criticalities implied in their transformation; these pertain not only to high costs but also to the limits ensuing from preservation stances related to artistic or cultural values, imposed by local and/or national heritage conservation authorities. Within this framework, experimentations carried out in the last decade have proven that the most efficient type of action is based on artistic interventions. Be they permanent or temporary, creative interactions with existing spaces and structures are capable to add new layers onto the building and profoundly alter its uses and meanings in a reversible way, one that strategically coheres the transformation and conservation of the architectural body and its identity, meets preservation requirements, and concurrently allows for an open and continuous revision process.

A particularly interesting experimentation with these practices can be observed at Museo delle Civiltà in Rome. This complex institution ensued from a major project launched by the Italian Ministry of Culture in September 2016, intended to enhance the management of the most relevant archaeological and ethnographic collections of the city in a coherent and innovative way, through the merging of five renowned museums – Museo Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini", Museo d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci", Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, ISPR's paleontologic and mineralogical collection, and the former Museo Coloniale (inaugurated by Mussolini in 1923, later renamed Museo dell'Africa Italiana, definitively closed in 1971). The institution is housed in the monumental complex formed by Palazzo delle Scienze and Palazzo delle Tradizioni Popolari, built for the World Fair held in Rome in 1942, in the EUR neighborhood – one of the most famous architectural symbols of the Fascist Regime and its colonial stances. The institutional reorganization of collections triggered an overall renovation of curatorial and display strategies, many of which engaged a self-reflexive dialogue also with the evocative features of the historic architecture. Among the many interesting practices that are being experimented in this museum, it is worth recalling some of those realized in Spring 2023, during the latest phase of the ongoing decolonization project, based on the collaboration with several international artists. Within this context, Jemmy Michael Gabriel's installation, *Yekati 12*, generated a visual and cultural "short circuit" along the monumental stairs of Palazzo delle Scienze, by inserting an exact replica of the staircase built in Addis Ababa during the colonial period: the symbolic placement of this architectural element was used to integrate the occupation of Ethiopia in the narration of the history of the anti-fascist era. Sammy Balaji's *Gnosis* critically questioned the idea of 17th-century Wunderkammern, hence re-contextualizing collections of mirabilia and naturalia and the emergence of modern anthropological and ethnographic museums in Italy, through the set-up of a large black fiberglass sphere evoking the image of a mirrored globe, reflecting the map of Katanga and including two bronze plaques reproducing Kongo fabrics (preserved in the institution's collections). The intervention presented by DAAR (Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti) re-signified and activated the space under the colonnade of the palaces through a scale reproduction of the main façade of the rural settlement of Borgo Rizza (built in 1940 by the Ente di Colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano, established by the Fascist Regime, following the Entente Colonization of Libya model to develop a sort of internal colonization), by breaking the figure down into 15 multi-functional modules which allowed to host public debates and events. These installations provide strong evidence for the disruptive power of artistic installations in the de-activation of contested layers of memory in heritage buildings, hence proving a particularly strategic tool for post-colonial museums in colonial buildings.



The intervention presented by DAAR (Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti) at Museo delle Civiltà in Rome, June 2023 (courtesy of Museo delle Civiltà).

**RESOLVING CONFLICT BY APPLYING THE DESIGN CONCEPTS OF 'VENTILATION' AND 'REFLECTION': A CASE OF THE NATIONAL FOLK MUSEUM OF KOREA'S SPECIAL EXHIBITION [FOLKLORE IS OUR LIVES]**

Cindy Miok Choi, National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul, Korea

**ABSTRACT**

Exhibition is a drama in which exhibits and visitors communicate and exchange emotions, and exhibition design is to create an optimal environment for this. If so, in the exhibition, 'curating' is a term that includes the activities of curators in 'curation (collecting, selecting, and disseminating various information by giving it new value). In addition, combining the word 'space' which is the subject of the exhibition, the site facing visitors, and also a symbol system that conveys meaning, becomes 'space curating'. The term 'space curating' refers to an activity in which space itself implies a theme and has the value of experience.

The National Folk Museum of Korea's special exhibition, [Folklore is our lives] was an exhibition that dealt with a rather heavy and difficult subject for the public and researchers alike.

Therefore, it was implicating a number of collision factors. In the space curating of the exhibition, the design concepts of 'Ventilation' and 'Ruminum' were applied to solve this problem. I will introduce how I solved the fundamental problems of this exhibition through 'Ventilation' and 'Ruminum'.

**BIO**

**CINDY MIOK CHOI.** Born in 1974, in Korea Doctor of architecture. Currently, Curator and Exhibition designer in National Folk Museum of Korea.

Design(Space Curating) : 'Sunbi-Classical Scholar', 'Babsangjigyo: Cultural exchange on the table between Korea and Japan', 'Sejong City 2005:2015, Remarkable transformation and distant memories', 'Junk x User's Guide', 'Wintering', 'Our Lives beyond Epidemics' etc.

Award-winning career: Winner of 2016 Japan Good Design Award, 2017 iF Design Award, 2018 German Design Award Best Researcher Award (2020, 2022) - Korean Society of Exhibition Design Awarded the Achievement Award at the Korea Design Awards (2023).

Book : '100 Designers(2010)', 'Museum X Journey(2019), Children's Museum (2023)

Paper : 'Case study of Brand Positioning through Design in Museum(2014)', 'The Study on Preschoolers and their Guardians' Interaction at Children's Museum; Focused on character of visitors behavior in experimental exhibition type(2015)', 'A Study on Exhibition design of by the Play; Focused on Visitors' behavior and Affordance (2016)', 'A Study on the Exhibition Space Formation through the Concept of Plot(2016)', 'A case study of exhibition design, applying the contextual spatial concept(2016)', 'The Spatialization of Exhibition Contents with Phenomenology of Perception of Merleau Ponty(2017)', 'A Study on the Exhibition Space Curating with the Concept 'Mise en scene'- Focused on Special exhibition, 'Wintering' of The National Folk Museum of Korea(2020)', 'Metaverse and Exhibition: A study on the seach for the Future of Exhibition with a focus on the Children's Museum(2021)', 'A Case Study on Exhibition of Museum Representation Method Approach with Simulacion (2022)' etc.



# Resolving Conflict by Applying the Design Concepts of 'Ventilation' and 'Reflection'

A Case of the National Folk Museum of Korea's Special Exhibition

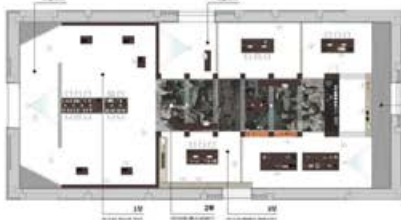


Exhibition is a drama in which exhibits and visitors communicate and exchange emotions, and exhibition design is to create an optimal environment for this.

The exhibition space, which is the object of the exhibition, the site facing visitors, and also a symbol system that conveys meaning, should mean the theme and have the value of experience. A history exhibition is an imaginary walk that fills the gaps in history. By emphasizing what can be discovered and what must be discovered, it is to reveal the intention to give reality and emotion to history and to face the exhibition with the discourse of the present tense. There are numerous conflicts in this process. Design thinking and the result of design should be able to solve and buffer them.

The National Folk Museum of Korea, Korea's leading museum of folk life history, which deals with the lives and culture of Koreans and people living in Korea, has prepared a special exhibition called "Folk is our Lives." This was to commemorate about 100 years since folkloric research began in Korea. However, the exhibition dealing with "folklore" was a difficult topic for both the public and researchers. Therefore, from the beginning, various collision factors were implied.

Floorplan



Structure & Furniture



The elements of the conflict and the design solution are as follows

1. Theme selection (museum vs visitors)
2. Space production (curator vs designer)
3. Relics display (curator vs conservationist)
4. Operation (museum vs sustainability)

The first being the exhibition promotional material (poster), which is a visual object, and the second being the spatial structural application.

The promotional material applied typography (two words are similar in Korean) and extended the definition of folklore from life to people. This exhibition promotion method becoming a kind of visualized "reflection" that asks questions to visitors.

The gate of light became an alarm device that repeatedly crosses on and off. As the act of 'thinking' in the dark and the act of 'ventilation' in a bright environment intersected, viewing was intended to become a ritual that reflects on folklore.





## EXHIBITION DESIGN AS CONFLICT MEDIATION AT IPIRANGA MUSEUM

Ana Paula Pontes and Anna Helena Villela  
– Metr pole\_arq

### ABSTRACT

Opened in 1895, the Ipiranga Museum was the first public museum built in S o Paulo. For several years, it has been managed by the University of S o Paulo – USP. After being closed since 2013, the museum underwent extensive restoration and renovation processes. It finally reopened in September 2022, coinciding with the celebration of Brazil’s 200th anniversary of Independence. The museum’s collection focuses on the history of material culture and, upon reopening, offered a unique experience to the public. The exhibition featured 11 permanent displays showcasing items from the museum’s collection, along with a temporary exhibition. In total, over 4,000 items were exhibited across an impressive 5,456 square meters.

This paper will delve into the proposal for the museum’s exhibition design, which was carried out by Metr pole\_Arq. The design takes a contemporary approach, aiming to establish a dialogue with the Eclectic architecture of the building itself, which is considered a monumental piece within the collection.

The project encompasses the creation of a flexible exhibition display system that can be adapted to different rooms and exhibitions. Alongside graphic panels and object displays, each room includes mobile stands in the center. These stands provide a wealth of information through various sources, including texts, images, audiovisual monitors, and tactile objects. Notably, the historical paintings are presented detached from the walls. This serves as a reminder that they represent the artists’ interpretations of their time, rather than definitive opinions on historical facts. The design solutions developed through meticulous curatorial research aim to present the objects to the public with complementary information, emphasizing their significance as witnesses to specific periods in history rather than mere precious treasures. Ultimately, these innovative design choices offer visitors a fresh perspective on the museum’s collection.

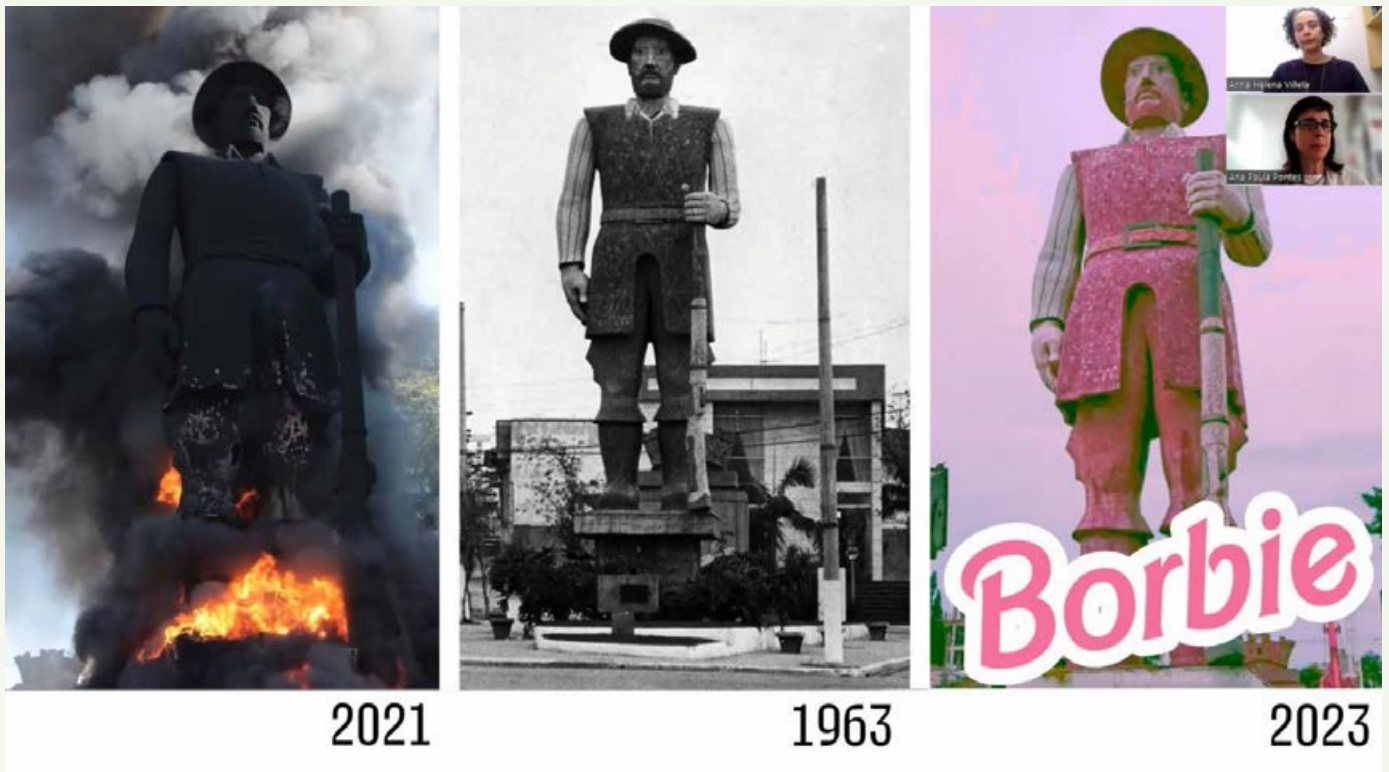
### BIOS

**ANA PAULA PONTES** is an architect and urbanist graduated from FAU-USP, with a master’s degree from PUC-Rio, and a Ph.D. also from FAU-USP. She has been involved in projects and constructions of large-scale cultural buildings, such as the Pinacoteca do Estado and the Museu da L ngua Portuguesa in S o Paulo, as well as the Cidade das Artes and the New MIS in Rio de Janeiro. She began her work in exhibition design in 1999 when she joined the design team at MAM Rio de Janeiro. Since then, she has developed numerous projects for institutions throughout the country. She is a professor at FAU Mackenzie, where she is involved in the research and extension project *Museus em Conex o* (Museums in Connection), aiming to integrate discussions on art and architecture into the field of museums and exhibitions. Since 2017, she has been with Metr pole\_arq, and alongside Anna Helena Villela, she has worked on the design of the long-term exhibitions for the New Museu Ipiranga-USP (2020-2022).

**ANNA HELENA VILLELA** graduated in Architecture and Urbanism from FAU-USP, where she also completed her master’s degree in 2019. In 2003, she founded Metr pole\_arq, focusing on architecture projects with an emphasis on cultural buildings and exhibition design. She has been involved in exhibition design projects for institutions such as MAM-SP, MASP, SESC, SESI, and the S o Paulo Biennial. In addition to museums dedicated to art, she is the author of the long-term exhibitions at the Museu de Zoologia-USP (2015) and the New Museu Ipiranga-USP (2020-2022), alongside her partner Ana Paula Pontes.

**EXHIBITION DESIGN AS CONFLICT  
MEDIATION AT IPIRANGA MUSEUM**

Ana Paula Pontes and Anna Helena Villela  
– Metr pole\_arq



Exhibition design as conflict mediation at ipiranga museum:  
<https://id.lettras.up.pt/icamt2023porto/?p=1045>





# KEY THEME 3 PROCESSES AND CONFLICT

Dialogues between the global North-South and South-South in museum architecture and exhibition design projects dealing with conflict.

Conflicts that take place in the process of developing museum architecture and exhibition design projects that look precisely at conflict-related issues and ways to deal with them (e.g., architects vs museum professionals)

Museum architecture and exhibition design as a tool to develop critical awareness around conflict processes.

## MORNING SESSION

Moderated by Danusa Castro,  
Co-chair of ICAMT, Italy

### MODERATOR BIO: DANUSA CASTRO

**DANUSA CASTRO**'s professional career is linked to arts and culture, and she has always been involved with collections, libraries and archives.

Her education includes a degree in Communication Sciences, post-graduation in Marketing and a specialisation in Museology and Museography.

Catalogue Manager and Registrar at the Koelliker Collection in Milan, she's also a consultant for FTG-Arte, creating content to enhance and disseminate cultural heritage, and associate/project manager of the creative studio at Hoxby (UK).

She has been an ICAMT board member since 2019 and is currently Co-Chair of this International Committee. At ICOM Lombardy, she's an active member of the Working Group "Sustainable Exhibition Fittings" and is currently researching museum recycling international practices and new green materials.

**EXHIBITING THE OCCUPATION:  
HOW THE ITALIAN PRESENCE IN ALBANIA  
HAS BEEN REPRESENTED THROUGH  
EXHIBITIONS OVER THE LAST CENTURY**  
Giuseppe Resta, Faculdade de Arquitectura  
da Universidade do Porto, Portugal

**ABSTRACT**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the Albanian National Theatre in Tirana was demolished overnight, in the days of the first major lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theatre was built in 1939, when the Italian military occupation of the Albanian territory was officially established, after decades of increasing influence on the local economy by the fascist regime. That day was the climax of a two-year-long protest against its demolition by local associations and international organisations. This event demonstrates the importance of debating on the contested material and immaterial traces that the Italian presence in Albania left behind, culminating with a military occupation during WWII.

This text surveys the exhibitions curated or organised by Italian institutions, with the aim of tracing the evolution of the colonial narrative from fascist propaganda to contemporary initiatives. Starting in the 1920s, the Italian *Ministero delle Colonie* opened trade exhibitions, ethnographic displays, and political and recreational events. During the occupation, Albania was featured in the *Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare* (1940) and many other venues up to recent shows in Tirana.

The first exhibitions were essential devices to support Italian territorial claims, built on the argument of an alleged Mediterranean tradition of the area, reunited once again under the “Roman” identity flag. The political-ideological nature of the artistic productions, the biased historical discourses around the myth of Roman origins, and the aesthetics employed in such events formed a strong narration that lasted much longer than the military presence on the territory. Taking this case as an example, we will see how exhibitions were instrumental to the authoritarian regime in the identity-building process; how contested narratives can be twisted in the contemporary political debate; and to what degree this heritage can be considered a shared legacy by both parties, the coloniser and the colonised.

