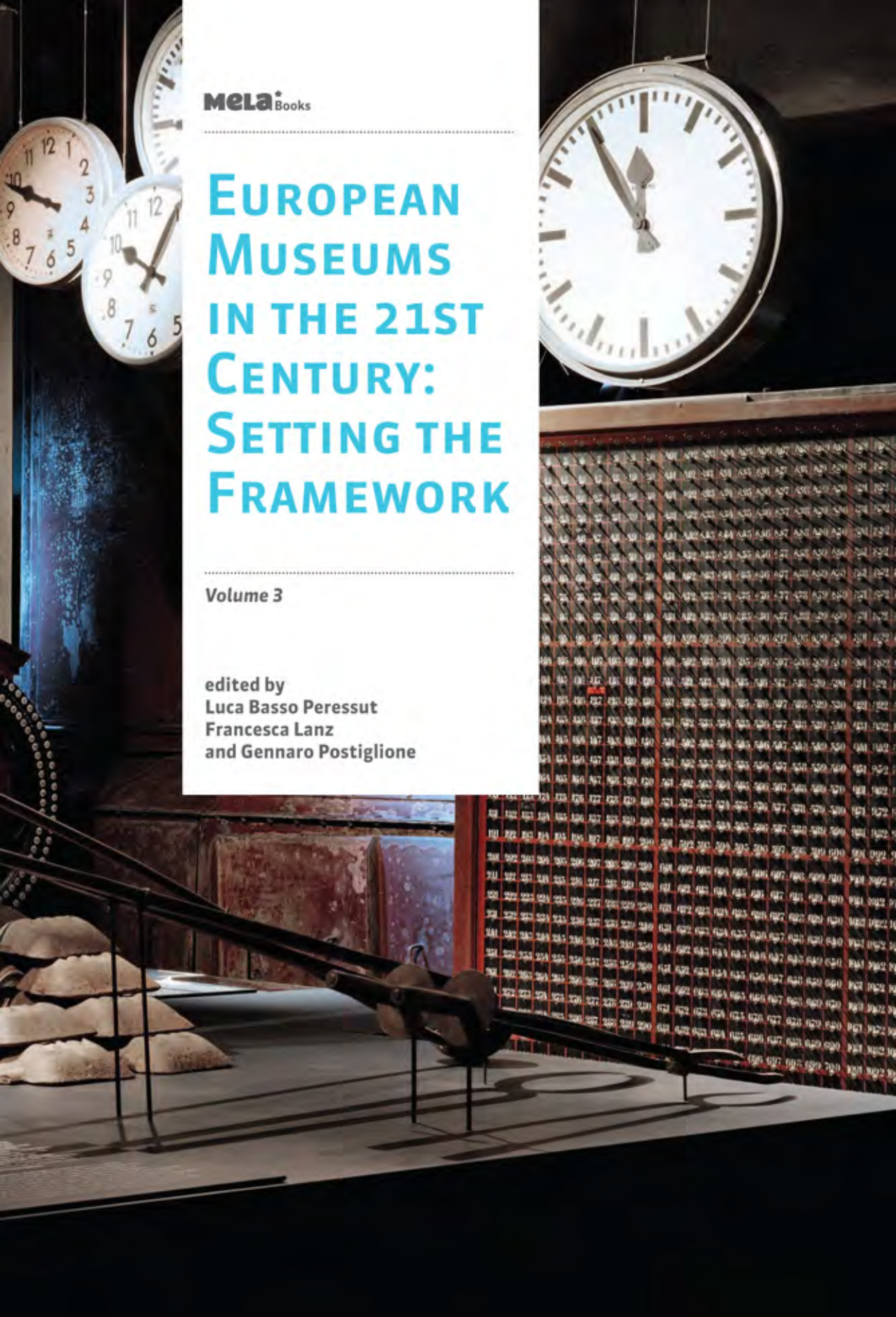


Mela Books

EUROPEAN MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK

Volume 3

edited by
Luca Basso Peressut
Francesca Lanz
and **Gennaro Postiglione**



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Vol. 3

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Acknowledgments

These books grew out of the work of the Research Field 6 “Envisioning 21st Century Museums,” led by Luca Basso Peressut and Gennaro Postiglione, Politecnico di Milano, within the European project MeLa—*European Museums in an age of migrations*. MeLa is a four-year interdisciplinary research project funded in 2011 by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Programme (Seventh Framework Programme). Adopting the notion of “migration” as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, MeLa reflects on the role of museums and heritage in the twenty-first century. The main objective of the MeLa project is to define innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of the contemporary processes of globalization, mobility and migration. As people, objects, knowledge and information move at increasingly high rates, a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity is needed to facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion. MeLa aims at empowering museums spaces, practices and policies with the task of building this identity. MeLa involves nine European partners—universities, museums, research institutes and a company—who will lead six Research Fields (RF) with a collaborative approach, and this book is meant to report about the preliminary findings of the first research phases.

