

**Mela** Books

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# “PLACING” EUROPE IN THE MUSEUM

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*People(s), places, identities*

edited by  
Christopher Whitehead,  
Rhiannon Mason, Susannah Eckersley,  
Katherine Lloyd

EUROPEAN



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edited by Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason,  
Susannah Eckersley and Katherine Lloyd

**MELA BOOKS 08 – RF01 MUSEUMS & IDENTITY IN HISTORY AND CONTEMPORANEITY**

Published by Politecnico di Milano

© March 2013, The Authors



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ISBN 978-88-95194-35-6



This Book ensued from the Research Project MeLa - European Museums in an Age of Migration funded within the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (SSH-2010-5.2.2) under Grant Agreement n° 266757.  
Project Officer: Louisa Anastopoulou



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
European Research Area



Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

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**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Zetalab — Milano

**LAYOUT**

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## “Placing” the City within its Museum

The relationship between heritage, people, and territory in the Italian tradition of civic museums

→ FRANCESCA LANZ

Places, especially the ones that early nurtured us, are deeply impressed upon us. When we lose those spaces, we lose an essential part of our self and our stories.

(Archibald 2004, 1)

→ A MUSEUM ABOUT AND IN THE CITY

Growing attention is being focused on city museums. This is attested both by the fact that they have been the subject of discussion from the nineties onwards, as well as by the significant economic investments recently made on them across Europe. Such interest is not only social, theoretical or speculative, but, as David Flaming pointed out, it is also a response to new cumulative demands, which are “part ideological, part economic, driven by perceived social and educational needs, and by cultural competitiveness between cities, looking to diversify their post-industrial role towards European tourist currencies” (1996, 132). It can also be related with the re-emergence of local and regional identities in a context of political re-definition and, at the same time, it can be related to the current fast and deep changes that many European cities are facing. It is widely recognised that the on-going political, economic, and cultural process of the creation of the European Union and the new opportunities offered by globalisation are transcending the political-economic sphere, to the extent that they influence almost every aspect of human activities and life. Extensive research studies, as well as statistical surveys, have already pointed out how cities are deeply affected by such changes, both from a social standpoint and from a physical and architectonic point of view (Sassen 1991; Martinotti 1993; Sassen 1994; Amendola 1997; Rykwert 2000; UN|DESA 2012). In spite of the fact that places were expected to lose importance in

the global network society, and several authors foretold the very end of the city, discourses on places and their role in shaping identity are currently increasing and developing, while cities seem to be experiencing a “rebirth”, and are repositioning themselves in the political arena. Being the destination of material and immaterial fluxes of objects, individuals, information, and business, today many “European capitals”—which can be national capitals, historical centres, as well as new cultural, political or economic key points—are experiencing a renewed cultural and economic impetus that is characterising their development, offering important opportunities, but also furthering significant changes.

City museums, as institutions historically in charge of representing the city, recording its transformations and conserving its memory and history, are reacting to this context. In the last ten years, several new or renewed city museums around Europe have been opened, and many others are dealing with physical and conceptual renovations and cultural relocation processes. Thus the role, structures, and purposes of the city museum are being thoroughly reconsidered. City museums are nowadays reconsidering their approaches, widening their activities, reorganising their collections, rethinking their narrative and communication strategies, and redesigning their exhibitions, looking for new ways to implement and fulfil their mission—often revised—promoting the idea that their role should go beyond the mere collection and display of the city history, towards a more active involvement in society and in the current urban issues (Jones, MacDonad, and McIntyre 2008; Kistemaker 2006; UNESCO 2006; UNESCO 1995; Jhonson 1993).

As many authors have already pointed out, it is very difficult to provide a unique definition of a “city museum” (Postula 2012). Indeed, it is usually identified with historical museums, but today this is often not the case for many new and renewed city museums, which deal more and more with the city’s present and future. Actually, a city museum is neither defined by the type of objects it conserves, which can be very heterogeneous, nor by the ownership of its collections or by its funding sources, which can be national, municipal as well as private. Several effective definitions have been given (e.g. Bertuglia and Montaldo 2003; Galla 1995); however, for the purpose of this paper, the most telling definition of a city museum is probably the one given by Steven Thielemans in 2000, and quoted by Renée Kistemaker in her introduction to the fourth symposium on city museum in 2005: “a city museum is a museum about and in the city. It is connected with both the strategy of the city and with its citizens” (Kistemaker 2006, 5).