**BIO**

**GIUSEPPE RESTA** is a Researcher at the Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto (PORTofCALL project). He previously held teaching positions at Yeditepe University, Istanbul (2021-23) and Bilkent University, Ankara, TR (2019-21) as an assistant professor, at Politecnico di Bari, Bari, IT (2019) as an adjunct professor, and at Polis University, Tirana, AL (2017) as a lecturer. Resta received his Ph.D. in architecture from Università degli Studi Roma TRE, Roma, IT (2017) and his M.Arch from Politecnico di Bari, Bari, IT (2013). He is the owner and curator of Antilia Gallery (IT) and co-founder of the architecture think tank PROFFERLO Architecture (IT-UK). Resta has been architecture editor at *Artwort Magazine* and [Artwort.com](http://Artwort.com). His work has been published in architectural journals such as *The Plan Journal*, *STUDIO*, *Lunch journal*, *FAM*, *Architecture and Urban Planning*, *Inflection*. His latest books are “Journey to Albania: Architectures, expeditions and landscapes of tourism” (Accademia University Press, 2022) and “The City and the Myth” (Libria, 2023). Resta is a co-leader of the COST Action CA18126 “Writing Urban Places” and a member of the COST Action CA18137 “European Middle Class Mass Housing”.

**EXHIBITING THE OCCUPATION:  
HOW THE ITALIAN PRESENCE IN ALBANIA  
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Giuseppe Resta, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, Portugal

**INTRODUCTION**

Exhibitions were one of the pillars of Mussolini's propaganda strategy, aimed at supporting the ongoing colonial narrative in association with the interests of the national building industry (Cianfarani, 2020). What is Albania's role in all this? How was architecture communicated during the occupation, and how has the narration evolved until today?

In the twentieth century, Italy held a strong influence on the country, spanning from a full-fledged military occupation to scientific collaborations. Officially, the Italian occupation lasted only five years (1939-43), but the factual interest in Albanian affairs precedes the turn of the century and continues to these days. As a matter of fact, the problem of accompanying the military action with a new narrative became central to the propaganda. This produced a wide range of cultural initiatives involving publications of all kinds, movies, scientific explorations, and exhibitions.

After Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, a new phase of westernisation took place. During the First World War, the country was transformed on the battlefield. A group of patriots led by Ahmed Zogu, future president of the First Republic and later king of the Albanian kingdom (1928-1939), re-established order in 1920 to create a central government based in Tirana (Porfido & Resta, 2022). However, this instability attracted the attention of Austria, France, and Italy. The economic and political interests were manifold (Ministero della Guerra, 1915). The Italian government first created the conditions to steer domestic politics by leveraging on infrastructural works through loans from state-owned agencies (Iaselli, 2004, 2013); later, the Mussolini administration seized power and treated Albania as one of the regions of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The fascist propaganda portrayed the country as a land of opportunities. Similar to what happened in the Agro Pontino, agricultural centres and reclamation works followed 1927

Mussolini's announcement that "Italy must be ruralised", determining renewed attention to the rural areas and population growth policies (Parlato, 2002). Those Italians who started to migrate to Albania following State guidelines, hence legally, were considered proper colonists; others entered the country illegally (Vietti, 2012). All contributed to a climate of foundational civilisation.

**THE INVENTION OF A SHARED  
MEDITERRANEAN TRADITION**

In several European countries, as a response to the formation of nation-states, the end of the nineteenth century is permeated with debates on what is to be included or excluded from the supposed identity of a population. This is done by defining a common historical memory based on flexible interpretations of heritage (Biddiss, 1994). Hence, the roots of national culture had to be grounded on invented traditions (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Italian fascism developed a colonial narrative based on the Mediterranean at the time of the Roman Empire, the so-called *romanità*.<sup>2</sup> This was the invented tradition to be publicised domestically. Archaeological bulletins, the commemorative stamp of Aeneas in Butrint, "Virgil's cruise" dedicated to the places explored by the Trojan hero, and several other initiatives aimed to relocate the differences between the two countries as a historical accident to be compensated.

The *romanità* debate also involved architectural elements, especially at the beginning of the 1930s when the regime favoured austere forms over eclecticism. One example is the argument between Marcello Piacentini and Ugo Ojetti on the use of pilasters and architrave system instead of columns and arches, in which the former prevailed because of the simplified aesthetics (Piacentini, 1933).

The consensus-building program passed through infrastructural works and new towns. The popularisation of the operations in Albania was first disseminated in Italy through the press. In the mid-1920s, the news covered mainly Italian archaeological missions in Albania (Gilkes, 2003), also documented by scientific publications, conferences, and *Istituto LUCE* newsreels. In Albania, *Gazeta Shqipëtare*, the local branch of the Italian newspaper *Gazzetta*



*del Mezzogiorno*, was founded in 1927. In August 1933, news in Albanian started to be broadcast from across the Adriatic Sea, from Bari's EIAR station. Later, the first LUCE short films and *cinegiornali* were screened in Italy, primarily aimed at publicising the infrastructural works carried out by the Italian-funded agency SVEA (Godoli, 2012).

Because the *romanità* was a staged tradition, exhibitions were crucial venues where new stories could be told. As we will see, the approach was that of a total work of art, an integration of architecture, visual arts, and graphic design.

### ITALIAN EXHIBITIONS DURING THE OCCUPATION

The regime designed fairs and exhibitions as places where the Italian population would have tangible contact with distant territories. Their placement, the architectural features, and the exhibition design metaphorically represented their political posture towards different territories. Indeed, exhibitions reflected a much broader discourse on communicating colonial claims. In an all-encompassing regime like the Duce's, any minor decision had to follow precise aesthetic guidelines (Avcı Hosanlı & Resta, 2022; Besana, Carli, Devoti, & Prisco, 2002).

The first logical venue was Bari's *Fiera del Levante*, as it was the closest to Tirana. Starting from its opening in 1930, Albania participated on a yearly basis until 1939. Two dedicated pavilions were designed within a general layout drafted by Arch. Augusto Corradini (La Sorsa, 1931). The *Fiera* accommodated an "oriental village" in which various nations to the East of Italy were represented with stereotypical characters. This process of visual appropriation employed the architectural lexicon of an idealised distant land, with an Islamic milieu, to be normalised. The first Albanian pavilion showed more eclectic decorations: pilasters at the corner intersections, recessed panes on the façade, and two large *trifore* shaded with latticework elements similar to a mashrabiya. It was later renovated to accentuate the eclectic decorations. The first exhibition, in 1930, aimed at presenting photos of scented landscapes and beautiful panoramas (La Sorsa, 1931). In the 1932 edition, there was also a painting of King Zog, local products on show, and visuals portraying the infrastructural works in which "bridges, buildings, and streets give an idea of the great development that is

progressing in the allied kingdom"<sup>3</sup> (Bollettino Quotidiano, 1932).

The second pavilion reflected the changed relationships with the country in 1939. It was designed by Gerardo Bosio, the leading architect of the Tirana office in which regulatory plans for Albanian cities were drafted (Resta, 2019). The building adopted a dominating position in visual and physical terms,<sup>4</sup> in line with the changed sensibility of the fascist regime towards architecture in the late 30s (Fig. 1, a). It was a pure rectangular parallelepiped, alluding to a military defensive tower. Bosio drew a structure made of sandstone, with a *bugnato* cladding, sat on a stepped podium, and next to a Skanderbeg<sup>5</sup> statue. The only architectural elements were a large monumental entrance, a series of small openings around the volume, and a crenelation-like top. Interestingly, this was seen as a morphological synthesis between the Venetian control towers installed on the Balkan coast under *La Serenissima* rule (1392–1797) and the local tower house typology *kulla* (Castiglioni, 1945). The interiors and the content of the exhibition were personally curated by the Undersecretary for Albanian Affairs Zenone Benini, hence as a close emanation of political messages. On the walls was a photomontage of military scenes and working people.

The main room hosted a large model of Tirana according to the new fascist plan, and archaeological material extracted from the ongoing campaigns. It was an ideal connection between the Roman past and the fascist future. The rest of the exhibition presented the richness in raw material in the Albanian Alps (Pollastri, 1939) and ethnographic information on the local customs.

Building on the same rhetoric of the *Fiera*, Albania was presented in May 1940 at Napoli's *Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare*. Tellingly, the poster shows the feet of a person wearing caligae<sup>6</sup> and stepping on a stone-paved road. The pavilion confirmed the same organisational structure (coordination by Benini and design by Bosio, in collaboration with Arch. Pier Nicolò Berardi) and precisely the same architectural features mentioned above. However, the Napoli pavilion was much bigger and equipped with custom artworks produced by relevant artists (Fig. 1, b). The uniform structural pace of the framework was integrated

with displays and representations, exhibited in a linear fashion as a series of episodes composing the overall narration of the fascist initiatives in Albania. Again, predominantly military involvement, raw material extraction, infrastructural works, and urbanisation. At the centre was another large model of Tirana. The *Triennale* pavilion achieved the optimal integration between built and narrative space, presenting itself as the quintessential display of *romanità*. Goods and objects were framed in monumental scenes, capable of communicating a sense of power and well-being. The architectural composition of the two pavilions was not only an isolated exhibition project, but a small-scale experimentation of what Bosio would later build in full scale in the capital. The Casa del Fascio, today's Polytechnic School of Tirana, shows symmetry, proportions, *bugnato* cladding, and many additional details that the Florentine architect tested in Bari and Naples.

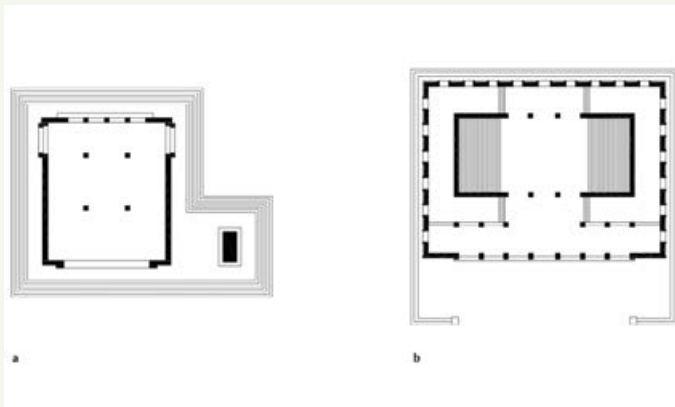


Fig. 1. Plan of the Albanian pavilions at the Fiera del Levante (a) and Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare (b), drawings by the author on the base of archival material

The Second World War interrupted most of the international exhibitions, including Roma's Expo of 1942. Minor exhibitions were organized in Tirana in 1942 (the *Mostra del Libro e della Cultura italiana dell'epoca fascista* and the travelling exhibition *Mostra Mobile del Fascismo*) and in 1943 (the *Mostra dell'Artigianato albanese*).

### ITALIAN EXHIBITIONS AFTER THE OCCUPATION

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the Albanian National Theatre in Tirana was demolished overnight, in the days of the first major lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theatre was built in 1939 by Arch. Giulio Bertè

and represented the climax of a two-year-long protest against its demolition by local associations, and international organisations. This episode demonstrates the importance of debating the contested material and immaterial traces that the Italian presence in Albania left behind. Although the theatre embodied the Italian occupation, the fact that it was being repurposed by the artists' community *Art House* flipped its meaning for the city as a centre for experimentation (Lunghi & Scardi, 2020). The contested heritage of colonial past is then rarely a binary decision of keeping or destroying, but it should be analysed in its individual stories.

Colonial exhibitions are part of the immaterial traces left behind. The Albanian case is quite unique because the postwar period relegated the country to an extremely isolated status, under Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha (Fischer, 1999). Foreign visitors were generally not allowed, or "tested by the daily requirement to undertake up to six hours work on a collective farm in return for the privilege of staying in the country" (Hall, 1984, p. 547).

His decision to limit cultural influences from foreign countries was lifted only towards the end of the regime<sup>7</sup> (Bishku, 2013). Italy was one of the first nations to restore cultural ties, though the issue of studying the early twentieth-century architectural heritage was a slippery one.

The main governmental body for the organisation of exhibitions, among other cultural activities of promotion of Italian culture abroad, is the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura* (ICC). It was founded in 1926, as an outpost of the regime propaganda abroad, and reformed several times, until today's operational autonomy under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mancini Palamoni, 2020). In Albania, the ICC functioned as one of the offices of the Italian Embassy, with a limited degree of action, until it moved to a dedicated location in 1999.

In the same years, architectural historians inaugurated studies on Italian colonial architecture in Albania. First, Gresleri, Massaretti, and Zagnoni (1993) published a volume on *terre d'oltremare* (overseas territories), recently expanded and revised. The design activity of Italian architects in Albania was exhibited, in collaboration with the Albanian ICC, in *La presenza italiana in Albania nella prima metà del XX secolo* (Tirana

2004), *Architettura moderna italiana per le città d'Albania. Modelli e interpretazioni* (Tirana 2012), and *Sulle tracce dell'Italia in Albania* (Tirana 2014). But more exhibitions opened in Roma, Firenze and Bari (i.e., *L'amicizia tra Italia e Albania: passato, presente, futuro* in Roma in 2006, *La presenza italiana in Albania. La ricerca archeologica, la conservazione, le scelte progettuali* in Bari and Roma in 2016).

Indeed, the first relevant monographic volume was the catalogue of the 2004 exhibition, curated by Giusti (2004), followed by the catalogue of the 2006 exhibition (Giusti, 2006). Articles and chapters mainly covered the case of Tirana, until 2012, when publications included minor cities and towns as well as co-authorships of Italian and Albanian researchers (Giacomelli & Vokshi, 2012; Menghini, Pashako, & Stigliano, 2012). An essential work on thematic archival indexing was conducted by Silvia Trani in 2007.

The 2014 exhibition is probably the most relevant until today, with broad institutional support. Five Italian universities and the Polytechnic School of Tirana collaborated in the curatorship of the contents, spread across the same Italian buildings that were the object of the studies. On the same days, the restoration of the National Bank of Albania, designed in 1938 by Arch. Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, opened to the public and the event was accompanied with a scientific conference (*Ambasciata d'Italia a Tirana*, 2014).

Overall, the three exhibitions mainly presented original archival material, surveys, 3D reconstructions, and typological analyses of the projects. Less evident was the effort in critically addressing the Italian influence today, and attempt maybe a revision of the sources. As we have seen with the demolition of the National Theatre, this uncertainty on the contested heritage leaves gaps that could be exploited in many ways. As an example, the theatre will be replaced with one designed by the Danish office BIG, plus buildings to be developed in the same area.

The Italian exhibitions retained a rather conservative position and rarely addressed the wider public. Also, the composition of contributors showed a large majority of Italian scholars. The design was flat, made of panels loaded with information and technical drawings. Sometimes directly sourced from Master's or doctoral theses. The many details presented in the texts made intellectual positions hard to understand, somehow at the other extreme

from the assertive magniloquent vocabulary adopted in the original fascist pavilions. The words "traces" and "presence" are the most recurrent in the briefs and the titles. The former explains the act of discovery of something that was interrupted; the latter rewords "occupation" with a more diplomatic term.

The body of archival research on Italian Architecture in Albania is today mature, and the archival material has been examined consistently in publications and theses, especially affiliated with universities in Firenze, Roma, and Bari. However, the unfoldings of the Italian contested heritage are in that phase of much-needed dissemination, in order to open public debates on mainstream media but also chats among acquaintances. This phase needs bold curatorial approaches and a not-so-academic approach to exhibition design in an attempt to re-elaborate the documentary and iconographic material accumulated over the years.

## NOTES

1. It should be noted that Albania did not retain the status of a colony, but that of an Italian region. Indeed, it was officially part of the "kingdom" and not of the "empire", to which other colonies were subjected (Ciano, 1996).

2. There is a frequent reference to the Roman Empire as an ideal destination for a renewed centrality of Italy in the Mediterranean. The prime minister Merlika Kruja, in the speech dated April 12th 1939, with which the Parliament offered the Albanian crown to the Italian king Vittorio Emanuele III, stated that "the union of the kingdom of Albania with fascist Italy in the framework of the Empire of Rome is an event of historical importance" (Kruja, 1943, p. 36).

3. The text has been loosely translated as "allied kingdom". However, in the original version, the Albanian Kingdom is addressed as *amico* ("friend"), highlighting the privileged status of Albania.

4. In contrast with the location of the previous pavilion, it was not placed together with other foreign countries because Albania was in the process of becoming part of the Italian territory.

5. Skanderbeg is the Albanian national hero who fought the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century.



6. Military sandals worn by Roman foot soldiers.

7. The communist rule of Enver Hoxha spanned between 1944 and 1985, with his death. Until 1992, Ramiz Alia guided a transition phase that led Albania to reconnect with Europe, the USA, and the Middle East right after the end of the Cold War.

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### **MOVING BEYOND DEPOLICIZED REPRESENTATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTS AND DISAGREEMENTS IN THE EXHIBITION-MAKING PROCESS**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

How different people perceive museums is intimately related to the preconceptions shaped by political environments. This article presents two specific examples of conflict processes in exhibition-making to contend that sometimes the intention to weaken the political implications of exhibitions brings more disputes. Although the two examples vary in scope, the elements that cause conflicts are similar. With rhetorical museology, this paper argues that the selection of objects, interpretation texts, spaces, and the position of curators and audiences all potentially shape the political expression of exhibitions. In addition, this article believes that curatorial practices that take the initiative to avoid the political dimensions of social life themselves represent a political tendency, while in doing so, the exhibition cannot exist in a non-politicized vacuum.

#### **BIO**

**JIAYI CHANG** is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research interest is museums and ideology, while her main research interest is the Communist Party of China and its extensive deployment of museums in fulfilling political objectives. The way she approaches her research is by observing and deconstructing the performances and narratives in museums. Recently she just finished several field trips across China to experience red tourism. She respects the situatedness of the Chinese contemporary museum and heritage system and hopes to expand and diversify the understanding of the museum and counter homogenizing views that deny this diversity.



**MOVING BEYOND DEPOLICIZED REPRESENTATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTS AND DISAGREEMENTS IN THE EXHIBITION-MAKING PROCESS**

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Museums are places where conflicts of interest between various parties can be observed, both conceptually and physically. While witnessing all of this, museums are also striving to address these conflicts and looking forward to more effective cooperation. In his publication regarding contemporary museology, Knell (2020, p.28) sees the museum as “an institution that proposes truths to the world based on its own acts of border creation, negotiation, patrol, defence, mitigation and erasure”. Through the border lens, the museum witnesses, collects, and records the occurrence of conflicts and peace on various scales, subtly conveying the values of their society in this process.

By embedding the museum in contemporary society and using rhetorical museology, the central argument I wish to make here is that the selection of objects, interpretation texts, spaces, and the position of curators and audiences all potentially shape the political expression of exhibitions. What generates conflicts is essentially the need for representation. Although the two examples analyzed in this article are to some extent related to China, this is not a specific discussion about China-related conflicts, but rather my own identity and academic experience allow me to pay more attention to these examples. Disagreements related to representation may exist between any two or more individuals, communities, organizations, or countries, depending on their respective political interests.