The editors would like to thank all the scholars who enriched this book with their suggestions and contributions as well as all the museums and their staff, curators, directors, designer and architects who kindly provided information, images and drawings supporting our investigations. Attention goes to the English editors and translators, and to Elena Montanari, Cristina Colombo and the staff from POLIMI, who essentially contributed with their help to the editing of this book.

Introduction

European Museums: Mapping an Ongoing Change

The MeLa Project, funded in march 2011 by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme (Social Science and Humanities) is a four years long reserch project, which aims to investigate the effects of contemporary phenomena such as globalisation, demographic movement, transformation of migration patterns, increased mobility of people, as well as of objects, ideas and knowledge on the form, organisation, mission and status of museums, and to explore the likely potential role of museums in the construction of an inclusive European identity by facilitating mutual understanding and social cohesion.

Adopting the notion of “migration” as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, MeLa reflects on the role of museums and heritage in Europe in the 21st century. The project aims to investigate how, and to what extent, changes in population flows and demography, the impact of new media, the consequent layerisation, complexification and fragmentation of societies and identities and, perhaps more importantly, the recognition of the central focus of such changes to the human experience of life and society in modernity, do, could and should, affect European museums. Focusing on the transformation of museums, seen as cultural spaces and processes as well as physical places, the main objective of the MeLa project is to identify innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges posed by what the project defines as “an age of migrations”—an age characterised by intensive migration flows; accelerated mobility and fluid circulation of information, cultures, ideas and goods; the political, economic and cultural process of creation and consolidation of the European Union, and the consequent high degree of cultural encounters and cross-fertilisation.

The project’s Research Field 6, *Envisioning 21st Century Museums*—which is developed in parallel to and in consultation with the other five project research areas—is aimed at pinpointing innovative models, practices and tools to further the role of European museums in promoting new democratic and inclusive forms of citizenship, contributing to foster dialogue between the different ethnic, religious, social and generational groups which characterise our societies, and furthering awareness and education among new citizens and young generations.

While the investigation and the consideration of the role of contemporary museums and heritage has nowadays become a relevant component of the European agenda and lively debate on the subject is gaining prominence, nurtured also by several research projects and academic studies, museums themselves are questioning their *raison d’être* and roles, and undergoing a process of deep transformation of their missions, strategies, practices, spaces and exhibitions.

The present books collect the work of MeLa Research Field 6, *Envisioning 21st Century Museums*, and are meant to illustrate the preliminary results of its earlier investigations aimed at mapping and exploring such a transformation process and its features, particularly in terms of architecture renewal, museography and exhibition settings. The first phase of this research field thus focused on the possibility of mapping current trends in contemporary European museums in order to set up an overall picture of the state of the art of museum development in relation with the above-mentioned issues and questions. Its activity has been aimed at defining a general framework for the development of subsequent research phases, that are the identification of strategies and practices to support a renewed and increased role for museums, and the revision of their contribution in-building a democratic inclusive European citizenship through practicable and effective intervention by EU policy-makers and the institutions working in cultural and educational fields. This research has been investigating different categories of museums, individuated as those which better represent the current status of European museums, including: national history museums, ethnographic museums and museums of cultures, migration museums, city museums, local museums, and war museums. Because of the relevance of some museographical practices in the representation of the evolution of contemporary museums, the research activity has been extended to the transversal topic of temporary exhibition design.

Due to the large quantity of gathered materials, the publication has been divided into three volumes, each of which is organised into sections curated by a MeLa reseracher including a piece by the MeLa researchers involved in the investigation, contributions from scholars and museum practitioners, interviews and the presentation of significant examples of museums which are new, have been renewed or are under renovation. Particular attention has been paid to their architectural and exhibition design, which is intended as concretisation of innovative and sometimes highly experimental ideas of what we define as “new museography,” new models of representation and communication of knowledge.

The first volume opens with an overview on the evolution of contemporary national history museums, analysing how globalisation, migration phenomena and their effects have challenged these places of stabilisation, where identities are formed and displayed, and their transformation fostered into inclusive arenas of multiculturalism. By considering the representation of national identity as a political act in the sense outlined by political theorist Chantal Mouffe—acknowledging the aim of democracy in a pluralistic condition as the possibility of transforming antagonism into agonism, and creating unity in a context of conflict and diversity, as explained in the complementary text—Clelia Pozzi assumes the so-called “agonistic pluralism model,” which Mouffe had previously coupled with art museums, and applies it to national history museums. Her investigation of these institutions as “Agonistic Spaces” explores and exemplifies the museological, museographical and architectural translation of this model, illustrating the modalities in which migration and its agonistic effects may enter the rationale of these museums, a category which, more than others, seems to have been subjugated by coercive interpretations of states and regimes and, moreover, she redefines their role, strategies and spaces from within.