The birth of city museums in Europe can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the biggest cities—which were involved in the urban, economic and social transformations of the time—tried to preserve documents, stories, and memories from the past; they were usually hosted in ancient and representative buildings of the city, they were conceived as repositories of civic treasures and places where the city history should be conserved, and their collections were meant to represent the city, tell its story and celebrate its glorious past. The



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relationship between the city museum and the city itself is the basis of the birth of the city museum and today it still lies at the very core of its *raison d'être*. This relationship is, however, being brought into question by the current city's changes, the on-going transformation that city museums are going through, and the resulting shift of their focus from urban history to social history and the contemporary city.

In a context where people, objects, knowledge and information move at increasingly high rates, cities—which have never been still—are today a fulcrum of a material and immaterial accelerated mobility, and are thus experiencing ever-faster changes: the on-going phenomena of mobility and migrations are reconstituting cultural diversity inside European cities and reconfiguring their identity, which is strictly related with the identities of a variety of subjects that live in the city, with their intellectual and cultural differences. At the same time, the current city's development results in quick urban changes, the dismantlement of large industrial areas, the construction of new areas and the social and physical transformation of many neighbourhoods. Thus, the city that the museum should represent is no more monolithic and unitary, but is full of contradictions, erratic, and its form and structure transform quickly. Furthermore, since city museums today do not only focus on the city's past and history anymore, but also, and sometimes primarily, on its present and future, the relationship between the city and the museum is no longer mediated by history, but is now direct: the city is at the same time the cultural and physical context of the museum, it is the subject of the actual museum but it also lives just outside the museum's own walls. Consequently, we should ask ourselves, which links, synergies, cross-references and mutual enrichments can be established? What should and could a visit to the museum add to the city's experience?

The relationship between the city and the museum needs to be rethought and redefined and new models and strategies have to be developed by city museums, to become more relevant for the city and its citizens, and eventually contribute to the city's social, political and economic development. Several outreach projects recently carried out by many city museums around Europe can be understood in this sense, as actions aimed at reconnecting people, places, and the museum within the city and in relation with city's history, present and future. New mobile technologies, ICT, educational programmes, and participative strategies are undoubtedly effective tools; temporary exhibitions dealing with specific contemporary city issues or difficult topics, and which may also be developed according to new curatorial practices aimed at involving urban communities, can produce important results, as well as the museum planning. My assumption is that some historical models of European local museums, on the ground of their long, inherent and original relationship with the local communities and places and their longstanding work in local identity building, could be implemented with remarkable aftermaths. Among these, there are some of the Italian museographical models for civic and city museums, which can offer interesting solutions, in particular with respect to the possibility to create a more articulated relationship between the museum and the city, in, within and beyond the museum itself.

→ THE ITALIAN CIVIC MUSEUM: A MUSEUM OF, ABOUT AND WITHIN PLACES

Civic museums today are very complex, fragmented and multifarious institutions, which are locally characterised and site specific. From a juridical point of view, Italian museums can be divided into state, civic, ecclesiastic, and private museums, according to the ownership of their collections and regardless of their topic, mission, and responsibility of their management. Civic museums, thus, are not necessarily minor local museums, and many major cities host civic museums which have a national relevance. The number of civic museums in Italy is very high. The data available is not updated or definite; however, to gain insight into the state of the art, it has been estimated that in Italy there are more than 4000 museums, 13% of which belong to the State, about 40% are civic, and about 1242 are ecclesiastic (Dell’Orso 2009; TCI 2009). Italian civic museums are also very heterogeneous. They are often multi-typological, since they may be picture galleries, archaeological museums, archives, or historical museums at the same time, and usually they are strictly connected with other local institutions, such as libraries or schools. Thanks to its peculiar structure, social and historical development, the Italian civic museum, as Andrea Emiliani pointed out, may be analysed as a document of the process of elaboration and transformation of the very concept of identity of a local community.