**CONFLICTS IN EXHIBITION-MAKING**

In organization theory, conflict is a process that can exist both potentially and overtly, in which A deliberately uses some sort of blockage to counteract B’s efforts which will result in frustrating B in achieving one’s goals of furthering one’s interests (Robbins, 1990, p.412). For a conflict to exist, it must be perceived by the parties to it (Robbins, 1990, p.412).

In the context of museums, a power relationship involving representation can often be observed in the interaction between museums and communities, experts, or governments. The subtle power differentiation between various parties makes museums a potential or overt conflict zone. This clearly goes beyond the conflicts simply caused by personality incompatibilities, but is related to the structural root of conflicts that organizational theory focuses on (Robbins, 1990, p.418). It is worth noting that political authority does not only appear in the form of government intervention, as in most cases it is hidden. Museums seem to convey an illusion that their messages are “authorless” and only express neutral authoritative facts (Knell, 2020, p52). According to rhetorical museology, museums are highly crafted spaces, which provide “symbolic narratives via words, objects, and architecture that together shape the actions of their nations” (Weiser, 2017, p.7). This article attempts to argue that the political position of those seemingly concealed experts and curators attaches political symbols to texts, objects, and spaces, implicitly or overtly. Such “fore-meanings”, in a political sense, will inevitably be projected into curatorial practice. As Gadamer (2004, p.295) shows in the hermeneutic theory, the prejudices and fore-meanings are not at one’s free disposal, so they are not like a method that can be learned or applied; they are given to us. Indeed, the museum profession is itself “a political force and an expression of political values and agenda”, although it is not constituted as a political party (Knell, 2016, p.21-22).

**THE EXHIBITION “CHINA: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS” IN THE MET**

On May 4, 2015, along with the opening of the Met Gala, the exhibition “China: Through the Looking Glass” opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The exhibition showcases a large number of Western fashion designs inspired by “fantasies about China” and Chinese cultural relics. After its opening, this exhibition was criticized by both international and Chinese audiences as it displayed lots of products of Orientalism. Andrew Bolton (2015, p.20), the curator of this exhibition, repeatedly explained that the focus of the exhibition “is not

about China per se but about a China that exists a collective fantasy”. The logic implied by this proposition is: if the topic of the exhibition itself is imagination, then it is only a neutral display of the product of imagination, and therefore not responsible for any criticism of wrongly representing the resource of inspiration. However, this explanation is insufficient to reduce disputes.

Some disagreements are closely related to a nationalist sentiment within China. At present, approximately 1.67 million Chinese cultural relics have been plundered or collected by Westerners (Bai & Nam, 2022, p.894). Sometimes, this nationalist sentiment is not based on an examination of whether specific Chinese heritage was indeed looted overseas during the colonial era, but rather on the loss of ownership of these cultural relics, which can be a feeling shared through the Chinese identity. As Smith (2006, p.51) states, “the ability to possess, control and give meaning to the past and/or heritage sites is a re-occurring and reinforcing statement of disciplinary authority and identity”. The loss of ownership signifies a loss of the ability to control and interpret the past, which further indicates the difficulty of using these heritage to construct a narrative according to one’s own interests.

The rhetoric of space or place has added to the controversy with the opening of the exhibition “China: Through the Looking Glass”. Bolton (2015, p.19) emphasized that designers’ intentions were more driven by the logic of fashion rather than by that of politics, and they just pursue “an aesthetic of surfaces rather than an essence governed by cultural contextualization”. However, this exhibition did not occupy a separate space to display these products of the aesthetic of surfaces. There were two venues for the exhibition: in addition to the costume gallery in the basement of the museum, the exhibition also juxtaposed costumes and cultural relics in Chinese galleries on the second floor. In this juxtaposition, the difference between reality and fantasy has been blurred. For Chinese critics, placing these products of fantasies that convey elements of Orientalism in galleries spread the nationalist sentiment from Chinese collections to costumes. The juxtaposition makes it easier to perceive the physical location of Chinese cultural relics in the West, strengthening the sense of losing ownership and the ability to interpret the past.

Moreover, since there was no one-to-one correlation between objects and costumes, the decision to juxtapose which objects was completely subjective. In fact, there was no other Chinese in the top curatorial team except for Wong Kar Wai, who served as the artistic director for the exhibition. Although some of the objects were borrowed from Chinese museums, the curatorial team did not collaborate with Chinese museum staff. This led to the fact that the exhibition narrative, which focuses on cultural exchange between East and West, was not a genuine product of “communication”. Maxwell K. Hearn, head of the Met’s renowned Department of Asian Art, once expressed his worries that Chinese objects might be overshadowed and demeaned by the design in the exhibition-making process. From this point of view, it can be seen that there is an innate contradiction between design and heritage. The inspiration of designers came from abstract, vague, and distant Chinese symbols, not specific cultural relics. For fashion design, artists and designers need to conduct creative reinterpretations based on original objects (Hearn, 2015, p.14). These costumes were not slavish replicas (Hearn, 2015, p.14). While in the meantime, these Chinese cultural relics did not only exist as a starting point for design. Juxtaposition established an irreconcilable connection between abstract inspiration and specific collections, leading to the following interplay: collections created in the real Chinese past have influenced the simple appreciation toward the aesthetic expression of fashion design, while the aesthetic of surface limited the understanding of the cultural relics. The spatial rhetoric of juxtaposition was straightforward and superficial; it did not intend to showcase the process of cultural exchange, but instead used non-specifically-related objects and costumes to represent the result of cultural exchange as dislocation, confusion, and ambiguity. Therefore, the overly simplified presentation of cultural exchange left little space for dialogue between the East and the West.

The best example of proving this exhibition was not as unrelated to the real China as the curators claimed is the curator’s attempt to place the Mao jacket sculpture in the Buddhist Gallery to symbolize Mao’s myth in China, with the idea of change in deities and monumentality.

Wang Kar Wai immediately rejected this idea and pointed out that this would be too sensitive to both the Chinese government and Buddhism. Such arrangement is clearly based on a simplified and formalized understanding of religion and personal cult toward political figures. Not responding to the potential impact of an exhibition on another culture is itself not pursuing communication and understanding.

Cross-cultural collaboration in the exhibition-making process is beneficial for jointly participating in the discourse construction and ultimately influencing the outcome of the exhibition narrative. However, the next example shows that cross-cultural curatorial collaboration may lead to a more complex and controversial situation, and can affect curation progress.

#### **A CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE: THE METAPHOR OF “HOME” AND ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The following section can be seen as a reflection on a previous curatorial experience. During my master’s, one of the modules aimed to develop an installation or display based on sound objects through group collaboration, and to develop our exhibition design and interpretation skills. Before its start, the whole class was reorganized into several new groups while ensuring the diversity of nationalities among team members. It is observed that the more heterogeneous the members are, the less likely they are to cooperate smoothly; and the longer the team members have worked together, the more likely they are to get along well (Robbins, 1990, p.422-423). It turns out that this cooperation experience was not a smooth and pleasant one. Our group was assigned to curate a physical cabinet. We asked several classmates to provide an object that embodies a sense of home, familiarity and comfort while living in a foreign country. In order to align with the theme of “sound”, we invited the owners of each item to orally share their stories. Audiences can listen to the owner’s oral interpretations by interacting with an iPad beside the cabinet.

The original intention of curating the exhibition under the theme of “home” was to display a shared connection between individuals and a sense of belonging. However, the complex collections and the national identity of the owners and the curatorial team members potentially determined the existence of clear

boundaries in the understanding of “home”. Since there was no text interpretation of each item, the visual information conveyed by the objects themselves was obvious. Among all the collected items, there was a card of the 2019-2020 Hong Kong protest. There were disagreements among the curatorial team regarding whether the card should be on display. Those who insisted it being displayed were not all Westerners, but also members from the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan who did not support Chinese politics. They believe that freedom of speech in a democratic state should allow for the expression of demands. The opponents, all from the Chinese Mainland, believed that this card was very sensitive and that it would be partial to show only one party’s voice.

It is researched that when those who will be affected by a decision become part of the decision-making body, it can fuel conflicts (Robbins, 1990, p.422). The alliance of team members who supported the display of the card actually hoped to express their common dissatisfaction about politics. This protest card has been appropriated as a tool to express things that were not allowed to appear in the public discourse domain under the control of the Chinese government. A connection between the display and the expression of opinions has been established: if the item is not displayed, it means that the right to express is restricted. Meanwhile, Chinese team members who opposed the card being displayed, including myself, grew up with Chinese propaganda and the definition of party-state propaganda has shaped their ideologies. Propaganda has been overt and prevalent statecraft since 1949 (Kneel, 2020, p.109). Therefore, when conflicts arose, this card, along with its supporters’ claims, represented an unfamiliar and even aggressive ideology for its opponents who grew up in a filtered field of public discourse. When individuals influenced by a certain ideology leave their original environment, which means crossing boundaries physically, this original ideology will follow them to the new environment and conflict with the ideology in the new environment at some moment. This is often seen as an act of safeguarding national interests. Therefore, the influence of ideology and potential political demands will join exhibition-making — as cross-

cultural cooperation practices — along with individuals.

Meanwhile, the space beside the showcase was designed as an interaction area, with a world map hanging on the wall. Audiences were encouraged to share their feelings about home on labels, and then attached the label to the location of their home on the map. This spatial rhetoric once again indicated that the feeling of “home” is personal and bordered. It is linked to one’s national identity.

After several years of pursuing a master’s and doctoral degree in the UK, I can now understand that the disagreement about the card originates from a competition for representation. The difference in the environment that shapes each person’s ideology affects their understanding of this card. The display of objects is closely related to the power of representation and discourse.

## CONCLUSION

Museums exist in the contemporary world, and therefore inevitably become places to express the political aspirations of individuals and larger communities. This divergence is particularly evident in cross-cultural-cooperative exhibition design in the Western context, as there is no limit to the power of public discourse to unify ideas, or in other words, to unify expression. The purpose of this article is not to provide an immediate and effective crisis management plan, but to provide a framework for calm reflection. In the above two examples, the exhibition theme, collection sources, curation team members, and the implicit boundary rhetoric in the exhibition space were not recognized during the curation process. Conflict allows us to better understand where the boundaries of each other’s principles lie, and often it is the ideology or national identity that shapes these boundaries. Museum rhetoric is crucial for understanding the ubiquitous politics in museums and dealing with political disputes that may arise at any time.

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**MUSEUMS AS MEETING PLACES:  
UNDOING CONFLICT WITH DIALOGUE**

Fabiana Dicuonzo, CITCEM – Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar “Cultura, Espaço e Memória”, Universidade do Porto, Portugal

**ABSTRACT**

The poster aims to highlight the potential of the museum’s architecture by looking at the liminal spaces as meeting places undoing conflict. The proposal emerges as a theoretical dialogue between museology and architecture in the framework of the author’s PhD research, “Museums as meeting places: learning from educational spaces”. The liminal spaces are an understudied topic that can play a relevant role in building inclusivity in the museum. Considering the museum as a political entity, the liminal spaces can facilitate accessibility and democracy through an attentive and proper design. As public spaces of transition between the outside and the inside of the museum, the liminal spaces are the first visitor’s approach to the cultural institution, and for this reason, they are crucial in undoing physical and non-physical barriers. Embracing the theoretical concept of Doreen Massey of space as an ongoing outcome of our relationality, museums should look at liminal spaces as the main stage of relationships between people, objects and space where the encounter can build dialogue. The poster drawing reflects this concept, highlighting the relations in the museum’s liminal spaces through a graphic elaboration of an ongoing observation on the museum’s hall of the Serralves Foundation in Porto, Portugal. The study allowed the author to collect multiple affordances and relationships between the different actants, evoking the potential dialogue the museum’s space can build to be a place for all of us.

**BIO**

**FABIANA DICUONZO** is an Italian architect and curator based in Porto (PT). She is currently a PhD student in Heritage Studies - Museology specialisation at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade do Porto (FCT scholarship 2022.11710.BD). She is a licensed architect specialising in conservation and exhibit design, working for public and private institutions. She is a consultant architect in European Cooperation Projects for Apulia Region - Department of Tourism, Economy of Culture and Valorization of the Territory. Since 2016, she has written for Artwort online magazine, and since 2021 she has been the co-founder of Artwort Gallery. She is the co-founder and co-curator of Antilia Gallery and the co-founder of PROFFERLO Architecture (PT-UK). She holds a Master in Architecture at the Polytechnic of Bari (2015) and attended the Postgraduate School in Architectural and Landscape Heritage, “La Sapienza” University of Rome (2018). She deepened museums and curatorial studies while participating in three online courses at the NODE Center for Curatorial Studies based in Berlin and the advanced Course EXHIBIT at the MAXXI Museum of the 21st Century Art in Rome.

# MUSEUMS AS MEETING PLACES: undoing conflict with dialogue

## BACKGROUND

### The liminal spaces of the museum

Public and accessible spaces that function as gradual connection from the surroundings of the museum to the interior public realm.

Spaces of physical, emotional, and social passage denoting a change in visitor's behaviour.

## RESEARCH OBJECT

### Museology < > Architecture

Liminal spaces are potential tools to raise essential questions about the **socio-cultural accessibility** and **democracy** of the museum, as the place of the first encounter with the visitor.

## LACK IN THE RESEARCH

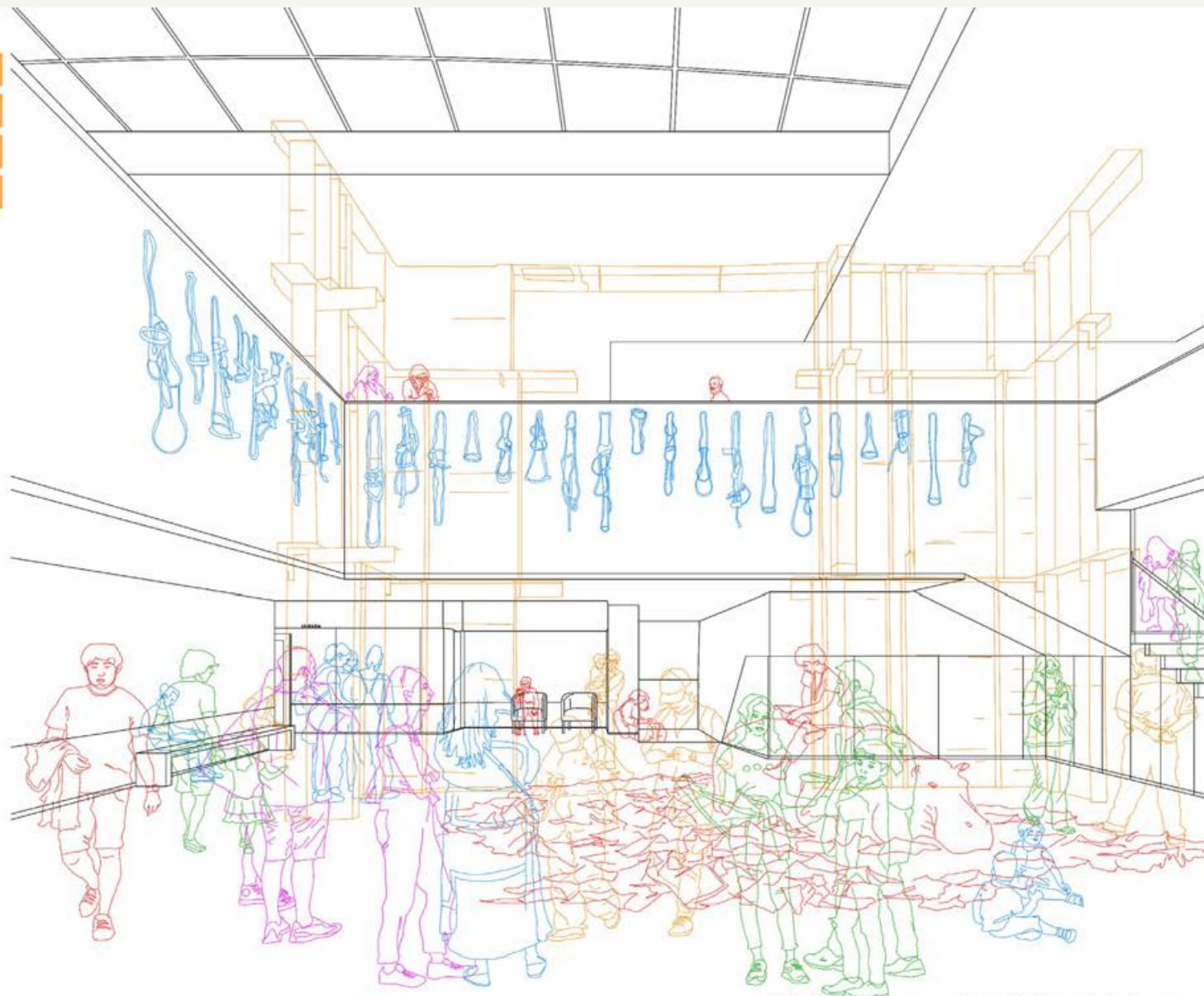
### A dialogue is missing

Architecture plays a primary role in affecting the visitor's experience, but still, there is a lack between museums' interest in inclusivity and the architectural effort of space development.

## AIM

### A space for all of us

Identify the first steps towards a model for museum architecture of the liminal spaces that can undo physical and non-physical barriers by creating meeting places that accommodate relations and dialogue.



Hall of the Serralves Museum, Porto (PT). Elaboration by the author

**PhD Student:** Arch. Fabiana Dicuonzo (CITCEM, Universidade do Porto)

**Supervisor:** Prof. Alice Semedo (CITCEM, Universidade do Porto)

ICAMT PORTO 2023

## Key Theme 3 – Processes and Conflict

Museum architecture as a tool to develop critical awareness around conflict processes.



This work is supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology - FCT (2022.11710.BD) within the context of a PhD in Heritage Studies, Museology specialization (Universidade do Porto) entitled "Museums as meeting places: learning from educational spaces".

### FUR FARMING – FROM FASHION TO PROHIBITION

Frode Pilskog and Cecilie Rørstad, Stiftinga Viti, Museums of the Norwegian Coastal Administration, Ålesund, Norway

#### ABSTRACT

Viti, the museum of Sunnmøre, will investigate how changing multinational trends directly effects on micro level. In the village Norangsdalen, high-end tourism and fur farming have existed side by side since the early 20th Century.