The review of the role of museums as places for the presentation, stabilisation and construction of identities is also crucial in ethnographic museums, which have been profoundly challenged by the mutation of the contemporary political, social and cultural context. The beginning of the 21st century represents a turning point for the role, objective and strategies associated with these institutions, reacting to the evolution of the colonial “west and the rest” model, as well as the effects of globalisation increasing cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism. Challenged by the claim for identity recognition and, at the same time, the demand for an egalitarian representation of cultural differences, the transformation of these institutions, aimed at displaying cultural pluralism, seems to aim at erasing colonial roots by turning the ethnographic approach into an aesthetic one, or by giving voice to minorities in the representation process. Through the comparative analysis of the different progress of new, re-established or refurbished institutions, Camilla Pagani and Mariella Brenna investigate the reasons, the nature and the extent of the current process of renovation, from institutional redefinitions to museological approaches, and categorisation of museums of world culture(s). The interpretation is also bolstered by interviews with some museum workers who are directly involved in this process. These include Maria Camilla de Palma, director of the Museo delle Culture del Mondo di Castello D’Albertis in Genoa, Klas Grinell, curator at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, and Vito Lattanzi, Director of the Educational Department at the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “L. Pigorini,” in Rome, and by the theory contribution of Nélia Dias, Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology at ISCTE-IUL, in Lisbon.

The evolving socio-cultural context also poses a challenge to museums of natural history. These museums have radically changed over recent decades in their relationship with what is at stake in society. Laurence Isnard,

Sarah Gamaire and Fabienne Galangau illustrate the transformations of these institutions, triggered by a powerful increase in the awareness of environmental issues along with their social consequences, the biodiversity crisis, and the development of new interdisciplinary research approaches. The piece explores how these phenomena have questioned the role of natural history museums and exhibitions as sources of knowledge and players in the conservation and validation of scientific and natural heritage, and investigates its evolution, benefiting from technological progress and communication techniques, as well as from growing knowledge on visitor expectations. By reporting the results of a recent survey developed by the authors, the text sheds light on the dynamism of these institutions and their commitment to renovation projects, especially those aimed at including diversity in cultural representations of nature. These considerations are supported by Giovanni Pinna, who questions the role of bureaucracy in the evolution of natural history museums, and of Judith Pargamin, director of the Musée d’Histoire Naturelle de Lille, who offers a highly citizen oriented reflection on the renovation project of the museum.

In the second volume, the investigation begins by focusing on more local facts, bonded and rooted in specific communities, their stories and identities. Anna Chiara Cimoli attempts to map out and analyse the rise of a huge constellation of migration museums and temporary exhibitions that focus on the relationship between migration and identity. By investigating museological strategies, museographic tools and exhibition design trends that characterise this museum typology, the piece investigates the specificities, implications, difficulties and risks of displaying present and past mobility. By investigating how museology and museography choices can reveal, explain or, in some cases, gloss over the cultural policies and the more general local, national or international political attitudes towards migration, the piece aims to verify whether these institutions act as history museums, or whether they are evolving into vehicles to orient, educate, and participate in political debate. This exploration is complemented by the positions of Joachim Baur, highlighting the ability of migration museums in building a master narrative as a choral epic and a socially unifying experience, promoting a sense of community, representing the diversification of cultural identities, and fostering societal integration.

The rise of migration flows discloses a profound transformation of the current socio-cultural context which museums purport to represent, cooperating with other phenomena to enhance the role of certain locations, especially cities. While updated demographic forecasts envision that in the next 30 years the growth of the world’s population will mostly be concentrated in urban areas, the new economic and cultural opportunities offered by globalisation, the fluid mobility occurring at the European and world-wide level, together with the ongoing political, economic and cultural processes of creation of the European Union, are deeply influencing the development of contemporary cities posing both new changes and challenges. It is widely believed that, within this complex scenario,

glocity museums, as institutions historically responsible for representing the city, recording its transformations and conserving its memory and history, could and should, contribute to these transformations in several ways. Francesca Lanz investigates how city museums are reacting to these stimuli, questioning themselves, rethinking their mission, acquiring new roles and experimenting with new tools and strategies. The piece aims to outline this transformation process in order to interpret it, define its features, identify commonalities, challenges and possible criticalities, and analyse the museographical aspects related to such changes. These considerations are endorsed by the contribution of Jack Lohman who, as former director of the Museum of London, argues for the role of city museums as the endogenous development of communities in their diversity and shaping of the global community. The interview with historian Marie-Paule Jungblut, former deputy-director of the Musée d'histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, adds reflections on the crucial role of international networking projects and the web for the advanced role of contemporary city museums, while different examples of a “new generation” of city museums presented by curators and directors, supports the reflections outlined in the opening piece.

City museums focus their mission on the past and present history of the described urban environments. Nevertheless, a large number of other museums drawing on the distinctive nature of specific locations are likely to play a significant role in the contemporary context.