In the nineteenth century, several city museums arose in Italy; however, their development was slightly different than in other European countries, due to the particular Italian cultural and socio-political context of the time. In Italy city museums developed as part of the “civic museums” network; however a “civic museum” is not always necessarily a “city museum”, since its collections can have different origins, and thus it may not necessarily be strictly related with the city’s history and identity. Italian civic museums came into being in the eighteenth century and mainly spread in the nineteenth century, around the decades of the Unification of Italy: in this period, cities created these museums to strengthen the link with their local traditions and proudly affirm their specific identities, which were going to be absorbed into the new nation-state. It is widely recognised that the ratification of the laws that cancelled many religious orders, and the consequent devolution of their goods to the state and the municipalities, marked a very significant moment in the history of Italian civic museums. In particular, the laws enacted by the new kingdom of Italy in 1866 and 1867, granted a relevant number of paintings, sculptures, books, and other artistic and historical objects to civic and provincial museums and libraries. These laws caused one of the largest dispersions of Italian heritage, which was de-contextualised, sold—mainly outside the country—or ruined. On the other hand, they undoubtedly favoured the establishment of a peculiar bond between the local museums, which received part of these goods, and the surrounding cities and regions, where the heritage originated from. This worthwhile relationship made it possible to preserve and pass on a cultural heritage otherwise doomed to get lost, and marked the evolution of civic museums as institutions deeply rooted in the territory and implicated in local identity work. This particu-

lar relationship with the territory, the local history, the places' identities and the communities' memories, has been one of their main characteristics up to the present times (Emiliani 1985; Whitehead 1997; Di Valerio 1999; Visser Travaglini 2008; Dell'Orso 2009). In the years following the Italian Unification up to the Second World War, their collections were enriched by donations from private collectors and by several archaeological findings, provided both by the many major public works of the time, and by the specific surveys of those years. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, after a period of uncertainties and delays, the legal order in the field of cultural heritage and cultural policies definitively opted for a centralised system and this trend became even more marked during the Fascist period (Emiliani 1973; Jalla 2000). The ownership and the management of the museums' collections were kept divided; the museums were entrusted with a basically preservative role; they were meant as "stores" of cultural objects underplaying their role and the relationship with the people or the places they should refer to.

After the Second World War, most Italian civic museums that had been bombed out underwent a renewal and became the object of new attention. Many museums were restored by some of the major Italian architects of the time, such as BBPR, Ingazio Gardella, Carlo Scarpa and Franco Albini, in collaboration with enlightened directors, such as Caterina Mercenaro, Vittorio Viale and Licisco Magagnato. Their projects are still today masterpieces of Italian architecture, which marked the heyday of Italian museology and museography, and defined a new approach to the museum design (Polano 1998; Huber 1997). Most of these projects were targeted at restoring historical buildings so as to turn them into museums, looking for "equilibrium between monumental buildings and new functions, between historical collections and new publics" (Huber 1997, 9). All of them were characterised by a very peculiar approach to the restoration of the ancient buildings hosting the museums and the relationship between the exhibition system, the collection and the building itself: the project was meant as "interpretation" of both the art works and the historical spaces hosting the collections, which became themselves part of the collection. The visit to the museums was meant as an *itinerary*, a physical, intellectual and emotive voyage, designed in order to allow the visitors to personally read, interpret and fix the collection in their memory, and where all the elements of the project, the exhibition design, the collection and the building, with their own identity but acting as whole, participate in generating a "visual emotion".

In the same period, a process aimed at guaranteeing autonomy to civic museums, in order to allow them to autonomously develop cultural projects and services, started to take over, fostering new scenarios in the evolution of the very concept of civic museums. A new idea of civic museum started to emerge, according to which it should be a cultural institution whose responsibilities go beyond the conservation and passing on of local memories; several authors and museums' directors saw the civic museum (and, in particular, the city museum) as a socio-political subject which acts in concert with local administration in planning,

managing, and taking care of the development of the territory. Thanks to their widespread distribution on the territory, and their historical link with places and people’s identities and traditions, civic museums are seen as new powerful starting points for a new museum conception.