A ban on the breeding of fur animals will come into force in Norway in 2025. The fox and mink farms will soon be torn down. How can we as a museum communicate this shift? How can we disseminate what we don't see from our recent past, our intangible heritage?

The methods of slow memory will broaden the knowledge and understanding of the complexity of fur farming in our region.

#### BIOS

**FRODE PILSKOG** wrote his Master in Archaeology in 2000, focusing on heritage, oral history and identity. Pilskog has been working on archaeological projects all around Norway as a project leader, researcher, and advisor.

Since 2009 Pilskog has been responsible for Vitis part of The Museums of the Norwegian Coastal Administration. Pilskog was project manager for the main exhibition at Dalsfjord museum of Lighthouses that opened in 2012. Until 2019 Pilskog also worked as section leader at Dalsfjord museum of Lighthouses. Now he works as a conservator researching and teaching the history of lighthouses, pilots, ports and preparedness against acute pollution.

His works also includes digital documentation, photogrammetry and 3D modelling of ports and lighthouses.

**CECILIE RØRSTAD** wrote her master in Public Administration in 2012, focusing on different factors influencing regional development in the region of Sunnmøre. Rørstad has been working as a researcher and advisor and with volunteers in folkdance and music in the region of Sunnmøre.

Since 2014 Rørstad has been a conservator in Viti, and worked with both Viti's educational programs and research, in both industrial and agricultural history in Sunnmøre. Rørstad has been project manager for the main exhibition at Sunnmøre museum "I was here – the voices from Sunnmøre" that opened in 2022.

She has experience in involving volunteers in the museum's dissemination and in the use of reference groups in the development of exhibitions. Dissemination of intangible heritage from the region to different groups of audiences is also a part of Rørstad's work.



## **FUR FARMING – FROM FASHION TO PROHIBITION**

Frode Pilskog and Cecilie Rørstad, Stiftinga Viti, Museums of the Norwegian Coastal Administration, Ålesund, Norway

### **STIFTINGA VITI, ÅLESUND, NORWAY.**

A ban on the breeding of fur animals will come into force in Norway in 2025 (Act prohibiting furbreeding 2019). Fur farming has been an industry for more than 100 years. There are many conflict lines concerning high-end fashion and fur farming. Viti will investigate how the rise and demise of fur farming have influenced the region of Sunnmøre.

The rural village Norangsdalen is an example of how changing multinational trends directly effects on a micro level. In this village high-end tourism and fur farming have existed side by side since the early 20th Century.

### **A WIDER PERSPECTIVE ON EXHIBITION DESIGN**

The ethical dimensions of the contemporary conflicts surrounding fur farming and high-end holidays can be a framework for exhibition design. Concepts of slow memory deals with conflict, and processes of transformations seem relevant for uncovering different aspects of the conflicts. The most important sources are historical archives, photographs, Vitis collections, the stakeholder's stories and the village itself.

Keeping animals' captive for their fur is no longer accepted in influential parts of the fashion industry. Animal welfare and the ethical issues around keeping partially domesticated animals in captivity have been emphasized in public discussions.

Today some elements of luxury consumption are forbidden, while others, such as "high-end" holidays in vulnerable landscapes, are valued and glorified. We will explore and disseminate how transnational trends directly influence Norway.

The fur breeding cages, the tangible heritage, will soon disappear. The knowledge the farmers have accumulated over generations has no value anymore. How will the memory of places like Norangsdalen and their conflicts be interpreted?

We will also investigate how alien invasive species such as farm minks and foxes affect nature in the region of Sunnmøre. Escaped animals

can survive and breed in the Norwegian fauna and represent a major threat to red listed species (Norèn et al. 2009, Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management 2011). Local authorities, volunteers and farmers have made efforts to try to remove the minks.

### **FUR FARMING IN NORWAY AND NORANGSDALEN**

In the early 1920s breeding of carnivores for their fur was a new and profitable business model in Norway and possibly an easy entry point for farmers already used to diversifying. At the time fur was highly valued, and both consumers and producers were looking for more efficient ways of meeting demand in a growing market than by hunting wild animals. Canada soon came to hold a leading position and became an inspiration to Norwegians who wanted to take part in the flourishing industry. From the archives we have found that Norwegians travelled to Canada to learn more about this new way of farming. They brought back new and prized knowledge along with expensive breeding animals for sale.

In Sunnmøre both farmers and investors saw opportunities for income and innovation in fur farming and cooperated on the development of the new industry. Knowledge about Canadian fur farming combined with practical farming experience was the basis for early fur farming in this region. Prospects of financial gain and the thrill of the unknown were alluring. Soon a whole network was established: breeders' associations on local, regional and national levels and other partnerships between breeders and buyers, food producers, providers of equipment and medicine and producers of fur clothing.

### **SUNNMØRE AND NORANGSDALEN TODAY**

Although income from fur farming has been falling and the number of fur farms declining, legislation impact both the remaining farmers and the villages the farms are part of. Norangsdalen is surrounded by glorious alpine mountains, waterfalls and fjords. The landscape is characterised by agriculture, and fur farming has been a mainstay at most of the traditional farms. For the last few decades the population has been decreasing, like in many other rural areas. The last of the fox and mink farms that have existed in the village for almost a century will soon be torn down. With that, all the visible



traces in the landscape will disappear. What is left is the picture-postcard view with majestic mountains, green fields, a magnificent hotel in the Swiss chalet style and growing high-end tourism industry.

#### **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION**

In Viti's collections there are no buildings in the open-air museum, and very few objects representing the fur farming industry. A prize goblet, awarded to Jens Nordang from Norangsdalen, is an interesting exception. Nordang played a major role in establishing and developing fur farming in Norway.

Our project will form part of a national collaboration between museums and institutions dealing with the topic, developing museum's collections and dissemination practices.

The methods of slow memory can broaden the museum's knowledge and understanding of the complexity of fur farming in our region. This can lead to a recognition of the regional impact of fur farming and the society that farmers and consumers are part of – irrespective of society's view on the ethics around the use of fur and luxury consumption.

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# Furfarming

from fashion  
to  
prohibition

# KEY THEME 4 HEALING, RESISTANCE AND THE FUTURE

The power of museum architecture and exhibition design in fulfilling the social mission of the museum when dealing with conflict.

Future perspectives for exhibition design and museum architecture in dealing with conflict.

Museum architecture and exhibition design as promoters of healing and resistance.

## MORNING SESSION

Moderated by Cláudia Garradas,  
CITCEM – FLUP, Portugal

### MODERATOR BIO: CLÁUDIA GARRADAS

Cláudia Garradas is PhD fellow in Heritage Studies – Museology at the University of Porto (2022-2026). Her research project, “Maritime Museums: Exhibition Representations and Narratives of Mediterranean Cultures”, is supported by a scholarship from the Foundation for Science and Technology, Portugal, 2022.13713.BD. With a background including a two-year post-graduation in Museology (2000) and a master’s degree in Museum and Curatorial Studies (2007), both from the University of Porto, she began her museum career in 1997 at the Museum of Fine Arts of the University of Porto. She also worked with the Malta Study Center at Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (2016-2021) and, more recently, with the Malta Maritime Museum at Heritage Malta (2021-2022). Claudia has extensive experience working as a collections manager and museum exhibitions curator. She is part of the investigation centre CITCEM-University of Porto, integrating the Education and Societal Challenges research group. Since 2023, she has been involved in a COST Action focused on “Slow Memory” (CA20105).

### KUNAL – MUSEUM FOR A PRE-HARAPPAN SITE

Yatin Singhal, Department of Archaeology & Museums, Haryana. Chandigarh, India

#### ABSTRACT

In the State of Haryana in India, lies a district Fatehabad, which yielded a significant Harappan type site, Kunal. After few successful excavation seasons, and explorations, the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Haryana took a decision to propagate Site's significance for perpetuity thus the upcoming Pre-Harappan Site Museum in village Kunal, district Fatehabad, Haryana, India, is now taking shape. This project embraces an innovative architectural design that not only preserves and interprets the site but also fosters a profound connection between past and present. Drawing inspiration from the very archaeological site it proposes to stand adjacent the actual trench areas, the museum embodies the essence of healing, resistance and a vision for the future. The museum's architecture mirrors the organic shape of the archaeological mound, symbolizing the enduring spirit of resilience and regeneration. Its parametric roof, crafted using bamboo and thatch, gracefully replicates the form of the mound, while the galleries are thoughtfully designed as trenches, reminiscent of the excavation findings.

Among many, one of the notable features of this upcoming design is an outdoor seating area that faces the majestic mound. This carefully planned space encourages a lively interaction between the museum and its surroundings, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the serene ambience and connect with the archaeology and history that lies beneath their habitation. The seamless blend of site and architecture provides a harmonious setting for reflection, contemplation, and dialogue, fostering a sense of unity between the present and the past.

It serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of the past, empowering individuals to explore and cherish the legacy that has shaped their identity. Through its design, this museum inspires a collective journey of healing and resilience, paving the way for a future where cultural heritage is cherished, protected, and celebrated.

#### BIO

**YATIN SINGHAL.** Being an architect and heritage professional, I have been working in the field of cultural heritage for almost six years. I have worked on various projects, such as the development of heritage streets, the development of structures that highlight their heritage value, and the museum-based promotion of heritage sites and similar. These projects were aimed at creating awareness and bringing heritage to larger public platforms.

I have been associated with the Department of Archaeology & Museums Haryana in the capacity of Architect and now as consultant, gave me the opportunity to give my inputs that can enhance structural strength, and further effective intervention to protect it for the future. Monuments like Victoria Memorial in Karnal to be converted into an Ethno-archaeological museum, Brick Baoli (step-well) in Kaithal, and State Archaeology Museum in Panchkula, infra-structures for archaeological sites, such as Site Museum and Interpretation Centre Rakhigarhi in Hisar, were very interesting endeavours.

Participation in conference will be fruitful as when a person who has actively worked with Heritage sites and monuments for years, gets the opportunity to brainstorm the scope of work and project planning, the things that are planned become more achievable and acceptable to the public at large.



## KUNAL – MUSEUM FOR A PRE-HARAPPAN SITE

Yatin Singhal, Department of Archaeology  
& Museums, Haryana. Chandigarh, India

### OVERVIEW OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, KUNAL AND THE MUSEUM CONCEPT

The archaeological legacy of State of Haryana in India has consistently captured public attention due to its remarkable array of Harappan type archaeological sites that have unveiled exceptionally valuable artefacts and discoveries. Situated on the Bhuna-Ratia road within Fatehabad district of Haryana, India, the Kunal archaeological site has yielded insights into the Pre-Harappan, Early Harappan, Transitional-Mature Harappan, and Painted Grey Ware cultures during its previous excavation seasons. The excavation excerpts and consecutive reports unveil that the earliest inhabitants dug expansive pits which were utilized as foundations for wattle-and-daub huts. These residents demonstrated a profound understanding of agriculture and animal domestication which is a key element of human progress.



Fig. 1. Excavated trench

The subsequent phases are characterized by the presence of moulded mud bricks, a distinctive feature shared with the Early Harappan sites in Kalibangan (Rajasthan) and Banawali (Haryana). These bricks were employed to line the dwelling pits.

The core area of the settlement - Kunal, is 3-4 acres though the site expands to 9 acres and the total occupational deposit is around 3.10m. The Kunal Archaeological site has undergone a series of excavation seasons that commenced in 1986 and continued until 2018-19, with



Fig. 2. Bird's eye view of the site

intermittent breaks. These rigorous excavation efforts have yielded a treasure trove of valuable artefacts that distinctly reflect Harappan characteristics which will be displayed at the Site Museum, Kunal.

The concept of a Site Museum serves as a widely embraced approach to acquaint the populace, especially the locals, with the invaluable heritage that forms an integral part of their identity, encapsulating the rich cultural narratives of bygone eras. The practice of exhibiting objects in close proximity to the original archaeological site has been an enduring tradition since the inception of archaeological practices in India. Records from various archaeological sites have consistently adhered to this approach, emphasizing its significance in maintaining the connection and contextual significance of the artefacts.

Kunal (29° 30' N Lat. and 75° 41' E Long.), a Pre-Harappan site, lies on the dry bank of ancient river Saraswati, located in Tehsil Ratia, District Fatehabad, Haryana. The idea of upcoming Site Museum in Kunal, Haryana, serves as an emblematic example of how architectural design can transcend its utilitarian purpose and become a vehicle for narrative storytelling, healing, and resilience. In a World where the rapid pace of development often challenges the preservation of cultural heritage, this museum stands as an inspiring testament to the significance of harmonizing architecture and archaeology and taking it to future.



Fig. 3. Location of the site

### ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: A REFLECTION OF RESILIENCE

By visiting the actual present site area, one can get a glimpse of some built structures used for different purposes such as site office, rooms, store, pantry and toilets, etc. These existing structures were created to carry the excavation and store work smoothly and safeguard the excavated remains. They are inappropriate to convert into a museum, hence, interventions were required. The requisite interventions were designed in resonance with the existing ones.

The museum's innovative architectural blueprint goes beyond preservation and interpretation; it forges a profound and visceral connection between its visitors and the fragments of history it encapsulates, embodying a remarkable synthesis of purpose and design. The physical layout of the museum was designed to guide visitors through a narrative that evolves from healing to resistance and then into the future, creating a seamless and engaging journey. The museum's architectural design is a powerful homage to the suppleness of the site's timeline. The organic shape of the archaeological mound is ingeniously mirrored in the museum's structure, encapsulating the enduring spirit of survival and regeneration. This harmonious integration of form not only pays tribute to the significance of the site but also communicates the museum's commitment to preserving the legacy of the past. This symbolism condenses the spirit that the architecture intends to show its capacity to spring back into the shape of a mound, evoking a sense of renewal and reflection.



Fig. 4. Proposed panoramic view of the museum

The envisioned exterior finish of the museum building will harmonize with the natural hue of sand, while the design patterns will draw inspiration from the intricate motifs found on the unearthed ceramics.

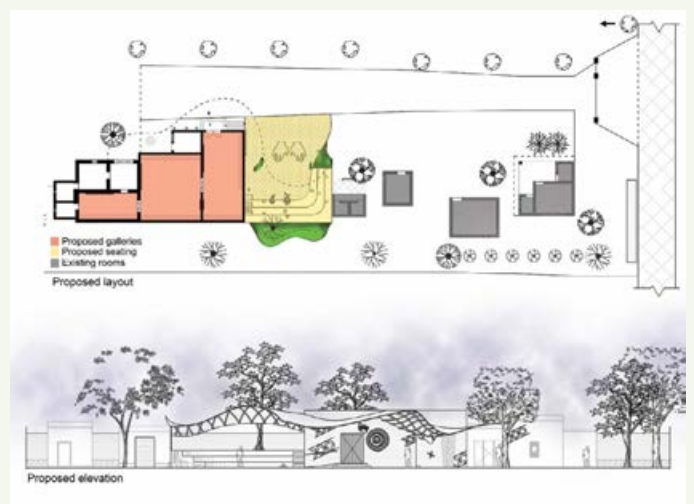


Fig. 5. Proposed museum plan and elevation

### PARAMETRIC ROOF: SYMBOLISM AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

Crafted with ingenuity, the parametric roof, proposed in bamboo and thatch, elegantly echoes the silhouette of the mound itself. The roof emulates the contours of the archaeological mound, creating a visual connection between the museum and its foundation. This symbolism isn't just aesthetic; it reflects the inherent wisdom of the past while embracing the possibilities of the future.



Fig. 6. Proposed museum plan and elevation



## TRENCH-LIKE GALLERIES AND ANCILLARY STRUCTURES:

### AN IMMERSIVE JOURNEY TO THE PAST

Complementing the roof, the interior galleries are thoughtfully conceived as trenches, reminiscent of the excavation process that unearthed the site's treasures. The concept put forth was akin to a narrative journey wherein traversing the galleries would evoke the sensation of stepping into authentic archaeological trenches. Just as archaeologists encounter artefacts intricately embedded within trench walls and areas, a parallel notion was embraced for the museum's design. The walls of the galleries were envisaged to mirror trench walls, offering a distinct resemblance to the process of excavation. However, a significant divergence lay in the execution: within the galleries, the artefacts would be thoughtfully presented within both passive and actively controlled environments. This meticulous approach serves the dual purpose of preserving the artefacts by shielding them from deterioration while simultaneously permitting curated engagement for visitors. Through this pleasant fusion of site and structure, a compelling narrative unfolds, speaking eloquently of the past and safeguarding the identical.



Fig. 7. Inter-relation between the proposed galleries and the archaeological trenches

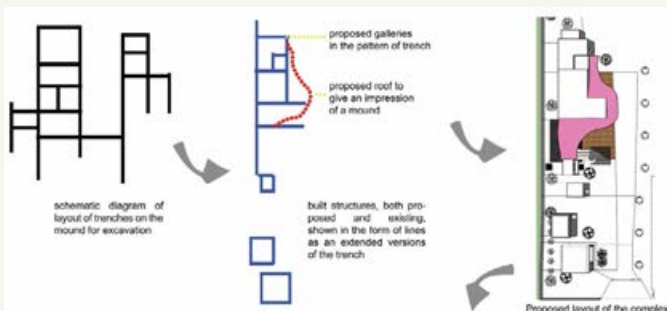


Fig. 8. Schematic diagram indicating the inter-relation

## CONNECTING WITH THE OUTDOORS: SITE REFLECTIONS

The upcoming Site museum's outdoor seating area, serves as a space for contemplation and interaction. The outdoor seating area offers a panoramic view of the archaeological mound. This planned space serves as a bridge between the museum and its surroundings, encouraging vibrant interactions. Here, visitors will be able to immerse themselves in the tranquil ambiance and establish a tangible connection with the archaeological layers that lie beneath their feet, fostering a sense of attachment between themselves and the site. This emotional resonance is a powerful tool for fostering healing and connection. The seamless amalgamation of site and architecture results in an environment that nurtures reflection, contemplation, and dialogue, cultivating a profound sense of unity between the present and the past. This integration of outdoor space into the museum's design encourages reflection, dialogue, and an appreciation for cultural heritage.