The third volume focuses, on the one hand on very local museums and, on the other hand, on war museums and temporary exhibitions in national museums and it somehow comes full circle in this publication. As explained by Elena Montanari, the different institutions who aim to conserve, validate and “maternalise” the memory, heritage and culture related to specific places, are characterised by the employment of specific tools and strategies, which may turn out as particularly effective means to foster the role of museums as inclusive social agents in this “age of migrations.” Allowing for their status, forms and means, and variation according to their diverse backgrounds, management structures and conceptions of heritage and identity across different countries and cultures, local museums seem to share a common mission in preserving, interpreting, celebrating and presenting the visible symbols produced by human history in a specific environment. In addition, they also perpetuate the origins and sources of cultural heritage, opposing resistance to the effects of globalisation and the increased migrations of people, objects and knowledge, which include impoverishment and distortion of habitats and cultures, standardisation of space, homogenisation of material culture, dispersion of collective memory, etc. as well as assert continuity and stability through secure and rooted values, contrasting the disorientation of self-awareness and enabling societies to define and anchor their identity. The potential, challenges and risks currently pertaining to these institutions are further depicted through the words of Hugues De Varine, who outlines their

specificities, raises pivotal questions and proposes paradigmatic models and practices for their future.

Among the most significant national and local museums, the institutions ensuing from war memories and places are becoming crucial elements in heritage discourse. Luca Basso Peressut considers the many European museums that focus on war and its various representations, identifying two distinct situations. On the one hand, there are still in existence representative models typical of museums of weapons, of armies, and of military history, which were set up between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. On the other hand, he observes that in recent decades there has been an increase in museums that are committed to emphasising how Europe needs to critically reinterpret its past and the conflicts that have marked it, both in a tangible and an intangible way, overcoming the “divided memories” that have dramatically marked the populations of the European continent as an essential requirement to build the political and cultural identity of Europe. With their tools and representation devices, museums dedicated to the history of European wars are committed to the raising of such awareness through a “policy of memory” that, with no sacralisation or vulgarisation, must involve all cultural institutions, including those devoted to the education of younger generations. Thus, Basso Peressut suggests the role of war museums is crucial in the process of building and consolidating a shared European memory and identity. Moreover, war museums convey the transnational value of those events that are part of a common history that transcends any geographical border, contributing to a better understanding of the importance (and fragility) of peace and freedom, and of the establishment of the European Union based on mutual respect and on the rejection of war as a solution to controversies.

The final chapter by Marco Borsotti analyses the role of temporary exhibitions in the dynamics of approaches of museums to innovative topics. Temporary exhibitions can be identified as significant strategies in the promotion of new approaches to the portrayal of museums, as well as in the search for public interest in media, and in the possibility of generating income, image and prestige. Today, temporary exhibitions are also visible manifestations of an educational, informative or celebratory discourse, which is characteristic of the rapid changeover in the communication rhetoric of contemporary society. Furthermore, temporary exhibition models can also be expressed in dazzling experiences of cultural innovation, leaving permanent displays with the more accustomed role of keeping continuity with historical portrayals and settings. This can be considered a strategy for the renewal of the representational assets of museums.

The overall aim of this investigation was to detect how, and whether, European museums in their diverse range of interests are reacting to the topics and issues of our “age of migrations” and to the changing conditions of production and fruition of culture, memory and identity. As Appadurai already noted almost twenty years ago, it is increasingly evident

that globalisation is not the story of cultural homogenisation, and that contemporaneity is more and more characterised by a high degree of cultural encounters and cross-fertilisations. We are in agreement with the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch that the traditional description of cultures based on the ideas of ‘inner homogenisation’ and ‘outer separation’ is nowadays both descriptively and, in terms of legislation, inappropriate. Our analysis of new exhibition spaces and arrangements in museums of national and local relevance (a distinction which currently proves to be very blurred and perhaps to be overlooked), seems to suggest that the rise and the inclusion of new stances and approaches toward the role of museums and the narratives it puts on display are starting to foster not only a revision of the curatorial practices of museums and approaches but also of those consolidated exhibition design practices and museum organisation that reflected a premise of objectivity and reality and a traditional conception of identity as unique, homogeneous, and geo-politically defined, that is today brought into question by the shifting nature of contemporary cultural conditions in our contemporary “age of migrations.”