One of the most powerful theories was developed by Andrea Emiliani and Fredi Drugman. Their idea of “*Museo Diffuso*” is today still characterising many debates in the field of museum policies and strategies (Emiliani 1974a; 1974b; 1985; Drugman 1982; 2010). The *museo diffuso*, a term that is actually impossible to translate in English, is a kind of museum that aggregates different places and complementary functions. It is a system of cultural places that does not only include other museums, local cultural services and centres (such as libraries, schools, universities), but also archaeological and historical sites, witnesses of local material culture and industrial remains—which are considered the roots of this culture—and any kind of local cultural resource relevant for the cultural life and identity of the territory. This museum is not constrained by a geographical definition. It has a physical site, but, as a matter of fact, it is a “network-museum”, rather than a museums’ network: it reaches out beyond its own walls, involving and interacting with the whole territory and cultural institutions it refers to, broadening its cultural horizons and its collection by including people and places, local, historical, and material cultural, tangible and intangible heritages. It is a “civic project”, a museum with a social utility and cultural and political dimension whose aims are to: recreate a link between the museum’s collections and the contexts they originate from; rekindle memories of places and traditions by enhancing the rich cultural heritage of the territory it refers to; act both as a place of identity making and as a modern “access portal” to the territory, making the most of local resources, also in a touristic and promotional point of view, in a fruitful collaboration between public and private institutions. These were all very innovative and high-potential ideas but they mostly remained theoretical speculations for a long time, as the juridical process aimed at providing local museums the needed autonomy was never finalised.

#### → CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN CITY MUSEUMS: PEOPLE, PLACES, IDENTITIES

Recent years have seen the opening of new city museums, which somehow try to embody the theories and ideas so far elaborated within the Italian museographic and museologic tradition. Such museums develop a new city museum model type between tradition and innovation, between the Italian and historical model and new emerging needs. Two of them are presented below as examples able to trigger some more general reflections on the role of museography in the creation of a relationship between the museum and its context, aimed at conserving, collecting, restoring and somehow enlarging places’ and people’s identity.

The Santa Giulia museum, in the city of Brescia, is the result of a process which has lasted over thirty years and is still in progress (Stradiotti, Castagnara Codeluppi, and Mastropietro 2005; Tortelli and Frassoni



IMG. 01 — Aerial view of the complex of the Santa Giulia museum. © Archivio fotografico Civici musei d'Arte e Storia di Brescia.

2009; Lo Tennero 2008). The museum is hosted in an ancient monastery lying on some remains of the Roman period, built in 753 AD and expanded throughout the centuries, up to the sixteenth century. After the time of the Napoleonic laws, which established that ecclesiastical goods had to be devolved to the State, the monastery was used as barracks, an army storage, a jail, a hospital, and, eventually, it was turned into the city's Museum of Natural Science. Consequently, the building itself is layered; it is a kind of historical palimpsest of the city history. In the sixties, some public works and related archaeological surveys in the area brought to light important archaeological remains. This was the beginning of the project for the city museum. Several successful excavations were organised, and the municipality came to the decision to make a museum of the whole area and entrusted Andrea Emiliani with the task of designing it. The plan for the museum was published in 1978: in this document Emiliani identified the creation of a city museum as the only and most effective tool to enhance this area, its treasures and historical meanings. Following his previous research activities and theories, he envisioned a museum aimed at recreating a link among the city, its history, places, and communities.

The realisation of the museum continued over the eighties and the nineties, and it involved the organisation of conferences, seminars, excavations, historical and archaeological research. In 1998 the first sections of the museum were inaugurated, and two main exhibitions were organised:



one on the history of the monastery, which included the visit of several rooms of the building that had been carefully restored, and the other one devoted to the history of the city, from prehistory to the eighteenth century. Between 2003 and 2004, an improvement project was carried out which included spaces for services, temporary exhibitions, conferences, and other events; on that occasion the museum enriched its roman section by opening a new area, which is the result of an exemplar work of restoration and musealisation of a Roman domus located on the grounds of the museum.