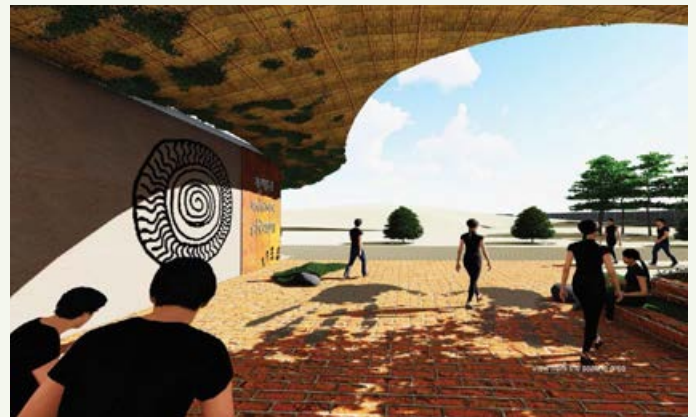


Fig. 9. View from the outdoor seating area looking towards the mound

A perpetual quandary has persisted, which centered around the sequential choice confronting visitors—whether to begin with the Site itself or the museum that celebrates it. This decision, faced by a diverse audience including general visitors, academicians, archaeologists, architects, and historians, prompts contemplation on the optimal sequence of engagement. The exterior seating area operates as a reciprocal solution, delicately resolving this quandary. It is well-acknowledged that exposing archaeological mounds to the elements compromises their preservation; consequently, they necessitate comprehensive

covering and safeguarding from environmental impacts. In this context, the outdoor seating area assumes a pivotal role by offering a preliminary glimpse of the mound before transitioning into the museum galleries. This strategic integration effectively addresses the dilemmas experienced by all, thus facilitating a harmonious and enriching visitor experience.



Fig. 10. View of the proposed outdoor seating area

### MUSEUM EXHIBITS AND THE OUTLAY: AT A GLANCE

The upcoming Kunak Site Museum is envisaged as a repository that will elegantly present an array of artefacts, including ceramics, seals, beads, copper objects, and related objects that speak about the Site. Accompanying these tangible relics, the museum will also exhibit images of objects unearthed through exploration and excavations. Furthermore, the museum will serve as an enlightening platform by disseminating pertinent information that accentuates key facets of the site and its excavated features and structures.



Fig. 11. Silver object found in the excavation of the site

A distinct highlight of the excavated ceramics from Kunal archaeological site, is its diverse range of shapes and elaborate designs. This encompasses an assortment of forms such as vases of varying sizes, jars, bowls, basins, troughs, dishes, and dish-on-stand to name a few. Notably, the artistic repertoire features paintings rendered in monochrome and bichrome patterns, some of which portray motifs inspired by the flora. Among the decorative motifs, geometric patterns hold a predominant presence, although a subset of pot-sherds showcases depictions of animals and birds, introducing a dynamic element to the artistic tapestry.



Fig. 12. Proposed objects to be displayed in the museum

The museum's presentation will extend to stratigraphy, wherein the layers of archaeological context and progression will be visually communicated. This dynamic exhibition approach will offer visitors an insightful understanding of the chronological sequence and evolution with respect to context of the site components.

### CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

The idea behind Kunal Site museum in every sense serves as a model for the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage of Haryana. Museum design invites individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage with their shared history, fostering a sense of empowerment and ownership. In a rapidly changing world, where cultural identity can sometimes be eroded, this museum offers a platform to explore, cherish, and protect one's heritage and emphasizing the importance of safeguarding heritage for posterity.

The merging of architectural form with the archaeological significance of the Site creates a palpable connection between the present physical space and the past atmospheres.



When visitors will enter the vicinity of the Museum, they will get enveloped in an environment that resonates with the story of the archaeological mound. The architectural design serves as a metaphorical bridge, allowing visitors to physically traverse the temporal gap and immerse themselves in the narratives of the past. The architectural design encourages visitors to actively engage with the artefacts. Instead of a passive viewing experience, visitors become participants in their own learning and knowledge process. This sense of agency is key to building a collective commitment to preservation and healing. As visitors get engaged with the exhibits and share insights with one another, a sense of community is fostered. This collective engagement reinforces the idea that cultural heritage is a shared responsibility, encouraging individuals to value and protect their heritage as part of a broader social endeavour. The truth is if we do not respect the past, we are headed for a muted future.

#### **INSIGHTS AND INFERENCES: CONCLUSION**

To summarise one can infer that at its core, the museum's architecture is a thoughtful orchestration of elements and spaces that transcend the confines of conventional design. Rather than being a static structure, it acts as a living testament to the cultural and historical heritage. The physical space, the choice of materials, and the layout all conspire to create an atmosphere that resonates with the essence of the Site. This deliberate design immerses visitors in an environment that transcends the present moment and transports them to different times, enabling a tangible connection with past.

In its distinctive and immersive approach, this museum not only blurs the boundary between architecture and archaeology but also captivates an array of diverse audiences. It compresses the transformative power of spatial design, channelling the aspirations into a physical manifestation that speaks to both the individual and the collective human experience. It stands against opposition, and adversities. The Site Museum at Kunal, seem to stand as a remarkable testament to the profound interplay between architectural ingenuity, historical preservation, and the resonance of time. As visitors will step into its embrace, they will embark on a journey that transcends temporal boundaries, embodying the enduring

spirit of human endeavour and the capacity of architecture to communicate across times. The Museum's significance lies not only in its physical structure but also in the stories it reveals and the conversations it inspires, creating a legacy that echoes through the annals of time.

In its essence, the architectural design of the museum creates a harmonious fusion of history, architecture, and emotion. By immersing visitors in an environment that symbolizes the past, the museum encourages them to explore their cultural identity, appreciate the resilience of their heritage, and take an active role in its preservation. This multidimensional engagement bridges the gap between the past and the present, leading to a collective journey towards healing and preservation.

The museum's purpose is not just to showcase artefacts. It aspires to foster a profound emotional connection and intellectual engagement among its visitors. By evoking a sense of nostalgia and belonging, it prompts individuals to explore their cultural identity, connecting their personal histories to the broader historical tapestry. This self-discovery encourages a deeper appreciation for the resilience and fortitude that have shaped their cultural heritage.

The multidimensional engagement that museum facilitates serves as a link between timelines. By confronting the challenges of the past, and celebrating the triumphs and treasures, the museum space aids in the process of reconciliation and understanding. It fosters empathy and solidarity among its visitors.

To summarise, the architectural design of this museum goes far beyond aesthetics; it is a testament to the power of architecture to evoke emotion, inspire introspection, and propel collective action. It's a space where past comes to life, where individuals find their place in the narrative of their culture, and where the past and the present coalesce in a journey of healing and preservation. The society that does not respect its past has no future. Site Museums come to rescue for such a phenomenon. They act as time capsules capturing resilience of vagaries of time and nature for good.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/ SPECIAL THANKS

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**CONFLICT, NEGOTIATION,  
AND INDIGENOUS SUBJECTIVITY:  
A CASE STUDY ON CURATING  
AN EXHIBITION FOR THE AUSTRONESIAN  
HALL AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM  
OF PREHISTORY, TAIWAN**

Chun-wei Fang, National Museum  
of Prehistory, Taiwan

**ABSTRACT**

This paper is based on the experience of curating the exhibition *Kita Us* at the National Museum of Prehistory, Taiwan. In the beginning, the structure and content proposed by the museum's team of curators was questioned and criticized by the source communities. The team made use of space and exhibition design to resolve these conflicts and ensure Indigenous subjectivity. Because of its close relationship to colonial history, the ethnographic museum has experienced various controversies in recent times, such as on who has the rights to interpret events of the past and have their voices heard, and for whom exhibitions are designed. In response to these potential conflicts, upon beginning to coordinate the exhibition, the museum invited members of the Indigenous community to participate in the curation and give their perspectives, which led to conflict as a result of differing viewpoints on the narrative. This study describes how the museum responded by negotiating with the source communities in the aspects of the space, exhibition design, and media, in turn shouldering the tasks of both social advocacy and public education.

**BIO**

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Chun-wei Fang, National Museum  
of Prehistory, Taiwan

**ENTERING THE AUSTRONESIAN HALL**

Following the indicated visiting route at the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP), take the escalator up from the basement to the second floor. What you will see at your visual endpoint is a series of TV screens relating seven stories in rotation on the origins of the Austronesian people. These screens are in the first gallery, “*kita US*.” If you look slightly ahead, you can see two Tao canoes hanging high above, their prows pointing toward the entrance to the exhibition hall, prompting viewers to move forward. This open space, with only the canoes and a rectangular display panel on the right, serves as the introductory section to the Austronesian Hall.

Having viewers be able to see the first gallery while still in the introductory section is not entirely due to the spatial limitations. It has also been done deliberately, so as to immediately make visible the video of Austronesian people telling their creation stories, not only to show that Austronesian people are the subject of the exhibition but to stress that the voice of Austronesian people is the main theme of the exhibition. Such message is also emphasized in the design of the introductory section itself.

In the introductory section, viewers see a large map of the world that seems both familiar yet unfamiliar. In addition to the continents, islands, oceans, and lines of longitude and latitude, the map also indicates the distribution of Austronesian-speaking peoples with light blue blocks of color. Compared with the familiar Mercator projection, which places north at the top and south at the bottom, this map, with east at the top, emphasizes how land is surrounded by the ocean, highlighting the vastness of the sea and prompting viewers to look at the world from another perspective. The large title “*Austronesian Worlds, Worldly Austronesias*” highlights the main idea of the Austronesian Hall, as stated in this introductory text:

*Austronesian Worlds, Worldly Austronesias* is a permanent exhibition on the continual movements and intertwined stories of different ethnic groups across diverse parts of the Austronesian world. Located on the Pacific Ocean, Taiwan has long been an important node of human migrations and cultural development. This exhibition is not about “the Others.” Rather, it concerns the Austronesian world in which we live and its engagement in complex negotiations with global forces.

This passage maintains an inclusive point of view. The story of Austronesian people is not the story of a different culture, but a journey shared with the viewers. The emphasis on similarity instead of difference is also reflected in the upper and lower areas of the exhibition board, on which the words “I” and “we” in Austronesian languages are lighter. On the one hand, this indicates that the term “Austronesian” is a construct of linguistic research, and on the other, it illustrates the diversity of Austronesian language and culture. The Austronesian words for “I” and “we” were chosen to emphasize the Austronesian people as the “I” in the exhibition narrative, while the “we” refers to the viewers, whose life experiences are also part of the exhibition.

The exhibition is composed of six galleries with different themes. In the first, “*kita US*,” we have selected seven creation stories of Austronesian people, starting with the first-person narrative in talking about what the word “Austronesian” means. This approach presents the Austronesian people as the subject of the exhibition while showing that the NMP recognizes orally transmitted stories as an important basis for the Austronesian people to understand themselves and their relationship with the world. This idea is made apparent in the panel text below:

Through these legends and stories, we have woven memories of our movements across the great expanses of the ocean, where the convergence of different peoples has created diverse histories. As we tell you our stories, we maintain that *myth is no less substantial than history* and that *science is no more authoritative than storytelling*.

An exhibition is a task for the curator to place objects and messages in a specific, often limited space. In fact, the use of space and exhibition design reflects some of the crucial challenges faced by the NMP today as an ethnographic museum, including handling the issues of decolonization, modernity, the museum as a forum, repatriation, the right to interpret, and Indigenous engagement. The Austronesian people, as the subject of the exhibition, are not just passive participants. The curatorial process ensured the space was where their views can be expressed, discussed, and presented.

### **INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT IN CURATORIAL PRACTICES**

The changing relationship between Taiwanese Indigenous people and museums was initiated by the democratization of Taiwan. The relationship between Taiwanese Indigenous people and the state was substantially transformed through Taiwan's Indigenous Movement, which began in the late 1980s. As part of this dynamic of Indigenous political empowerment, Indigenous people have started to play an increasingly active role in the politics of the representation of Indigenous cultures in Taiwan. Meanwhile, museums are playing a central role in the framework of cultural and ethnic policies and have been the object of governmental initiatives (Chen 2008). These developments have led to an increased awareness among Indigenous communities of the importance of museums as showcases of Indigenous culture. Active protest by Indigenous people has led to a new curatorial practice that recognizes their rights to assert ownership of and exercise control over objects in museums.

The excavation of the Peinan archaeological site in 1980 gave birth to the NMP, which opened in 2002. Since it is located in eastern Taiwan, the NMP has always regarded the Indigenous community as an important collaborator. Over the past two decades, the NMP has opened up its collection to Taiwanese Indigenous artists and cultural workers for use in research, analysis, reproduction, joint curation, and educational activities. These collaborations reflect the museum's continued concern for the current state of Indigenous art, culture, and politics. Therefore, when the NMP launched the construction of the Austronesian Hall in September 2018, the Indigenous community became an important collaborator in that as well.

Between April and June 2019, in order to gather suggestions on the original Taiwanese Austronesian Hall and the new Austronesian Hall, we conducted four focus group interviews and invited 27 non-museum researchers to come, 15 of whom had Indigenous heritage. In one meeting, an Indigenous participant gave this advice on the NMP's continued practice of using traditional Indigenous artifacts:

I know that the NMP possesses many exquisite cultural artifacts of our ancestors, but I hope that not so many will be on display in your Austronesian Hall. Although they are very fine pieces, viewers will think that Indigenous culture only existed in the past. We are still here! And just like our ancestors, we can make equally exquisite objects.

This reminds us that Indigenous modernity is an important issue and that contemporary Indigenous culture is constantly evolving, linking the past and present while looking to the future. In addition, when we were hesitant to use the word "Indigenous" or "Austronesian" in the name of the hall, to our surprise, almost all the Indigenous participants agreed to use "Austronesian." An Indigenous participant said, "The number of Taiwanese Indigenous people only accounts for a little more than 2% of the total population in Taiwan. We are a minority in Taiwan, but the word 'Austronesian' connects us to more than 200 million people in the world." Clearly, the word "Austronesian" has different significance in terms of identity politics and cultural politics for them.

Based on the suggestion of Professor WANG Songshan, the general consultant of the exhibition, and considering the trends of contemporary museum and exhibition development, after a period of progress, the curatorial team at the NMP proposed “*Worldly Austronesias, Austronesian Worlds*” as the main theme in their effort to make the Austronesian Hall a forum. The exhibition framework proposed on April 3, 2020 is as follows:

Movement		
Defining “Austronesian”	1-1. Language Perspective	
	1-2. Geographic Perspective	
	1-3. Prehistoric Perspective	
	1-4. Political Perspective	
	1-5. Non-human Species Perspective	
Borders	2-1. Protection and Control	
	2-2. Movement and Resettlement	
	2-3. Crossover and Mediation	
	2-4. Mingling and Fluidity	
	3-1. Environment	
Knowledge	3-1-1. Environment and World View	
	3-1-1a. Origin Stories	
	3-1-1b. Ocean and Land	
	3-1-2. Use of Environment	
	3-1-2a. Maritime Culture	
	3-1-2b. Living with the Land	
	3-2. Time	
	3-3. Making	
	Communication	4-1. Melody, Chanting, and Body Movement
		4-2. Emotional Expression
4-3. Literacy, a Precious Weapon		
4-4. Art and Creation		
Exchange & Trade		
認同 Identities	6-1. Indigenous Presence	
	6-2. For Whom Do We Fight? For Whom Do We Live?	
	6-3. Building Connections Among Ethnicities and Paths to Sovereignty	
Navigation		
Ocean		

On April 19, 2020, we held the first consultation meeting for Indigenous cultural experts based on this new structure. A committee member made suggestions on the name and content of the first gallery, "Defining Austronesian": "If this exhibition focuses on the Austronesian people, then the title 'Defining Austronesian' is a bit too academic and hard to understand. Wouldn't it be clearer if we changed it to 'We are Austronesian'?" Also, the language, geographic, prehistoric, etc., perspective used for the "Defining Austronesian" part was not the perspective of the Austronesian people. Another member was more challenging: "Can this exhibition answer the question 'How many years have Indigenous people lived on this island?' It is actually a historical and philosophical question. How should we think about it from the perspective of Indigenous people and respond to the questions of Taiwanese society?" He continued, "The impact and pain caused by colonialism in history should not be ignored. For example, the National Museum of Taiwan History in Tainan did not mention CHENG Chenggong's harm inflicted on Indigenous people. Misgivings about potential political controversy cannot be used to ignore the problem."

These suggestions led the curatorial team to rethink the perspective of the Austronesian Hall narrative. Therefore, the name of the first gallery was changed to "*kita US*," and the name of the Austronesian Hall was changed from "*Worldly Austronesias, Austronesian Worlds*" to "*Austronesian Worlds, Worldly Austronesias*." In the exhibition hall, the viewers are first led to learn about Austronesian history and culture from the Austronesian people's perspective. However, Austronesian history and culture are also part of world history, so the development of Austronesian history and culture must be viewed from that perspective as well. Through this process, we realized that only by changing the perspective would viewers experience ideological or epistemological shifts.

One of the main purposes of the meeting was to examine the structure and content of the exhibition from the perspective of Indigenous people, which involved considering identity politics and cultural politics. During the course of the meeting, differences in views between the Indigenous representatives and the curators came up.

For example:

1. Indigenous representatives at times opposed the curatorial team's stance, wishing to present often excluded experiences, the colonial past, and the struggles of the present.
2. Indigenous representatives challenged the common or linear view of history that was slated for the exhibition.

These different views put forward by Indigenous representatives reflect their identification and expectations for the role of national museum exhibitions in contemporary society and recognize the importance of exhibitions in constructing viewers' impressions of Indigenous people.

#### **LETTING VIEWERS FIND THEMSELVES IN THE AUSTRONESIAN HALL**

The Austronesian Hall is wide and open. Although there are six galleries, the spaces are not closed off and can be accessed from several entrances. Although there is still a suggested visiting route, it is not forcibly linear, and the significance of the permanent exhibition does not completely depend on the connected visiting route. Viewers will be able to focus on individual objects rather than any narrative within which they are displayed. Generally speaking, the museum does not present only a single historical context.

Overall, the entire exhibition design does not create a discourse about the Austronesian people through large-scale output or the use of photos or other display media as conventional ethnographic museums do. As demonstrated in the introductory section and the first gallery, "*kita US*," this is also the story of every viewer. We use various types of media, such as text, multimedia videos, and objects, to open up a space of meaningful interpretation among the Austronesian people, curators, and viewers, allowing the latter to actively explore their relationship with the Austronesian people, in turn encouraging viewers to become translators and active interpreters of the exhibition.