LBP, FL, GP

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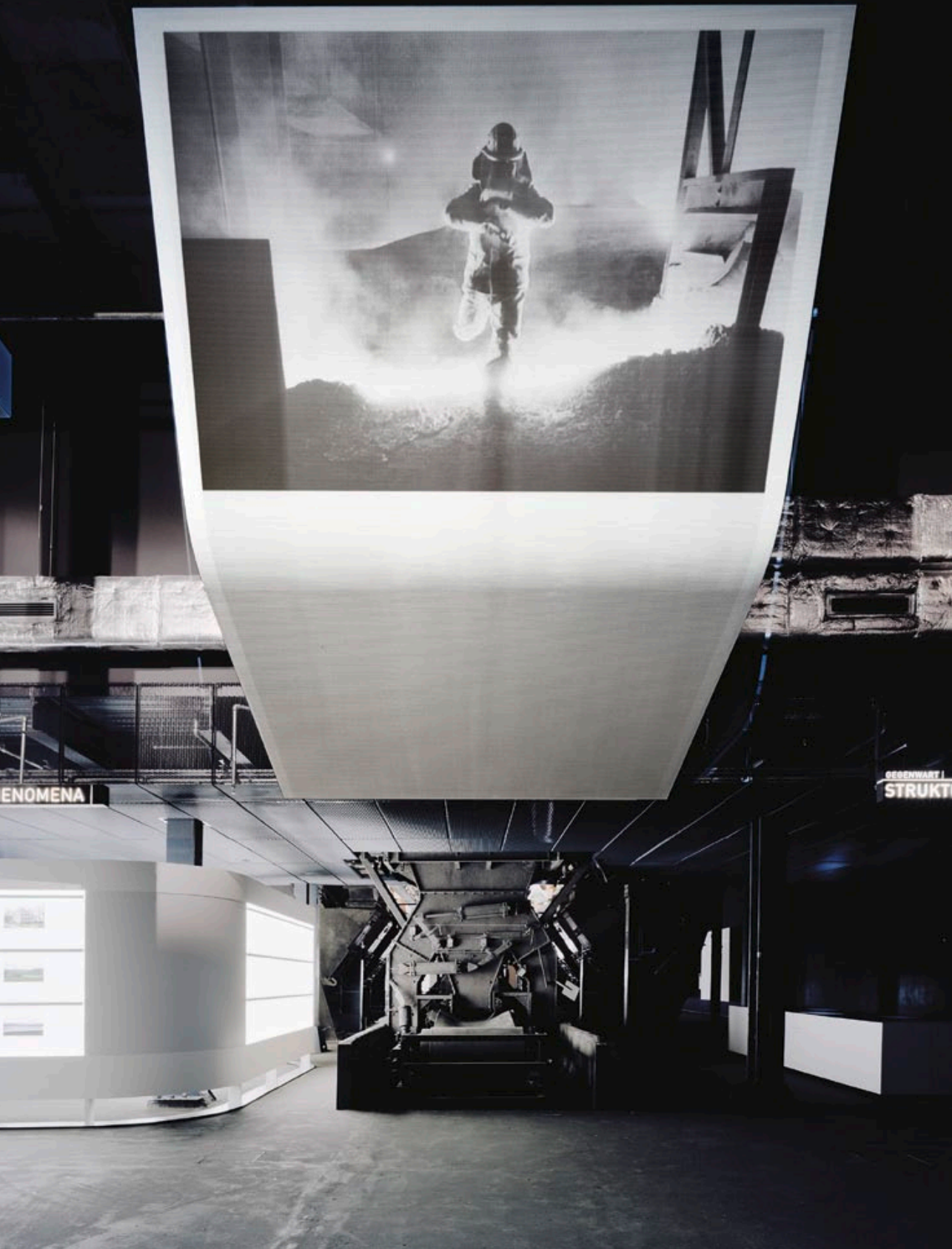
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Local Museums



Local Museums as Strategic Cultural Forces for 21st Century Society

→ ELENA MONTANARI

The expression *local*—from the Latin noun for place, *locus*—relates to what pertains to, or is characteristic of a particular place. The definition of local museums thus refers to the institutions developing “strong links to the conservation and celebration of the distinctiveness of a place” (Davis 2008, 411), that is, the material and immaterial elements constructing the special *genius loci* (Tuan 1977; Norberg-Schulz 1980) which may be conveyed by particular sites—open-air locations or buildings, ecosystems or archaeological areas, monuments or natural expanses—objects—testimonies to the history of a specific territory, as well as vehicles for the knowledge and information they contain—and manifestations—the referents of heritage that must be performed or produced in order to exist, such as oral traditions, artisanal skills or gastronomic customs. The museums which are conceived to present the local heritage—whose local character may be referred to the primary emphasis of narrations and collections, as well as to their main audience—are bearers of cultural prestige, places for community celebrations and contributors to the local economy. Above all, they are cultural forces aimed at identifying a local discourse and validating the identity system ensuing from the human interactions with a specific environment. Although they may not always avoid instrumentalisations and distortions, local museums have shaped, and have been shaped by, evolving community values and sense of history.

This area of investigation does not refer to a specific museum typology, rather it gathers together a wide range of institutions. They differ in their

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 6.01
— Ruhr Museum, Essen, Germany. © Ruhr Museum. Photo by Brigida Gonzalez.

The museum, presenting the natural and cultural history of the Ruhr area, is situated in the monumental coal-washing plant within the Zollverein coal mine, which has become a World Heritage Site and a repository for the memories of the region's transformation process. The industrial building was converted in 2010 (Ruhr celebratory year) by Rem Koolhaas, in cooperation with Böll and Krabel, who laid out the exhibition facilities by integrating the new installations with the pre-existing spaces and machinery, and valorising the plant itself as a main element of the local identity.

mission, statute, form and evolution,¹ and vary according to the diverse contexts, management structures and conceptions of heritage and identity across different countries and cultures, each one enhancing particular strategies and tools to throw light on the local cultural system and to preserve, interpret, illustrate and perpetuate the value of its specific signs or markers and their visible forms (Bellaigue 1999).

→ THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONS DRAWING ON THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF A PLACE: MULTIFACETED HISTORIES, COMMON PERSPECTIVES

The development of local museums was enhanced throughout the 20th century by the evolution of the concept of cultural heritage. From the end of the 19th century, environmental, cultural and economic paradigms started to expand this concept through the progressive liberation from aesthetic qualities and the integration of social values (UNESCO 1972; Choay 1992). The transformation started with the inclusion of “popular” objects among the exhibits of “high” museography, gradually proceeded to the incorporation of the physical features and linguistic traditions of place, and was finally fulfilled by the implementation of intangible values, mores and knowledge as fundamental contextual elements of the traditional museum heritage.

Whereas formerly it referred to a narrow selection of the most remarkable tokens of the past, it now refers to the sum total of all traces of the past as past. The notion of heritage, that is, has cast off its historical, material and monumental moorings and embarked on an age of memory, society and identity. (Nora 2011, X)

The pioneer institutions which triggered the exhibition of natural and popular heritage in Europe were *open-air museums*, scientifically planned and holistically conceived to present the cultural memory of a territory, to preserve the variety of the rural society menaced by industrialisation, and to reinforce patriotic spirit and local identities. The first experimentations, which took place within national or universal exhibitions (where natural, cultural and economic variety and diversity were exhibited in order to highlight the wealth of a country’s heritage), fostered the foundation of the first park-museum dedicated to rural architecture and traditional life-styles, Skansen (1891) in Sweden. (Imgs. 6.02, 6.03, 6.04) By triggering or mixing with other experiences in different countries, this outdoor institution was to have a profound impact² on ethnographic museography in Scandinavia

1 For example, in his presentation at the 2008 Conference in Faro (Varine 2009), Hugues de Varine resumed the typological diversity of local museums by highlighting the differences among these categories: small isolated museums (generated by the initiative of single persons or groups, mainly focused on the valorisation of rural, artisanal or industrial heritage), territory museums (usually poly-nuclear institutions, promoted by a local collectivity in order to enhance the heritage of a particular area), community museums (focused on the engagement of the population in an active management of heritage) and site museums (conceived as heritage instruments centred on touristic tasks, which can assume various forms: interpretation centres, heritage sites, etc.).

2 Skansen and the resulted living history and folk museums inspired a revival of national and community pride. They became lively community centres, cherished by old as well as young people, who actively contributed to their enactment and development. (Rentzhog 2007)



IMG. 6.02, 6.03, 6.04 — Skansen, Stockholm, Sweden. The Mora Farmstead, the Olde Shop and the pottery workshop. © Skansen. Photos by Marie Andersson (02-03) and Anna Yu (04).

Skansen is a large village conceived by Artur Hazelius (1891), housing the reconstruction of complex scenes of Scandinavian rural life and labour through the display of ethnographic material, craft demonstrations and authentic vernacular buildings—disassembled, then reassembled in situ, or completely rebuilt according to the original models.



and, later on, all over Europe—also profiting from the achievements of the nascent scientific ethnography, enhanced by the works of Bronisław Kasper Malinowski, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Gregory Bateson, etc.

In the 1920s, European local and national governments started to support the creation of several regional museums of popular art and traditions. During the inter-war period, though the increased interest in the reconstruction and celebration of traditional rural culture was mainly related to the promotion of specific social³ and political⁴ issues—the authoritarian regimes had been transforming museums into instruments of state policy (Wittlin 1949)—these experiences fostered the development of museological innovations and the raise of new institutions, which pivotal element was the *Heimatmuseum*. This “homeland” museum model was created in Germany to foster social cohesion by glorifying significant places or celebrating the memory of special events and traditions; it was characterised by a particular focus on the community, a holistic interpretation of the local history and heritage, and the enhancement of educational activity. Although instrumentalised by the Nazi regime,⁵ the dynamic character of the *Heimatmuseum* fostered an alternative and broader evolution of the static display of traditional museums.⁶

After World War II, the new political, economic and socio-cultural context favoured the foundation of several institutions—a great number of folk museums, open-air museums, living history farms (Bennet 1995,

IMG. 6.05 — Écomusée de la Communauté le Creusot Montceau, Le Creusot, France. “La Briqueterie”, the brickyard situated in Ciry-le-Noble. © CUCM, service écomusée, cliché D. Busseuil.

The ecomuseum was conceived to identify, study and promote the industrial heritage of the Saône-et-Loire region through the cooperation of the local communities. Coal mining, metallurgy, bricks and ceramic production have been enhanced through the preservation and presentation of the material and immaterial culture, as well as of the buildings and sites where the manufacture took place.



3 In the late 1920s, “the concept of culture was used to challenge traditional assumptions concerning the hierarchy of societies and, consequently, to promote a relativist understanding of humanity.” (Bénéton 1975, 137)

4 The institutions celebrating peasant life and artisans’ work were intended to “root” the political movements promoting nationalistic policies (e.g. in Germany, Italy, France, etc.).