According to the so called "*progetto brixia*", the museum should spread in the city, involving other areas of the city centre and historical remains. The museographical project of the museum plays an important role, combining objects, museum spaces and city places in an organic way, enhancing and respecting them, though creating a single stirring itinerary, making the visit a real "emotional experience", in Albini's words. The project is by Giovanni Tortelli and Roberto Frassoni, who were appointed for the design of the exhibition inside the monastery, and then for the project of the new extension of the museum, which included the *domus* pavilion and the musealisation of the gardens (Horti). The structure of the pavilion for the *domus* was designed without intermediate pillars, in order to allow a whole perception of the original ancient domestic spaces; the display of the ancient floors and walls decorations in situ has the same objective. Moreover, the project of the pavilion is conceived as a serial structure, envisioning a possible extension of the museum to include new archaeological findings. The materials used (a local stone, traditionally used in the buildings of the city, and iron, which recalls the industrial tradition of the city), and the architectonic composition of the museum (with careful attention paid to the relationship between the interior and the exterior) clearly distinguish themselves from the remains, while, at the same time, are able to establish an architectonic relationship with the context and the city.

Another Italian city museum was inaugurated in 2012, namely, the Museum of the History of Bologna. It is actually a private museum, and the last step of a project started in 2003, called *Genus Bononiae*, which is run and managed by the Bank Foundation CARISBO. On the one hand, *Genus Bononiae* is based on the exploitation of the already working system of civic and cultural institutions of the city; on the other, it directly involves eight historical buildings, which have all their own historical and artistic value and which have been renovated and rehabilitated for public use and host a cultural centre. As described in the project's mission statement, "to better describe and understand the genus and stock of the Bolognese people from yesterday and today, *Genus Bononiae: Museums in the City* follows a path through the city and narrates its history, life, arts and dreams; it uses the streets of Bologna as corridors and the buildings and churches as rooms, blending into the existing institutional structure, and ensuring a full link with other museums, art galleries, as well as the other cultural, economic and social initiatives which animate the local community."

IMG. 02 — View of the monastery and the Domus Pavilion from the Horti. © Archivio fotografico Civici musei d'Arte e Storia di Brescia.

IMG. 03 — View of the interior of the Domus Pavilion, design by Giovanni Tortelli and Roberto Frassoni, 2003-2004. A system of gangways allows the view of the archeological findings; some of the original ceiling mosaics have been restored and displayed on site; a wide windows opens the gaze to the outside space of the Horti, a philological reconstruction of the ancient gardens and part of the open air museum's spaces. © Archivio fotografico Civici musei d'Arte e Storia di Brescia.

IMG. 04 — Map of the Genus Bononiae network. Courtesy of Genus Bononiae, Musei nella Città.



IMG. 05 — Palazzo Pepoli, Museo della Storia di Bologna, Section “Forma Urbis”. The rooms display a reconstruction of a portion of Bologna’s porch that characterize the city’s center, including old city shop signboards and part an original ancient Roman street. Backlit panels display the urban historical development of the city and its morphology. Photo by Paolo Righi, Courtesy of Genus Bononiae, Musei nella Città.

IMG. 06 — Palazzo Pepoli, Museo della Storia di Bologna, Section “Il Sacro e il Profano”. The exhibition apparatus fits in the existing spaces, detached from the walls and composed of self-bearing elements which include all the necessary technical facilities, including the electrical and lighting systems; they are stand-alone elements, custom designed for the museum by Mario Bellini and freely placed in the space according to a different geometrical and spatial grid from that of the building. The exhibition elements are based on different variations of the initial concept of a three-dimensional cage made up of a squared white glazed steel frame hosting the collection’s objects and the related information panels (designed by Italo Lupi using texts, drawings, images and other graphic communication tools). Photo by Francesco Radino, courtesy of Genus Bononiae, Musei nella Città.