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**OUT OF DISPLAY, OUT OF MIND?  
A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ERASURE  
OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS  
IN ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Architecture exhibitions are powerful in mediating the encounter between the public and architecture. Usually, photographs, videos, models, drawings, and interviews with architects among other objects that are part of the exhibition embody the only experience that the audience will have with architectural projects and the making of their respective built environment. Therefore, it is safe to affirm that these exhibitions have the ability in shaping the public’s eye about architecture. However, what happens when exhibitions center the architects as the sole and autonomous genius and dismiss the contribution of other agents such as the construction workers? This paper argues that the erasure of construction workers in architecture exhibitions puts a distance between the audience and architecture by offering a partial frame of the topic. Such a frame is often characterized by the promotion of dominant narratives that privilege idealized imagery of architecture and the role of architects blurs the conflicts in the making of the built environment. From the enslaved subject to the migrant, often racialized, construction worker, from the past to the present, their labor allows us to understand how architectural projects have been conceived and made, as well as the conflicts carried in them. Accordingly, the alienation of construction workers in architecture exhibitions also contributes to delaying the advancement of discussions about their working conditions – e.g., low wages, exploitation, the racialization of labor, and modern-day slavery –, and collective awareness of their placement in the limelight in the making of architecture. As mediators between the public and architecture, these exhibitions have the potential to address

**BIO**

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alternative and inclusive narratives that foment critical discussions that leads from the exploitation and racialization of labor to the demystification of the architecture professional. Finally, architecture exhibitions have the potential to contribute to the placement of construction workers in the limelight of architecture.

# Out of Display, Out of Mind?

## A Discussion About the Erasure of the Construction Worker in Architectural Exhibitions

### Introduction

Architecture exhibitions are talented in mediating the encounter between the public and architecture. Modern architects, governments, and private and public institutions have a long record of using these mediums for marketing, ideals dissemination, or political purposes (Zimmerman, 2014; Vásquez Ramos, 2017). Based on that, it is undeniable that architecture exhibitions can significantly influence, or even shape, the public's perception of architecture, as they often serve as the sole point of contact between the public and architectural projects and built environments.

### Statement

From the enslaved subject to the migrant, often racialized, construction workers from the past to the present, their labor has made architectural projects possible. This labor contributes to our understanding of the making of the built environment, architectural practice, and disputes. Yet, rare architecture exhibitions have delved into the topic by placing the construction worker in the limelight of architecture alongside the architect.

### Question

What are the implications when architecture exhibitions display the architect as the sole and autonomous genius and dismiss the contribution of other agents, such as the construction worker?

### Discussion

An exhibition is a political act (Ferraz, 2017). The Venice Architecture Biennale 2016, curated by architect Alejandro Aravena, is one of the few that stands out for addressing a frequently overlooked ethical issue within the field: labor exploitation of the construction worker. During the construction of Qatar's football stadiums, projects authored by architect Zaha Hadid, migrant construction workers, most of them racialized subjects, reported inhumane and exploitative working and unsanitary living conditions, besides work-related accidents and, ultimately, the death of hundreds of workers (Millward, 2017).

### Conclusions

Omitting the contributions of construction workers hinders ethical discussions on labor within architecture. The public is prevented from a critical engagement due to the perpetuation of romanticized imagery of architecture and the architect. As a result, layers of conflicts geared toward exploitation and racialization of labor are not addressed or reviewed in the practice. Low wages, inhumane working conditions, racialization of labor, and modern slavery are realities of thousands of construction workers worldwide. Yet, they have continuously remained left out of the display and out of mind.



**EXHIBITION DESIGN  
AND (DE)COLONIALITY:  
CONTESTING MUSEUMS' LANGUAGE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This poster explores the intricate relationship between museums, language, colonialism, and racism. Museums, often perceived as apolitical spaces dedicated to aesthetics and the past, are increasingly recognised by society as active participants in the social and political realm. The ongoing discourse surrounding the decolonisation of museums underscores their relevance to rethink the connections between the past and present, and to imagine and create possible futures detached from the colonising worldviews.

In this regard, language plays a decisive role in decolonising museum practices. The power of language in shaping narratives, perceptions, and emotions is especially relevant, with words being a vital tool in exhibition design, capable of fostering inclusivity or perpetuating conflict and displacement. This poster delves into the use of language by museums when dealing with colonialism and coloniality, acknowledging the inherent challenges and conflicts arising from the historical titles of cultural objects, some containing discriminatory and racist terms.

Drawing from Grada Kilomba's conceptual framework (Kilomba, 2019) of five crucial stages to attain a critical awareness of the intricate connection between colonialism and racism, this poster proposes that museums are positioned in the “shame” phase, confronting the discrepancies between self-perception and external perception.

Central to the analysis proposed by this poster is how museums and their professionals can deconstruct racism through language in exhibition design. Ultimately, the poster represents the collective questioning, doubt, and discomfort process in the global endeavour to decolonise museums.

**BIOS**

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# EXHIBITION DESIGN AND (DE)COLONIALITY

## Contesting museums' language

**Denial – Guilt  
SHAME**

**Recognition – Reparation**

These are the five steps that one must undertake to achieve critical consciousness of how colonialism and racism are entwined and how one acts as a perpetrator of racism, even unconsciously.

**Decolonising** museums stems from urging museums to do this process.

We argue that museums are currently situated in the "**shame**" phase, an internal **conflict** between: "the act of realising the discrepancy between one's own self-perception and other people's perception" (Kilomba, 2019, s.p.).

This is a moment of deep questioning, during which museums are **unlearning** and **resignifying** how people perceive them and how they want to be perceived.

**SHAME**



**LANGUAGE** shapes our experience and the narratives museums create

Examining and **resignifying** the **title** of the bust shown at the center, an object of the National Museum Soares dos Reis (Portugal)

**Current title**  
"Black Man Head"

**Previous title**  
"Head of a negro man"

Should we erase the **racial identifier** of the current title? Keep the original version? Both? Other possibilities?

**Possible title (?)**  
"Head of a man"

**What are the implications of such erasure?**

**A colourblindness standpoint, or a gesture towards an inclusive museum?**

**For who, and for what, is this change made? Who decides, and how?**

**How does this change affect whiteness?**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to António Ponte, Director of National Museum Soares dos Reis (Porto, Portugal), for allowing us to use the image with the following caption: António Soares dos Reis, Black Man Head, 1873. Photograph of the authors © courtesy of National Museum Soares dos Reis. We extend our thanks to the supervisors: Alice Semedo (CITCEM, University of Porto), supervisor of both authors and António Pinto Ribeiro (CES, University of Coimbra), supervisor of Sofia Carvalho.



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**EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE  
ROLE OF MUSEUMS:  
ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
THROUGH ART INTERPRETATION  
AND MINDFULNESS PRACTICES**

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**ABSTRACT**

This poster aims to share impressions about the exploratory activity based on Ana Jotta’s artwork *Dormir* installed in Parque São Roque’s garden. The main objective was to use mindfulness techniques in interpreting art, considering the contemporary museum as a space for well-being and reflection on global issues – and consequently, a place for healing in the face of current conflicts.

The activity aimed to (re)activate the arbor’s architectural space, exploring the connection between the artwork, its installation area, and Casa São Roque in line with visitor agenda. This approach sparked discussions about the artwork’s title and context, addressing questions about the museum’s political stance, the role of mindfulness in interpretation, and the use of architecture for engagement.

The participants were invited to practice breathing techniques and share their ideas and feelings about the object. Finally, they were guided through a moment of relaxation, with the aim of enhancing the experience of contemplating the artwork.

The qualitative evaluation showed that the exercise effectively led the participants’ focus to the present moment, underscoring the significance of innovative approaches to mediation that incorporate well-being practices like mindfulness into contemporary museums. This fosters a refuge from daily stress, facilitates discussions on current issues, and transforms these spaces into platforms for reflection and active listening.

**BIOS**

**GIOVANA ENHAM** is a student in the Master’s program in Communication Sciences at the University of Porto, where she has focused her research on the field of communication and mediation in museum institutions. Since 2019, she has worked at Casa São Roque – Centro de Arte, where she is involved in communication, events, and audience mediation, and is responsible for the graphic identity of exhibitions. In Brazil, she graduated in 2010 with a degree in Social Communication and worked as an audiovisual and cultural producer.

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# Exploring the Transformative Role of Museums: Enhancing Conflict Resolution through Art Interpretation and Mindfulness Practices



## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary museum is understood as a space for well-being and reflection on global issues. As an architectural space, it can serve as a refuge from the busyness of everyday life. As a place of learning, it should provide a safe environment for expanding discussions on the conflicts and complex problems of our current existence through cultural mediation, understood here as a place for active listening and collective construction of meaning.

## MAIN AIM

To use mindfulness techniques in art interpretation to open pathways for diverse appreciation from a single object, proposing a meaningful experience for the participating audience.

## QUESTIONS

In developing the activity, the visitor's agenda and the reactivation of the architectural space of the arbour were taken into account. The arbour, an element of bourgeois daily life in the 19th century, served as an outdoor private resting area. The guiding questions were:

- How can the museum position itself politically as an opposition to the constantly accelerated pace of the outside world?
- How do mindfulness techniques assist in the interpretation of artwork and serve as tools for cultural mediation?
- How can mediation utilize architecture and physical space to engage participants in an activity?

## OBJECT

"Dormir" by artist Ana Jotta (2019). The site-specific artwork was installed in the garden of Parque São Roque, on the trunk of a tree located in front of the arbour.

## METHODOLOGY

The seven participants were invited to practice breathing techniques to ground their minds in the present moment and, based on this, share their ideas and feelings about the artwork. Finally, they were guided through a relaxation moment with the aim of enhancing the experience of contemplating the artwork.

## RESULTS

The qualitative evaluation showed that combining breathing and relaxation moments with the interpretation of the artwork is an effective way to enhance the experience and the public space. This experience highlights the importance of innovative approaches to cultural mediation, integrating well-being practices such as mindfulness into the context of the contemporary museum, which can become a space for reflection, active listening, and ultimately a place of healing in the face of current conflicts.



**ANIMA MUNDI: THE DESIGN OF A TEMPORARY MISSIONARY ETHNOLOGICAL EXHIBITION**

Giulia Sodano, Department of Industrial Engineering University of Naples “Federico II”, Naples, Italy; and Vittoria Vaccaro, Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa. Pisa, Italy

**ABSTRACT**

The power of museum architecture and exhibition design in fulfilling the social mission of the museum when dealing with conflict is significant. Museums indeed serve as important cultural institutions that can play a crucial role in promoting understanding, dialogue, and healing in times of conflict. In the last 30 years we have witnessed a renewed focus on ethnological museums, and the ways in which these specific institutions display and conceptualize the contradictions lying at the core of their collections. Among this kind of problematic spaces of cultural exhibition emerge the missionary ethnological museums which represents stimulating opportunities to reflect on how architecture, design, and museum curatorship can virtuously interact to deal with the colonial legacies, power relations and violence historically perpetrated for the collecting of the manufacts. Hence some questions that we would like to address: how do museum staff have to work with collections that were created in a colonial-missionary context? How can architecture contribute to the construction of a space for social reflection of the past and global connection for the future? As part of our investigation, we would like to propose a temporary exhibition with one of the most important missionary collections in the world, the one of the Vatican Ethnological Museum. This temporary missionary ethnological exhibition will be hosted within the halls of the same museum and can become a catalyst for reconciliation processes. A museum exhibition designed by those who possess the historical and emotional load of the exhibited works, often linked to dramatic historical events. They can facilitate the expression of collective trauma, promote understanding and empathy, and contribute to the building of resilient communities. “Anima Mundi” can amplify marginalized voices, uncover hidden histories, and challenge societal norms, while also

**BIOS**

**GIULIA SODANO** is an architect. She is a PhD student in Industrial Engineering at the University of Naples “Federico II”. Her research topics are connected with the innovative solution of lighting design, the integration of daylight and electric light and the circadian implications of light on human life. In the coming months she will begin her internship with the Hera Luce company. She received her master’s degree Architecture 5UE at University of Naples Federico II in July 2020 with a thesis in lighting technology. The thesis project had the aim of analyzing the existing lighting of the Pausilypon archaeological park and designing a new one that would satisfy the safety requirements by highlighting the wonders of the place. She won the “IL MUSEO CHE VERRÀ – comunità | ricerca | innovazione” prize organized by ICOM Italy. Moreover, she is very attentive to climate problems and for this reason she is part of an environmental association that deals with environmental education and the circular economy.

**VITTORIA VACCARO** is an PhD student in History at Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. As an historian with a background in Art History, she is strongly interested in cultural history, in the global circulation of objects and to aspects related to their musealization. Her research topic focuses on the cultural interactions between China and Europe in the 17th century, analyzing in particular the case of a Jesuit missionary named Nicolas Trigault, his role as a traveling agent for the Company of Jesus and its pioneering influence on the spread of interest in foreign fashions and cultures. Besides, she has previously worked in national and international art galleries, such as the Berlin-based Galerie Rolando Anselmi, developing theoretical and practical skills related to projecting exhibitions and museum’s spaces curatorship.

inspiring critical thinking, social activism, and the pursuit of justice. Finally, the lighting design will also be conceived in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy the exhibition.



# ICAMT 49th Conference – Porto 2023

## Anima Mundi: the Design of a Temporary Missionary Ethnological Exhibition

Giulia Sodano (Industrial Engineering - University of Naples “Federico II” - Italy)

Vittoria Vaccaro (History - Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa - Italy)



The power of museum architecture and exhibition design in fulfilling the social mission of the museum when dealing with conflict is significant. Museums indeed serve as important cultural institutions that can play a crucial role in promoting understanding, dialogue, and healing in times of conflict. In the last 30 years we have witnessed a renewed focus on ethnological museums, and the ways in which these specific institutions display and conceptualize the contradictions lying at the core of their collections. Among this kind of problematic spaces of cultural exhibition emerge the missionary ethnological museums which represents stimulating opportunities to reflect on how architecture, design, and museum curatorship can virtuously interact to deal with the colonial legacies, power relations and violence historically perpetrated for the collecting of the manufacts. Hence some questions that we would like to address: how do museum staff have to work with collections that were created in a colonial-missionary context? How can architecture contribute to the construction of a space for social reflection of the past and global connection for the future? As part of our investigation, we would like to propose a temporary exhibition with one of the most important missionary collections in the world, the one of the Vatican Ethnological Museum. This temporary missionary ethnological exhibition will be hosted within the halls of the same museum and can become a catalysts for reconciliation processes. A museum exhibition designed by those who possess the historical and emotional load of the exhibited works, often linked to dramatic historical events. They can facilitate the expression of collective trauma, promote understanding and empathy, and contribute to the building of resilient communities. “Anima Mundi” can amplify marginalized voices, uncover hidden histories, and challenge societal norms, while also inspiring critical thinking, social activism, and the pursuit of justice. Finally, the lighting design will also be conceived in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy the exhibition.

### Practical issues: what are they?

### Why are these issues challenging?

### Practical solutions: what are they?



Artifacts without a clear temporal and historical contextualization, neither indication on provenance



Decontextualized objects presented as “work of art”, cleansed of all traces of their conflicting origins

There is an underlying epistemological problem that still makes the Anima Mundi museum permeable to this kind of cultural discussions and evolution; an historical (more than curatorial) issue related, in a broad sense, on the way the Vatican faces its missionary’s history and the links with colonialism. Past contexts that have not been historically admitted and processed yet.

“The museum missionary claim brings to the fore the colonial legacies, power relations and violence intertwined with early modern collecting practices across the worlds and requires addressing their specific meanings and entanglements” (Brevaglieri S., 2022)



The artwork captions need a clearer historical, geographical, and temporal contextualization to properly report them to the audience.



Rethink the aspect of the acquisition of artifacts through more in-depth studies especially within the objects in the deposit.



The caption language is still far from being “a message of unity”



The number of pieces exhibited are insignificant compared to the number of works owned



Rethinking exhibition design based on the spatial and luminous aspects of the context.



Redesign the exhibition through the eyes of those who are part of that culture.

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**CARING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE  
IN A FORMER DOMESTIC-INDUSTRIAL  
SETTING TURNED HOUSE-MUSEUM**

Inês Azevedo and Joana Mateus, Casa da Imagem – Fundação Manuel Leão Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal

**ABSTRACT**

The following text and poster share the process experienced by a small-scale museum to act in the social context as *nuclei of dwelling*, working on issues of social justice through museum narrative creation. Museum Casa da Imagem (MCI) is presented as a case study. Recent rehabilitation of its architectural space preserved the coexistence of the industrial space - the workplace of “Rocha Artes Gráficas”, a recognized printing industry - with the old residential house - a less visible setting of domestic work. The future exhibition design of the museological transformation of the site aims to evidence the class and gender conflict inherent to the workplace’s highlighted by the house-industries. Thus, it brings out the need for the MCI to take care of the representation and recognition of the different intervenient of house-industries.

**BIOS**

**INÊS AZEVEDO.** Graduated in Sculpture at the Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto (FBAUP). Has master’s degrees in Contemporary Art Practices, FBAUP, and in Visual Arts Teaching, Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da UP. Currently is a PhD student at Estudos do Património - Museologia (Faculdade de Letras da UP). Is a researcher at CEAA-ESAP and CITCEM-FLUP. Works at Fundação Manuel Leão, co-coordinating Casa da Imagem (with Joana Mateus), where she proposes practices and reflections that articulate mediation, education and art, seeking the construction of a democratic, participatory and fair society, capable of imagining and recreating itself. Through Casa da Imagem has been carrying out numerous projects, highlighting the Casa das Imagens Museum, under permanent development, and the “PressHere - a living archive on industry in Europe”.

**JOANA MATEUS.** Graduated in Painting at the Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto (FBAUP). Has master’s degrees in Multimedia Art, FBAUP, and in Visual Arts Teaching, Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da UP. Is a researcher at CEAA-ESAP. Works at Fundação Manuel Leão, co-coordinating Casa da Imagem (with Inês Azevedo), where she proposes practices and reflections that articulate mediation, education and art, seeking the construction of a democratic, participatory and fair society, capable of imagining and recreating itself. Through Casa da Imagem has been carrying out numerous projects, highlighting the Casa das Imagens Museum, under permanent development, and the “PressHere - a living archive on industry in Europe”.