5 The Nazi regime turned the *Heimatmuseum* into an instrument for propaganda, emphasising the nationalistic focus on particular social groups, chauvinistically reappraising the sense of belonging and transforming the importance of education into racial indoctrination.

6 “Before the war, Rivière hailed the *Heimatmuseum* as an innovative harbinger of the truly ‘modern’ museum” (Poulot 1989, 70). This dynamic institution, with the community as cornerstone of its philosophy (Davis 2011, 52), has been interpreted as another indicator of the advent of New Museology in the 1980s (Rivière et al. 1989, 58).

109)—and the development of new experiences, based on a gradually renovated conception of heritage (e.g. extended to the industrial and urban environments), on the expansion of museums’ interpretation of popular culture (i.e. the preservation and display of folkloric expressions was not limited to the picturesque elements, but started to include the ordinary, everyday customs, rituals and traditions of the non-élite social strata) and on the abandonment of idyllic representations of the rural world. In fact, the second half of the 20th century witnessed the development of new museum models, promoting an active approach to the preservation and fruition of local heritage. On the one hand, this phenomenon arose through the direct involvement of the audience in the display—which began in Denmark in the 1960s (and rapidly sprang up consistently elsewhere) through the diffusion of the atelier museums, where the public was expected to take part in living scenes, use objects and experiment with artisanal practices, so as to revive forgotten procedures, know-how and costumes. On the other hand, it encouraged a holistic interpretation of preservation practices, through the engagement of the community with heritage development. Apparently, this approach first appeared in some American initiatives—such as small open-air museums founded in the 1950s by immigrant Hazelius’ followers, fostering the involvement of the population in the conservation of local history; the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in the suburbs of Washington (1967); the Casa del Museo, a suburban extension of the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (1973)—but eventually bloomed in Europe with the development of the *ecomuseum* institution.

Through early paradigmatic experiences, as well as the theorisation work of George Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine, this new museum model first appeared in France as an instrument for the protection and appreciation of natural and industrial heritage, encouraging environmental enhancement through direct action, and thus proposing an empowered role for museums in linking people, their heritage expressions and places. As illustrated by UNESCO-ICOM “Round Table on the Development of the Role of Museums in the Contemporary World” (Santiago de Chile, 20–31 May 1972), which gave a formal imprimatur to the emerging concept of the “integrated museum” at the service of the community and the environment, these institutions focused their activities on such tasks as remembrance (inventory of surrounding cultural material and immaterial resources), understanding (promotion of a deeper awareness of the environment through research and education) and joint management and development of the locale through the relationship between the inhabitants and a team of scientists. Despite the differentiated forms and focus of the various ecomuseums—for example among those concentrating on the enhancement of the natural environment, usually situated inside or near a park or rural area, e.g. Ecomuseum of the Grande Lande⁷ (1975),

7 The Ecomuseum of the Grande Lande, dedicated to the rural landscape system of the Grande Lande, has often been described as a fusion of the Scandinavian open-space model and the American park house; nevertheless, it differs from these models in that it is concerned with the local community and the global perspective with which it uses the natural environment and the traditional habitat.

and those centred on social values and development, usually situated in urban contexts, e.g. Ecomuseum of the community of Le Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines (1972) (Img. 6.05)—in general, the critical innovation of these initiatives was the shift in the main focus from the collections to the community, moving their subject matter based on academic disciplines to an interdisciplinary view of community life and, in some cases, by promoting participation practices at different levels of the museums' work, through which “the public was capable of moving from the role of consumer to that of actor, and even author of the museum” (Rivière et al. 1989, 164–165). In the early 1970s, these museological innovations were consolidated and widespread, providing the theoretical bases for what was later formally to become the New Museology.

In the final decades of the 20th century, the enhancement of this new active and experimental museological approach led to a sizeable growth in local institutions,⁸ characterised by the emphasis on interdisciplinary and holistic practices. The regional governments of several European countries had, in fact, started to consider the use of heritage not only in cultural, but also economic and tourism strategies. These processes regarded the foundation of musealised sites, aimed at preserving, for example, the evidence of the social, economic and technological processes of industrialisation (e.g. coal mines), as well as the mutation of existent regional and local museums into development agents promoting community enhancements. (Imgs. 6.06, 6.07) They were intended as instruments to strengthen local identities, resources to foster endogenous initiatives and the dynamism of the territory, and possible solutions to problems resulting from deindustrialisation (population decline, high unemployment rates and perceived lack of social well-being). Though these experiences generally failed to achieve their original expected goals—because of their decentralised location, they were unable to save local economies and solve unemployment through touristic resources⁹—they operated as “catalysts for regeneration,” which would induce a sense of pride within the community.