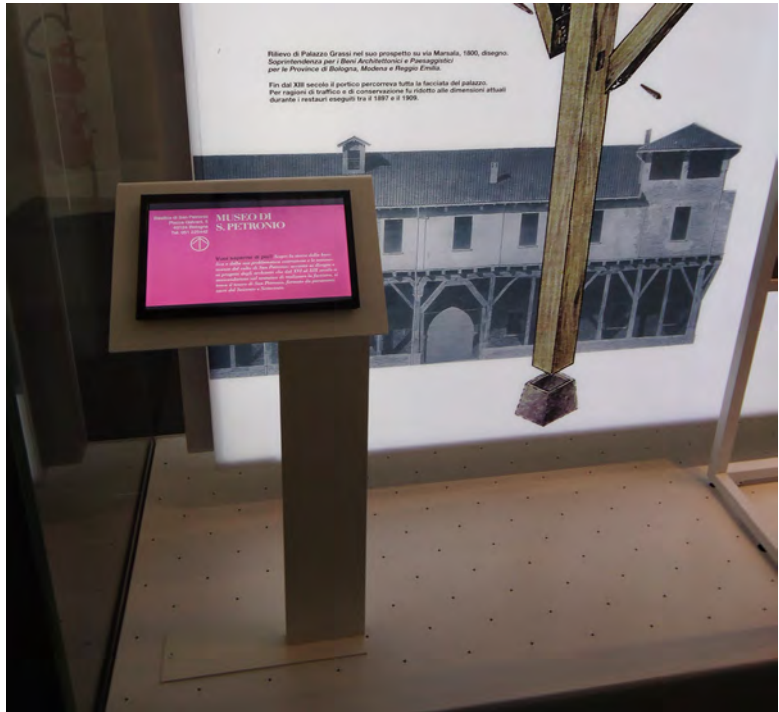
*Palazzo Pepoli*, the Museum of the History of the city, is the core of this project and it is conceived as the starting point for this cultural and artistic itinerary within the historical centre of the city. The medieval palace has been restored and turned into the city museum. The exhibition was designed and set up by architect Mario Bellini, the graphic design was by architect Italo Lupi, while the scientific project was entrusted to Massimo Negri. In 2003, Mario Bellini won the competition to realise the museum: his project aims at preserving and enhancing the ancient building; the rooms have not been modified, the decoration apparatus has been restored and is part of the exhibition itself, and the exhibition design fits in the existing spaces, respecting and differentiating itself from the historical context. The exhibition structures, in fact, are self-bearing elements which include all the necessary technical facilities, conceived as standalone elements, detached from the building walls, and freely disposed in the space, thus creating a sort of “room inside the room”.

The museum tells the story of the development of the city and its culture, from the Etruscans to the present day. It is organised chronologically, through key episodes, symbolic figures, and anecdotes. The narration is interrupted by some cross-cutting themes devoted to represent a particular feature of the city in a diachronic way. The contents are presented through a combination of objects, images and multimedia elements. Actually, the museum collection only includes objects which the Bank Foundation already owned, and therefore it is not particularly





IMG. 07 — Palazzo Pepoli, Museo della Storia di Bologna, Baloons and Video Points. Photo by Massimo Negri, courtesy of Genus Bononiae, Musei nella Città.



large. Consequently, the curator made the choice to set up what he defines a "narrative museum", focused on the story telling, rather than being collection oriented. Thus, the exhibition display and the graphic design play a fundamental communication role, filling the information gaps and contributing to building and conveying the messages. The museum uses different exhibition tools drawn on from theatrical languages and scenography to create metaphorical and allusive immersive spaces, and the exhibition design visualises and implements concepts and messages. At the same time, the museum's collection is virtually enlarged by including also the palace hosting the museum, the buildings of the *Genus Bononiae* network, and the city as a whole with its cultural resources and physical places. Particular attention has been paid to graphic communication, in order to create a link with the city, with widespread references to city places through the use of contemporary and historical cartographies, maps, and photographs. Moreover, cultural links with the city are established in various ways: through cross-references at the "video points" presenting the civic museums that are connected to a given theme; through "balloons", which highlight some temporary events that are relevant to the topics of the museum; through educational activities, which are carried out in cooperation with the other city museums; through loans of works and finds; and through scientific cooperation with the other museums and cultural entities of the city.

Despite their differences, both these projects aim to foster awareness of identity in the city's inhabitants, a sense of belonging to their city and territory, and the rediscovery of the city centre as a place of encounter and historical memory, contributing, at the same time, to the cultural, touristic and economic development of the city. They propose a musographical model able to knit together the museum, its collection and the whole city, bringing the museum beyond its own walls and the city inside them. They are, in fact, historical museums and represent the development of the *forma urbis* (the city shape). However, they are first and foremost the core of a wider widespread museum system, which includes preserves and enhances the objects of the collection, archaeological and historical areas, including the buildings of the museum, the whole urban territory and its cultural resources. The city is consequently enriched by new values and open to multiple meanings arising from the people's personal experience.