**Caring for social justice in a former domestic-industrial setting turned house-museum**

Inés Azevedo | Joana Mateus



**“nuclei of dwelling” between the industrial and the domestic settlement**

**creating narratives in a museum space: in between**

**the visibility and invisibility of bodies  
[status of women] representation | recognition [social esteem]**



**CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION DESIGN  
AS A BOUNDARY BREAKER**

Marco Borsotti, DABC – Dept. of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering, Politecnico di Milano; and Raffaella Trocchianesi, Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano. Milan, Italy

**ABSTRACT**

The contemporary exhibition design, which pursues an intensely *narrative* vocation, constitutes the privileged communicative tool that intercepts visitors by engaging with them in an ongoing dialogue that reveals the conflict in them that is latent, in terms of stereotyped ideas and commonplaces.

So, an exhibition must be equipped with its own design grammar capable of generating new relationships, intercepting every type of memory to transpose it into space and action. The design of the exhibition makes the understanding of different points of view, positioning itself as a *generator* of opposing ideas: not just an *interface*, but a true integrated environmental system, analogical and digital, which works in symbiosis with the curatorial contents, amplifying them and making them available and involving.

These principles will be analysed through a number of case studies organised according to three thematic categories: “the fences of the commonplace”, the “chains of the past” and the “fences of reason”.

**BIO**

**MARCO BORSOTTI.** Architect, PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design. Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano/DABC Dept. He works on Exhibition Design and Adaptive Reuse with a special focus on Cultural Tangible and Intangible Heritage and interior spatial and narrative interactions.

**RAFFAELLA TOCCHIANESI.** Architect, Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano/ Dept. Design. Director of the specialization Master IDEA\_Exhibition Design, she mainly deals with Design for Cultural Heritage in terms of museography and exhibition design, communication and enhancement of local areas, new models and narratives of cultural experiences, the relationship among design, humanities and arts.

## CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION DESIGN AS A BOUNDARY BREAKER

**Marco Borsotti**  
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**Key words**  
exhibit design | narrative | social storytelling

The spatial relation that is established between the needs of representation and the consequence of observation, defines the very essence of the exhibition design: a project that, in contemporary times, increasingly has a **narrative aspect**, aimed at broadening the accessibility of knowledge. (Atelier Brückner 2018; Kossman et al. 2012; Trocchianesi 2012; Borsotti 2017; Groenlandbasel 2021).

In Jacques Hainard and Marc-Olivier Gonseth's *Principes d'exposition* (n.d.), «to expose is to disturb harmony/to expose is to annoy the visitor in his intellectual comfort [...] to expose is to struggle against discounted ideas, stereotypes and stupidity».

To do this, the exhibition project must adopt a **design grammar** capable of generating new relationships, contributing crucially to the creation of **social storytelling**.

The exhibit system becomes the promoter of an **alternative cognitive system**, capable of conversing with different models of memory: individual, social and cultural, in order to transpose them into space and action (Halbwachs 1987; Ricoeur 2012; Assmann 2002).

These alternative systems are analyzed here through **some paradigmatic case studies**, according to **three thematic categories of reference**.

### THE FENCES OF THE COMMONPLACE

Clichés are preconceived beliefs, consolidated over time, according to mechanisms of covert persuasion and uncritical acceptance. Here, the exhibition design operates as a **contrasting element, revealing and denouncing the omissions of the the obvious**, often engaging visitors in **playful and emotional narratives** that shake their apathy.

*Helvetia Park* (Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel 2009-10), is «a playful stroll that addresses the points of contact and friction between different ways of thinking about culture in today's Switzerland».

The exhibition offers an **unexpected portrait of the country and tackles politically incorrect topics**. The installation adopts the **paradigm of irony**, engaging visitors in the **metaphor of play**, enacted in a kind of amusement park where they perform playful actions that reveal unexpected socio-cultural content.



Photo: MEN / Alain Germond  
<https://www.men.ch/fr/expositions/anciennes-expositions/black-box-depuis-1981/helvetia-park>

*Fetish Modernity* (Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, 2011) aims to define a new way of looking at the ethnographic sense of the objects, and at the psychological and socio-cultural attitudes linked to them.

The exhibition **unmasks the supposed superiority of the West as the sole holder of modernity**. Kascken's exhibition design supports this inclusive vision by arranging a modular, boxlike system that equalizes each classifying act and enhances by assonance the hybridization of objects from different cultural and geographical origins.



<https://www.africanmuseum.be/en/research/discover/publications/search/pubdetail?pubid=1631>

### THE CHAINS OF THE PAST

History is not unambiguous: its transcription varies according to the strong powers that manipulate it, resulting in a **deforming impact that propagates over time**. Breaking these chains implies accepting a **multi-voiced written perspective**. The exhibition design takes up the challenge, **generating interference in a game of unravelling that visitors are often called upon to activate by acting firsthand**.

The exhibitions *Our Colonial Inheritance* (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, 2022 by KossmanDeJong) implements a **critical reinterpretation of Dutch colonialism and its legacy today**.

It presents thematic environments that define as many spaces of dialogue with the museum's collections and are intended to highlight the creativity and resilience of the colonized peoples.



Photo by Rick Mandoeng. Copyright: © Rick Mandoeng  
<http://dutchdesigndaily.com/complete-overview/our-colonial-inheritance/>

*Our Land* (Museum Sophiahof, The Hague, 2022, KossmanDeJong) is dedicated to the **colonial past of the Dutch East Indies and its repercussions**: the exhibit here presents eight families who are followed in their migrations, back in time, from one generation to the next.

The narrative is personal and emotional: visitors constantly relate to the experiences of the members of these families, in a process of mutual acquaintance and comparison that generates tensions and affinities in a story that reveals many faces.



Photo by Rick Mandoeng. Copyright: © Rick Mandoeng <https://kossmandejong.nl/project/our-land/>

### THE FENCES OF REASON

Too often the logic of reason generates distorted and preconceived conditions, the consequences of which are, however, ignored by political and social stereotypes and conveniences. Here the exhibition design acts as a factor of **mental disarticulation and lexical provocation**, setting the conditions for actions of identification, capable of revealing the contradictions of dominant thinking.

The temporary exhibition *Prison* (The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva, 2019, designed by Holzer Kobler). It **addresses the issues of detention and exclusion from civil society, but also reintegration and legislative principles**. The installation engages visitors in a **continuous state of the presence and absence of bars**, materializing the thin but concrete boundary between freedom and imprisonment. The complexity of the theme is narrated in open and closed zones that create reciprocal visual links



<https://holzerkobler.com/project/prison>

The *Museo Laboratorio della Mente* (Mind Lab Museum, 2008 in Rome, designed by Studio Azzurro) deals with the theme of **mental distress by addressing the health/disease paradigm, otherness, social inclusion, and the politics of care**.

Its interactive exhibit is designed «to bring people into an experiential density in which the condition of visitors is slowly transformed into an unconscious interpretation of the stages of madness, of its postures, its obsessive behaviours. A progressive physical assumption of the theme through the numerous interactive stations that lead you to move in a certain way, to dress the typical postures of the disease, to interpret the stigma» (Studio Azzurro, 2008).



<https://www.studioazzurro.com/opere/museo-laboratorio-della-mente/>





**FROM CASA ANDRESEN TO HALL  
OF BIODIVERSITY – CIÊNCIA VIVA CENTER**  
Galeria da Biodiversidade - Centro Ciência Viva

The Hall of Biodiversity – Ciência Viva Center occupies an emblematic building in the city of Porto, the former home of the Andresen family, and opened to the public in June 2017. This science communication space brought new perspectives to a place already full of meanings for the city. This building, which was originally a family home, was also a teaching and attendance space for the academic community, having been the place for biology classes in the second half of the 20th century. Today this museum space accumulates all these memories returning, however, to the original design of the building. Academic, literary and botanical connections in one place, associated with a new scientific exhibition environment, creating distinct engagements with a variety of audiences. How to incorporate the multiples memory layers of a space, maintaining the relationships that different communities have with it? How to preserve the architectural memory of the space, adjusting it to a new meaning, preparing it to receive a distinct museology, capable of communicating science. How to recover the original architectural character of this historic building, emblematic of the city, for public enjoyment. During the visit we will address the architectural responses developed in the refurbishing of the building and preparation of the exhibition space.

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Nuno Valentim

Born in Porto (1971), degree in Architecture at FAUP (1995), MSc in Rehabilitation of Architectural Heritage at FEUP (2007) and PhD in Architecture FAUP (2016) with dissertation and thesis in Architectural Practice, Heritage and Regulation. Started independent professional practice in 1994. Assistant Professor at FAUP since 2005. With a vast experience in the rehabilitation of historical buildings, he has overseen the requalification of Casa Andresen in the Botanical Garden of Porto and its conversion into the Biodiversity Hall, the Extension of the Lycée Français International de Porto – Classrooms, Canteen and Sports Pavilion and Bolhão Market Restoration and Modernization project (Porto's central market). Selection of awarded works: IHRU/Nuno Teotónio Pereira National Prize and National Urban Rehabilitation Prize 2017/18 to the Rehabilitation of the Albergues Nocturnos do Porto; and the João de Almada Prize 2014 to the Rehabilitation of Marques da Silva's building from 1928 (in co-authorship with Francisco Barata and José Luis Gomes CEFA-UP)g the inaugural exhibition at the Serralves Museum, Circa 1968, in 1999. She was responsible for several curatorial projects throughout her career among them with the artists: Maria Nordman, Grupo Homeostética, Antoni Muntadas, Pedro Cabrita Reis, Cildo Meireles, Helena Almeida, Paula Rego, Tacita Dean, João Maria Gusmão e Pedro Paiva e Carla Filipe. Carla Filipe's exhibition, "in my own language I am independente", is currently on display at the Serralves Museum until 17 of September of 2023.

### **FERREIRA DA SILVA CHEMISTRY LABORATORY RESTORATION – THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS**

Museu de História Natural e da Ciência da  
Universidade do Porto

The Ferreira da Silva chemistry laboratory: from the intended transformation into a multi-purpose venue till the decision to musealize it; making options regarding the period to recreate; between a make-believe and a close to faithful restoration. It will be also presented the exhibition on display: Ferreira da Silva chemistry laboratory – a century of chemistry on display.

### **MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Marisa Monteiro graduated in Physics and has been a curator since 2000, with the former Science Museum and the present Natural History and Science Museum of the University of Porto, researching and cataloguing its 19th c. – early 20th c. exact science collection, having contributed to several interactive and historical science exhibitions. She assisted the restoration of the Ferreira da Silva chemistry laboratory with information gathered through research.

Mariano Piçarra (Lisbon, 1960) is a designer and author of numerous exhibitions at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, with which he has won the APOM award for “Best Exhibition” on several occasions, as well as the Pádua Ramos Award for Best Interior Design in 2015.

Luis Afonso Carvalho (Lisbon, 1961) is an architect and has been working with Mariano Piçarra in museography since 1991. The works carried out by this duo include regular collaborations with National Museums, Municipal Museums and also exhibitions for institutions such as the Centro Cultural de Belém, Serralves and the Rectory of the University of Porto.

**FOLK ART IN THE GALLERY****Casa Comum**

The search for authentic Portugal in the mid-20th century led to the appreciation of popular heritage from north to south of the country. Heritage that decades later is displayed in the spaces of erudite art. This temporary exhibition explores this dichotomy.

How to transmit these two distinct times of an artistic production, valuing the transformative moment that places the *Figurado de Barcelos* in the Art Galleries.

The temporary exhibition, work in progress, works in frontiers, between toys and art, between the real and the imagined, the sacred and the profane, the serial production and the artistic object. The technical solutions developed will also be addressed, taking into account the constraints of the spaces and the theme itself. The development of display cases was itself a process worth mentioning, which will also be addressed.

The Casa Comum of the Rectory of the University of Porto, which hosts this exhibition, is a space for meetings and cultural intervention, in line with the exhibition proposal addressed in this visit.

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

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Sergio Fernandez was born in Porto in 1937. Architect by the Porto Superior School of Fine Arts, in 1965. Associate Professor at FAUP and at the Department of Architecture at the University of Minho. He directs seminars and classes in the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, Angola, Brazil and Panama. Professor Emeritus at FAUP, in 2012. Author of “Percurso – Arquitectura Portuguesa, 1930/74”, and numerous articles and works published in Portugal and abroad.



### **CURATING THE NEW LONG-TERM EXHIBITION AT THE SOARES DOS REIS NATIONAL MUSEUM: CHALLENGES AND NEGOTIATIONS.**

Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis

#### **VISIT 1**

##### **[FOCUSED ON CURATORSHIP]**

The aim of this visit is to show the whole process of building the long-term exhibition at the Soares dos Reis National Museum, which recently opened in April 2023. The contexts, concepts and working methods behind the museum project and its communication will be presented. A field of work full of challenges and constant negotiation.

### **MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Ana Bárbara Barros. Museologist, Ana Bárbara Barros has a master's degree in Museology from the Postgraduate Studies Course of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of University of Porto, with a dissertation/research developed in the area of Education Professionals in Museums in the city of Porto, under the supervision of Alice Semedo (2008). She has a postgraduate degree from the same course (2004) and a degree in Historical Sciences/scientific area from the Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique (1996). She entered the professional world of museums at Porto City Council in 2000 and was in charge of the Educational Service at the Guerra Junqueiro House Museum until 2007. From 2008 to 2019 she was the Coordinator of the Romantic Museum of Quinta da Macieirinha, where she worked in the museum's collections management area between 2019 and June 2021. Since July 2021, she has been at the Soares dos Reis National Museum in a context of public administration professional mobility, supporting the museum's management and coordinating the design and assembly of the long-term exhibition, which opened in April 2023, as well as other strategic museum projects.

Ana Magalhães. With a degree in Communication Science from the University of Minho (2003), Ana Magalhães began her professional career as a journalist at the newspapers Público (2003) and O Primeiro de Janeiro (2003-2007). From 2007 to 2020 she was part of the Marketing and Communication Office of the Norte Portugal Regional Coordination and Development Commission, where she worked on communication plans for regional development programmes, the environment, spatial planning and European funds. She carried out brand activation, press relations and online communication actions. From 2014 to 2020 she represented the institution in national and European fund communication networks. Since 2020 she works in the Soares dos Reis National Museum, where she has been working on the Museum's Communication Plan and developing actions related to long-term exhibition, temporary exhibitions and participation in collaborative projects. She has represented the Soares dos Reis National Museum in national museum communication network of the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage.

**DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO ARCHITECT  
FERNANDO TÁVORA'S REMODELLING  
PROJECT FOR THE SOARES DOS REIS  
NATIONAL MUSEUM**

Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis

**VISIT 2  
[FOCUSED ON MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE]**

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Carlos Moura Martins is an architect and Assistant Professor of Design Studio in the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Science and Technology at the University of Coimbra (UC), where he has taught since 1999. Graduated in Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture of the University Porto (1986), he holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Coimbra with a thesis on public works in Portugal in late eighteenth century, awarded with the Pina Manique International Research Prize (Academia Portuguesa da História). He is author of the book *Os projectos para o porto de São Martinho e campos de Alfeizerão, 1774-1800* (Coimbra: Edarq, 2018) and of the book chapter "A aplicação da ciência à política do território na transição do século XVIII para o século XIX" (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2017). He has been developing studies on the technical and scientific activity and teaching and research institutions of the Enlightenment, having as field of analysis the institutionalization and development of the Portuguese scientific culture and its diffusion in the European context. His main research interests are the processes of transformation of the urban space in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, having as analytical field the relations between the practice of the military engineering and the development policies for the territory.

## THE ORGANIC MUSEUM

Museu de Serralves

The museum as a space for reflection and debate on current cultural, social, and political issues, and the museum as a narrator of collective memories from the past and present are just a few of the problematics that can be addressed during the visit to the Serralves Museum. This visit will provide an opportunity to critically analyze the role of contemporary museums, with the aim of exploring how architecture and exhibition design can contribute to a more inclusive experience for all audiences. The Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by the award-winning architect Álvaro Siza, is one of the main cultural and architectural icons of Portugal. Celebrating its 25th anniversary of artistic activity in 2024, the physical expansion of this building has become pressing, dedicating an exclusive space to a collection that emphasizes a constant reinterpretation of the transformations in art over the last 60 years. The new West Wing of the Serralves Museum will be a unique structure that will solidify Serralves' position as a successful partnership between the public and the private, as well as with citizens. It will further reinforce Serralves' emphasis on transdisciplinarity, highlighting how connections between art, architecture, environment, dance, performance, and music have redefined contemporary art. Sustainable, equitable, free and happy futures.

## MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION

Marta Moreira de Almeida is deputy director of the Serralves Museum since 2018. Degree in Art History from the University of Porto. She has worked in the Fine Arts Department at the Serralves Foundation since 1991 as a curator, having taken over the coordination of this department between 1995 and 2017. Played a key role in organizing the inaugural exhibition at the Serralves Museum, Circa 1968, in 1999. She was responsible for several curatorial projects throughout her career among them with the artists: Maria Nordman, Grupo Homeostética, Antoni Muntadas, Pedro Cabrita Reis, Cildo Meireles, Helena Almeida, Paula Rego, Pedro Costa, Tacita Dean, João Maria Gusmão e Pedro Paiva, Fernando Lanhas e Carla Filipe.

António Choupina is an architect graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto. He founded the CH.A (CHoupina.Arquitectos) studio in 2010, and in the same year collaborated with the School of Arts and Design. He has been responsible for interventions in the Palace of Carlos V in Granada and the Sverre Fehn Pavilion during the Official Visit of the Presidency of the Republic to Norway. Recently, he was involved in the construction of the Álvaro Siza Pavilion at the China International Furniture Fair, with whom he has developed several cultural projects in partnership with Aedes Berlin, the Vitra Design Museum, and the Aga Khan Network. As a curator, António Choupina has curated exhibitions at institutions such as the Serralves Museum, Nadir Afonso Museum, Alfaro Foundation, Tchoban Foundation, and Marques da Silva Foundation. He has produced multiple publications at the intersection of architecture, art, and philosophy. He is the editor of A As Architecture Network, serves as a jury member for international awards, and is a guest speaker at various institutions and events, including the Bauhaus100 and the International Architecture Design Forum.



**LIGHT AND ATMOSPHERES  
IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF ATELIÊ  
ANTÓNIO CARNEIRO**

Museu do Porto – Ateliê António Carneiro

The Ateliê António Carneiro was built in the 1920s as a studio for the artists António Carneiro (1872-1930) and his son Carlos Carneiro (1900-1971), outstanding figures of Portuguese art, in particular in the Symbolist and Modernist contexts, respectively. António Carneiro's other son, the composer Cláudio Carneiro (1895-1963) also lived here.