#### → CONCLUSIVE OBSERVATIONS

In the last ten years a growing number of city museums have been inaugurated all over Europe: new museums have been opened, and a considerable number of them have undergone thorough processes of renovation, in relation to the on-going social, political and economic changes occurring at European level and affecting many European cities. This situation marks an important turning point in the development of city museums: their mission and *raison d'être* is questioned and reconsidered; several new roles are envisioned for them, starting with their historical role and moving beyond it. Among their new tasks, on the one hand they

are conceived as “urban marketing tools” for city promotion, acting as a portal for city communication, often tourist oriented and occasionally implemented also in relation with city branding and local polices (Monlieu 2012; Tisdale 2012). On the other hand, they are required to play a social role, being more involved in urban and social issues, addressing difficult topics, and contributing to foster the dialogue between the different ethnic, religious, social, and generational groups of the city (Flaming 1996; Lohman 2006; Kistemaker 2006).

The on-going transformations that many cities are facing undoubtedly offer important development opportunities. However, these same dynamics also seem to scatter local communities, blur local identities, create and multiply the “invisible boundaries” dividing our cities (UN-HABITAT 2008), while the global economy is making cities’ architecture progressively less various and more homogeneous, affecting the citizens’ sense of belonging and the overall urban quality of life. With no reference points, Rykwert states quoting Kevin Lynch, “a citizen cannot ‘read’, let alone ‘understand’ his home”, since they make the place legible, and “not only offer security but also heighten the potential depth and intensity of human experience” (2000, 133). Moreover, many authors assert that the current changes occurring in cities, which are faster than ever before, are also inducing the rise of a sense of disorientation and, consequently, a feeling of insecurity, alienation and homologation (Boeri 2012). At the same time, as Doreen Massey acknowledged, “if it is now recognised that people have multiple identities, then the same point can be made in relation to places” which can be conceptualised “in terms of the social relations which they tie together”, as “processes” themselves (1991, 28). Hence, while fast and important changes are challenging the identity of cities and making it difficult to create and nourish the relationship between the city and its inhabitants, places can be an important resource. Indeed, places can represent a starting point to build a new common ground, and city museums, in the light of their recent developments and their origins as agents deeply rooted in the city, can act as a nexus and as identity building agents, by restoring a sense of place. Mason, Whitehead and Graham have already highlighted the role of places and places’ representation in museums in shaping people’s personal identity and providing a setting for collective memory (2012).

City places are the very roots of a city museum, and might become a powerful starting point for the museum itself to help people rediscover them, the history of those who lived and live them, the events which took and take place there, and the memories embedded in every place of the city. This means giving a sense to places, in order to better understand them, and thus better live them, and also deciding whether to preserve or change them, showing respect to history, which is not mere subordination, but an awareness that is the precondition for conscious choices on the future of the city. The museum’s activities and policies, as well as its architecture, exhibition design and communication tools, can contribute to furthering the rediscovery of the city and its places, and to fostering the raise of a sense of belonging in the city’s inhabitants. It

can contribute to the development of the city from many points of view, and, at the same time, it poses the basis for the promotion of an idea of "citizenship" that is not based on political, ethnic or birth origin, but on urban connoisseurship and on a sense of belonging to the city and its communities. Several models and strategies can be explored and developed in this sense; the Italian model is one of them, a large-scale effort museographical project that discloses the crucial importance of the connections existing between the museum's design and the museum's contents and its capability to enhance city places and establish relationships that go beyond prefixed scopes.

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# EUROPE

# MEETS THE WORLD

## AN EXHIBITION ABOUT EUROPE AND THE SURROUNDING WORLD THROUGH 2500 YEARS

The story is told in nine large rooms, each divided into two areas: Europe and the World. In each room, historic objects stand face to face and tell of conflicts and mutual influences through history.