The collection of the Ateliê António Carneiro consists of about 300 works by the artist, including the following: the final study for "A Vida" (The Life), a work made at the turn of the 20th century; the large painting, "Camões reading the Lusiads to the friars of São Domingos", the self-portraits and a set of family portraits, as well as marine paintings, church interiors and panoramic views of the city of Porto.

Closed to the public several years ago, it is currently undergoing an architectural rehabilitation project, overseen by the architect Camilo Rebelo, that aims to recover the original design and use of this project, which was built in the 1920s. This project includes on the one hand two painting studios, as central spaces, and, on the other, the endowment of programmatic and technical characteristics that enable the space to be opened to the public again.

The intervention highlights and emphasises three themes: recovering and enhancing the traditional typology of the painting studio lit by northern light (that today is practically non-existent in Portugal); and the original articulation with the contiguous gallery, endowing the city with a unique type of space; the replacement of the relationship between the interior spaces and the adjacent exterior spaces, in particular the private ones – the north patio, the south balcony/terrace, and the property's garden – and the public ones – the street and the pavement as a space for access and planting of occasional trees.

Source: <https://museudoporto.pt/estacao/atelie-antonio-carneiro-a-abrir/>

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Camilo Rebelo nasceu no Porto em 1972. Estudou no Colégio Alemão do Porto e diplomou-se pela Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade do Porto em 1996. Colaborou com Souto de Moura 1994-98 e com Herzog & de Meuron 1998-99.

Iniciou a sua atividade enquanto profissional liberal no Porto em 2000 e desde então elaborou cerca de uma centena de projetos, parte dos quais em parceria com Tiago Pimentel e Susana Martins.

Ensinou em instituições tais como, Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade do Porto, E.P.F.Lausanne, E.T.S.A. U.Navarra, Accademia di Mendrisio, RAC University Shanghai. Desde 2015 tem um atelier de investigação "Arquitetura e Paisagem" no Politécnico de Milão.

A sua obra tem sido reconhecida através de diversos prémios nacionais e internacionais entre os quais, Bauwelt Award, Baku UIA Award e Prémio do Douro e nomeações para o Prémio Secil, BSI Swiss Award e EU Mies Award. A casa Ktima foi escolhida pela BBC2 para um documentário "worlds most extraordinary homes underground".

O seu campo de investigação tem a sua dimensão entre arcaico – moderno e abstrato - figurativo, e tem-se desenvolvido maioritariamente nas relações arquitetura - natureza, cruzando contextos urbanos e territórios de paisagem natural protegida e classificada. Matéria, a sua atmosfera, os seus processos construtivos e a premência dos seus usos em cada contexto tem sido reconhecido em Portugal e no estrangeiro.

### RESERVATÓRIO – MUSEU DO PORTO

The Reservoir is the first station of the Porto City Museum. The unique space of this former Water Reservoir, whose renovation was designed by the architects, Alexandre Alves Costa and Sérgio Fernandez and with a museographic project by João Mendes Ribeiro, has been transformed into an archaeological site that combines three primary functions — it is, simultaneously, a museum, a work and mediation space and a living archive that safeguards archaeological records. Conceived as a time labyrinth, since it is not organised in a linear or teleological manner, the Reservoir's space is structured around two axes: a horizontal topographic axis; and a vertical stratigraphic axis.

The topographic axis is distributed over the different wings of the exhibition space and symbolically corresponds to areas of the territory where important archaeological excavation campaigns have been conducted throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, revealed different forms of settlement from various periods and all kinds of material vestiges, which permit a spatial and temporal interpretation of the evolution of the city we know today. The different sections are the River Estuary Mouth and Littoral Platform; the Riverfront and Areias Altas; the Morro da Penaventosa; the Roads and Paths.

The spectator moves through the space, and also through time; as we explore the space in depth, we reach back further in time, coming across different periods from history to prehistory, which successively correspond, as material evidence, to different artefacts or fragments dating from these periods: the Modern and Contemporary Periods, Medieval Period; Roman Period; Iron Age; Bronze Age; Paleolithic.

Visitors are invited to enter a machine that will enable them to read the city — wherein reading should be understood in the broadest sense of the word, since it implies several of our perceptive faculties: beyond, or below, sight, touch, smell, hearing, imagination, contemplation, meditation.

From the programming perspective, the Reservoir is a permanently organic space, in which objects are not inert things but provide links to the ways of thinking and doing of our ancestors. A Museum as a space of constant

questioning, as a space for work and exchange, as a place for producing knowledge and stimulating creation. A place to welcome and to make the community.

Source: <https://museudoporto.pt/estacao/reservatorio/>

### **“WORST TOUR” – FROM PALÁCIO DE CRISTAL TO PRAÇA DA REPÚBLICA** Porto Worst Tour, Porto architecture tour

The city is the stage for social struggles and conflicts. The city, more than Architecture, is a “political issue” par excellence. The city of Porto – simultaneously “bourgeois” and working-class – like so many other cities, is the physical representation in the public space of the social classes that make it up.

The city evolves, and with it, the Class Conflict evolves. In the struggle for the best located and most central square metre, the best locations and views, the city evolves to different stages of a “wider war”, “Gentrification”, “property speculation”, “expulsion”, “return to the centre”, etc.

Between the Palace and the Praça da República, various architectures express Culture and Politics, from the “Brazilians’ Mansions”, the “Bourgeois Houses”, the “Working Class Islands” in Lapa, the “SAAL” neighbourhoods of the post-25 April – Bouça and Lapa – the new 5-star Hotel in Lapa, the Igreja da Lapa and the Quartel da Praça da República. With an open future – as always – What is the future for the poor in the city centre?

What new social programmes could fit into half-empty buildings like the Palacete and the Quartel da Praça da República? What impact will the New Hotel in Lapa have? What solutions have not yet been attempted for the homeless in Praça da República?

### **MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Pedro Figueiredo (Portugal, 1975) Architect developing various activities related to the city of Porto: Drawing, Critical Tours, Local Politics and Research on Architecture and Urban Geography. Participated (2020-21) in the Book – “A Baixa do Porto – Architecture and Urban Geography – 2010-2020, coordinated by Prof. Geographer José Rio Fernandes. Since the beginning of the health crisis (2020), he has been drawing illustrations of Porto Architecture. Between 2016 and 2018 he participated in the organization of “Quiosque do Piorio”, a public intervention project of Ideas, Images, Propaganda and Drawings of Political Criticism. Since 2013, he has been a member of the project “The Worst Tours”/“Passeios do Piorio”, a group of walking tours and traveling discussions around the city of Porto on Urban Policies, Participation, Architecture and Urbanism. Architect graduated from FAUP – Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, working as a Designer for several Architecture Offices between 1999 and 2012.



**VISIT 1: CASA DA ARQUITECTURA  
[FOCUSED ON EXHIBITION DESIGN]**

Casa da Arquitectura – Centro Português de Arquitectura (CA) assumes a strategic position of cutting curatorship in the selection of the collections it seeks to incorporate, and distinguishes itself worldwide, through the creation of territorial collections, and of a certain temporal arc, with its own curatorship, as is the case of the Brazilian Architecture Collection, which has managed to bring together more than 100 projects and more than 200 donors, allowing an unprecedented reading of a temporal period of 90 years, through the exhibition “Infinito Vão” (Infinite Span), on view in 2018, in the Institution. It is CA’s policy to claim the importance of making the material in the collection accessible, fostering practices of openness and availability. With the advent of globalisation and the ease in the movement of collections and materials, it is urgent to stimulate methods of consultation and cession of these materials, in order to mediate conflicts inherent to their movement across borders. In addition to face-to-face consultation systems, CA has invested in the digital aspect to bring the contents closer to an increasingly dispersed and relocated public. The exhibitions constitute another fundamental axis of CA’s action in the dissemination of its collection, through an intrinsic connection between what is archived and what is exhibited. With curatorship mainly external, but always with the general supervision of the Commissioner and Executive Director of the Institution, each exhibition reflects a new reading of the collection, promoting the dissemination of knowledge of architecture to the general public, and involving various interdisciplinary areas.

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Nuno Sampaio (1974), architect in Porto and master in “Large Scale Architecture” at the Barcelona School of Architecture, develops professional activity as an architect since 2000 in the studio “Nuno Sampaio – Arquitectos”. Currently and since 2014 is the Executive Director of the Casa da Arquitectura, where he assumes the direction and curatorship of the institution that is now the Portuguese Center for Architecture. He was a member of the National Board of Ordem dos Arquitectos (Order of Architects) from 2008 to 2010. He was president of “Estratégia Urbana – Laboratório de Inovação de Arquitectura e Cidade”, and Vice-President of the Association “Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa” from 2010 to 2020. At the same time he has been a jury in several architectural competitions where the FAD 2013 Awards stand out.

### **VISIT 2: CASA DA ARQUITECTURA REAL VINÍCOLA [FOCUSED ON MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE]**

Casa da Arquitectura – Centro Português de Arquitectura is located in the former compound of the Real Companhia Vinícola, in Matosinhos Sul. Built at the turn of the twentieth century, it appears in continuity with the construction of the Port of Leixões and the urbanization plan designed for that area. After thirty years of prolific activity, the complex is abandoned, with two circumstantial occupations: in the mid-1950s, with the expansion of the port, displaced residents use the complex as a temporary shelter. A similar situation occurred in 1974, with the arrival of the “returnees”. The rehabilitation by the architect Guilherme Machado Vaz, executed in a municipal effort and inaugurated in 2017, informs both a cultural commitment to the future of architecture and a mediation with the past of the place where it is located. The reconversion project is based on a careful reading of the pre-existence as an accumulation of significant layers of memory, where historical, collective, and architectural meanings converge. On the one hand, the industrial legacy condenses a disused narrative, to which architecture bears witness. On the other, the various permanences that have succeeded each other in space nourish a collective consciousness that highlights the building in the context of Matosinhos.

### **MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Miguel Royo (1993) is an architect from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto. He collaborated at the Arnaldo Pimentel Barbosa Arquitectos office and was an intern at JackBackPack, a cultural association dedicated to promoting intersections between architecture and cinema. His master’s thesis investigates the symbolic spaces of the film *Stalker*, by Andrei Tarkovsky. He has collaborated with the magazines *Dédalo*, *Caliban*, *Enfermaria 6*, *The Jim Morrison Journal* and *The Apollonian* with poems, chronicles, essays, and scientific articles. He works in the Commercial and Partnership Department at Casa da Arquitectura, being responsible for tourism and architecture visits.

**MUSEU DA MEMÓRIA DE MATOSINHOS**

MuMMa – Museu da Memória de Matosinhos mission is to enhance the historical and heritage memory of the territory of Matosinhos, crossing it with the individual memories of its inhabitants, aiming to reinforce identity and promote citizenship. The design of this museum is based on the idea of creating a meeting space between the county's past and present, from origins to the present, but also for the future. Housed in a historic building, the museum develops around three axes between which it is – and will be – always necessary to find a balance point. The science – History, the human factor – city people and the political dimension – public service. The definition of content and form were issues worked on during the creation (debate) of the exhibition discourse, whether permanent or temporary, always seeking to create temporal bridges considering the physical characteristics of the space (where conflicts naturally arise, and through debate generate balance points), presenting content that is not closed, providing opportunities for new dialogues, new readings, museography and programmatic revisions. The functioning of this space is designed, ideally, as a work in progress, a continuous cycle, subject to permanent updating, putting into practice a vocation of openness to community participation, a fundamental partner in the preservation of memory and in the future development of the museum.

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Cláudia Almeida, graduated in History, variant of History of Art by the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra and Post-Graduated in Museology, by the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, Coordinator of Municipal Museums and Head of the Intermediate Division of 3rd degree Entertainment of Matosinhos City Council.

Luís Soares, graduated in Heritage Management, from the Escola Superior de Educação Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Postgraduate in Museology, from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, Senior Technician in the Museums and Heritage Unit – Culture and Museums Division of the Chamber Municipality of Matosinhos.



**PETRICHOR, THE SMELL OF RAIN  
(PORTO DESIGN BIENNALE 2023)**

Casa do Design

After a dry, hot period, the first drops of water falling to the earth, give off the smell of rain. This phenomenon is called Petrichor (from the Greek pétros, stone + íchōr, ethereal fluid or blood of the gods, as understood in Greek mythology). The aroma, often associated with the smell of the earth, is generated by the oils released by some plants during arid and hot periods and seems to set off and invade our sensoria, i.e. the part of the brain that is thought to be the common core of all sensations. The description of this phenomenon is a simplification of what actually happens, but it serves to introduce the idea of a natural, aqueous fluid interface, to which we can associate many other interfaces designed by humans. During the visit to this exhibition, participants will be confronted with some of these fluid interfaces (artificial heart valves, rituals, plant rafts, shipping traffic trackers, underwater vehicles for mapping underground aquifers, the use of bio-pigments, and water collectors, among many others) becoming aware of the ubiquity of water, its presence and circulation as a central element connecting all things.

Note: This exhibition is part of the main programme of Porto Design Biennale 2023, with the central theme Being Water: How we flow together and shape each other, proposed by the general curator of the event and of this exhibition. Taking place between 19 October and 3 December, the aim is to shape more sustainable, equitable, free and happy futures.

**MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION**

Constança Cardoso is a designer and curatorial assistant. She has a degree in design from IADE (2019) and a master's degree in interior design from ESAD (2023) with the dissertation "The Limits of Forms – between the ideal project and the possible project". Currently, she is working at esad-idea, Research in Design and Art, as a curatorial assistant for the Porto Design Biennale 2023, with the central theme Being Water: How we flow and shape ourselves collectively, curated by Fernando Brízio. 2023.

### CRITICAL DISPLAYING, EXPLORATÓRIO

esad—idea

Art is at risk as one of the few places where speculative thought and disinterested contemplation can occur. In this session, we will analyse the idea, which has intensified and become widespread, of establishing limits and, ultimately, censorship in art. Should slavery, racism, sexuality and other fractious themes be banned from museums? Can we condemn a work of art because it disturbs or offends us? Is it possible to impose limits on the artist's work? "Art cannot be tamed", wrote Jeanette Winterson in *Art Objects* (1995), "although our responses to it can be", she added, saying that our responses are conditioned from the moment we start school. Based on concrete examples, we will discuss how curatorship, exhibition design and their devices can act as intermediaries in the conflicts caused by cultures and time. The Critical Displaying workshop will rehearse practical responses to the problem of censorship in art, a process that will naturally raise more questions: a dialogue between theory and practice with the assumption of moderating conflicts in the museum context, a public space that exists to be free and unbound from canons.

### MEDIATION AND DISCUSSION

Joana Couceiro has a degree in architecture from the University of Coimbra (2005) and a PhD from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (2018). Her thesis, "Chiado and Style, the importance of the notion of style in the construction of Siza's Chiado", was a finalist in the *Arquia/tesis 2021 Biennial Thesis Competition*. She has been dedicated to research, architectural practice, publishing and curating. Between 2013 and 2020, she was an assistant and guest lecturer in the History of Modern Architecture at FAUP. She is co-founder of the publisher *Circo de Ideias* (2008/2018) and, in 2019, curator of *Open House Porto*. She regularly writes scientific articles, prefaces and critical essays on antique and contemporary architecture. She co-authors the books of the "Casas com nome" architecture collection. Currently, she is a researcher at esad—idea and a collaborator at CEAU-Faup, where she is co-IR of Siza Barroco project, funded by FCT.

Eleonora Fedi is an interior designer. With a degree from the Politecnico di Milano (2012) and a master's from ESAD Matosinhos (2015), she currently collaborates with esad—idea, *Research in Design and Art*, as a researcher and designer responsible for the exhibition projects included in the *Casa do Design Programme*. She has also been a member of the *Porto Design Biennale* team since the first edition, in 2019. Since 2021, she has been teaching *Culture of Living and Project* subjects in the Interior Design course at ESAD, Matosinhos. In her research, teaching and design practice, she explores the intersection and balance between moment and process by creating meaningful temporary spatial experiences and an urgent design awareness that seeks to understand materials and resources concerning their production processes.

## CONCLUSION

### THE POWER OF CONFLICTS: IS THERE A LESSON TO BE LEARNED?

At the end of 2022, when ICAMT, together with its Portuguese partners - the Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar Cultura, Espaço e Memória (CITCEM/UPorto) and the Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura e Urbanismo (CEAU/UPorto) - started defining what would have been the central theme of this successful Conference, the idea of exploring the conflict seemed to us at the same time an opportunity, but also a menace, as we, ICAMT, were seeking to explore in depth practical issues applied to the field of the Museum Techniques.

Choosing the backbone that guided our days together and preparing for the event implied solving conflicts at all levels. As also expected from the presentations, we saw all kinds of situations, such as conflict avoidance, conflict in action, or finally solved.

While for those in action, the lack of dialogue was evident, for the avoided or solved conflicts, confrontation at different levels played a pivotal role in the whole process. During our intense three-day Conference, more than the power of conflicts, what we indeed evinced from the presentations, case studies, and keynote speeches was the absolute necessity to engage, connect and talk. The hit point from each input we received from the participants and the audience was the essential demand to thrive on solving disputes through dialogue, hence the power of Conversation.

Museums are made by people, for the people. As the new museum definition approved at the 2022 ICOM General Conference in Prague reminds us, "...museums operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities...". This is possible only through Conversation between the parts.

We hope that reading this proceeding may have given "food" for future conversations between museum employees, curators, directors, and external stakeholders such as designers and architects. All sides are equally important when seeking the best solutions.

Dialogue is key. This is the lesson we hope to have offered at our Conference.

On behalf of the ICAMT board  
Danusa Castro  
Co-Chair of ICAMT





The organisation of the ICAMT 49th International Conference 2023 – “Undoing conflict in museums: materiality and meaning of museum architecture and exhibition design” was a success because of the hard-working and tide collaboration between three essential teams:

ICAMT Board: Eeva Kyllönen, Alessandra Labate Rosso, Nana Meparishvili, Marina Martin, Danusa Castro (from left to right)



Porto Team: Marta Rocha, Cláudia Garradas, Fabiana Diocuonzo, Laura Pinheiro, Manuel Furtado Mendes, Louise Palma, Alice Semedo, Elisa Noronha (from left to right)



Volunteers: Michelle Dona, Beatriz Figueirinha, Ana Paula Godoy, Ana Freire, Matilde Real, Daiane Silva, Gabriel Quinhões, Aline Albuquerque, Ana Pérez, Samara Duarte