Some selected exhibits are linked to a topical narrative. This is shown as a projection on the walls of the room when you activate it. You will also see QR-tags which will ask you questions via your smart phone.

The exhibition was produced through broad collaboration and includes exhibits from all the National Museum's many collections.

We hope you enjoy it!



Are the French arrogant? Should EU cooperation be based on a single religion? Is a home a basic human right? Use your smartphone to take part in our opinion poll on five fundamental questions. You can also borrow an iPod touch at the Information Desk. There is free WiFi at the museum, but to take part you need a QR-scanner installed on your smartphone. Download one free via App Store or Android Play. Scan the blue QR-codes and let us know what you think!

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Christopher Whitehead is Professor of Museology and a member of the University's Cultural Affairs Steering Group and the Great North Museum's Board. His research activities focus on both historical and contemporary museology. He has published extensively in the field of art museum history, with particular emphases on architecture, display and knowledge construction. His second major strand of activity relates to education and interpretation practices in art museums and galleries, and includes considerable government-funded and policy-relevant research. In the context of musicological study he has strong interests in learning theory, social constructionism, theories of representation, cartography and disciplinarity. He is the author of the following books: *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Ashgate 2005), *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines* (Bloomsbury/Duckworth Academic 2009) and *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries* (Routledge 2012).

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Susannah Eckersley is a Lecturer in Museum, Gallery, and Heritage Studies and Research Associate on the MeLA project. Susannah's PhD examined new museum building projects in the UK and Germany, focussing on the relationships between and influences of the key figures involved (museum directors, architects and local/regional government officials) against the context of the different historical developments of museums, cultural policy priorities and management styles in each country. Susannah's teaching combines these interests and her wider interest in issues of representing difficult histories (in particular in Germany). She is currently developing a new research project examining the representations of forced migration in museums, focussing in particular on the post World War II expulsions of Germans from east of the Oder-Neisse line (the post-war border between Germany and Poland).

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## Illustration Credits

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## MeLa\* - European Museums in an age of migrations

### **Research Fields:**

#### **RF01: Museums & Identity in History and Contemporaneity**

examines the historical and contemporary relationships between museums, places and identities in Europe and the effects of migrations on museum practices.

#### **RF02: Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernity and Museum Practices**

transforms the question of memory into an unfolding cultural and historical problematic, in order to promote new critical and practical perspectives.

#### **RF03: Network of Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions**

investigates coordination strategies between museums, libraries and public cultural institutions in relation to European cultural and scientific heritage, migration and integration.

#### **RF04: Curatorial and Artistic Research**

explores the work of artists and curators on and with issues of migration, as well as the role of museums and galleries exhibiting this work and disseminating knowledge.

#### **RF05: Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions**

investigates and experiments innovative communication tools, ICT potentialities, user centred approaches, and the role of architecture and design for the contemporary museum.

#### **RF06: Envisioning 21st Century Museums**

fosters theoretical, methodological and operative contributions to the interpretation of diversities and commonalities within European cultural heritage, and proposes enhanced practices for the mission and design of museums in the contemporary multicultural society.

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## “PLACING” EUROPE IN THE MUSEUM

PEOPLE(S), PLACES, IDENTITIES

This book represents the proceedings of the international conference “Placing” Europe in the Museum: people(s), places, identities, held at Newcastle University in September 2012. This was the first in a series of events intended to complement and inform research within the context of the EC-funded project *MeLa-European Museums in an Age of Migrations*. The papers relate to Research Field 1 of the MeLa project. This Research Field focuses on Museums and Identity in History and today, and will develop policy-relevant arguments concerning the cultural significance of place within museum representations for questions of contemporary European identities and notions of citizenship.

*With contributions by: Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, Tomasz Maślanka, Michał Łuczewski, Christine Cadot, Roxana Adina Huma, Elisabeth Tietmeyer, Barış Ülker, Kylea Little, Francesca Lanz, Michelle Moore, Sonja Kmec.*

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ICCHS, Newcastle University.

**COVER IMAGE** — The National Museum of Denmark. Photo by Christopher Whitehead, 2012.

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MeLa-European Museums in an age of migrations



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ISBN 978-88-95194-35-6