Since the turn of the 21st century, the quantity and variety of the institutions dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the natural, architectural and cultural heritage related to specific spaces have progressively and significantly increased,¹⁰ turning protected sites and

8 The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the foundation of numerous ecomuseums (though this term has sometimes been used inaccurately for museological and/or economic reasons e.g. low-profile initiatives to exploit tourism, or commercial use by entrepreneurs), as well as the international adoption of goals comparable to those of the ecomuseum by a variety of other institutions. In the United Kingdom, for example, small museums of industrial and rural history proliferated, fuelled by a strong local commitment to preserving the historical and recent heritage, tangible exhibits, but also popular technologies, know-how and social history; these institutions never assumed the denomination of ecomuseum, though they shared the emphasis on an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the local area.

9 At the end of the 20th century, this goal was made more attainable by the development of political tactics related to the UNESCO World Heritage listing which, together with the increased mobility provided by new means of transport, triggered tourist flows and economic benefits for small centres (e.g. new jobs in tourism, rising property values and an increase in population).

10 In Italy, for example, the number of local-regional owned and managed museums grew from 1,781 in 1995, to 2,158 in 2006 (source: EGMUS).



IMG. 6.06, 6.07 — Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Shropshire, United Kingdom. The Iron Bridge and the Coalport China Museum. Courtesy of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

The early industry survives distributed along the River Severn, as furnaces, factories, workshops and the settlements of Coalbrookdale, Ironbridge, Jackfield and Coalport, since the 1960s have been activated to become one of the most important industrial heritage parks. Collectively known as the Ironbridge Gorge Museums, they are managed by an independent Trust established in 1967 to preserve and interpret the remains of the 18th century Industrial Revolution in the region. The aims of the institution include heritage preservation and valorisation of the local historical identity, which are developed through the active involvement of the visitors. The area is a World Heritage Site (since 1986) and an anchor point of the European Route of Industrial Heritage.

IMG. 6.08, 6.09, 6.10 — Bokrijk Open-air Museum, Genk, Belgium. Settings from “The Sixties” section. © Domain Bokrijk. Photos by Luc Daelemans.

Although most open-air museums are focused on rural culture and on the past history of a territory, throughout the 20th century these institutions gradually widened their scope and mission, on the one hand integrating urban culture—the opening of the first town museum in 1909, Den Gamle By (The Old Town) in Århus, Denmark, fostered the expansion of several rural culture museums through the construction of new urban settings and installations—and, on the other, expanding their collections and exhibitions to illustrate the transformation of costumes and mores in recent decades. In the last years, many open-air museums have implemented new sections, such as the Bokrijk Open-air Museum in Genk, which in 2012 inaugurated a new exhibition area including buildings, interiors reconstructions, objects and documentation illustrating the 1960s, offering an immersive experience of the domestic and public spaces of the period (such as the petrol station, the café and the hairdressing salon).



local museums into the most diffused museums in several European countries.¹¹ These institutions have consistently participated in reshaping the social uses of heritage, altering the traditional relationship with the community, and critically reforming and revitalising techniques of conservation, fruition, exhibition and communication. Furthermore, the various museum typologies have evolved into more complex and hybridised forms, thus developing differentiated tools and strategies to enhance their role in contemporary society.

The open-air museum model has expanded into more articulated and diversified patterns. While the first institutions were merely focused on rural buildings and traditions, their mission has gradually been extended to urban and industrial culture. Though their role as “guardians of history” is unaltered—despite the contextual differences, their task remains “the exhibition of obsolete buildings as monuments of a vanished way of life” (Ehrentraut 1996, 6)—and centred on the presentation of the past, in recent years several institutions have been promoting a gradual upgrade of their collections and activities, in order to include the evolution undergone to social mores, cultural traditions, natural and urban environments in the final decades of the century. (Imgs. 6.08, 6.09, 6.10)

After a temporary decline, following the revision of the nationalist policies which had originated them, some Heimatmuseums were revitalised and evolved into active community museums, promoting inclusive presentations of the history and customs of specific neighbourhoods and regions, by fostering the participation of different members of the community into the continuous production and revision of the local historical memory (Img. 6.11).

The French ecomuseum initiative has been established throughout the world and experienced in a variety of different forms. Through the combination and interaction with other models, such as the Italian “museo diffuso,”¹² it triggered several community-based experiences, defining a heterogeneous group of institutions, diverse in statute, mission, tasks and strategies,¹³ it enhanced innovative forms of preservation and development practices, and it fostered further involvement of the population into the heritage activities.

In recent decades, the different forms of heritage activation have had a crucial role in social, cultural and economic regeneration processes around the world, turning natural, industrial and historical sites into cultural tourist attractions, and fostering the bond of the communities to

11 For example, in 2006 the proportion between state-owned and local-regional owned museums in Italy was almost 1 to 5 (source: EGMUS).

12 For Fredi Drugman the “museo diffuso” recalls “the image of a widespread organization, a network of branched museum as a complex system of services primarily responsible for the conservation (...). A museum that can no longer run out the conservation-information cycle within the old walls of a few building types, but that establishes itself in the strongholds of the territory.” (Drugman 1982, 24)

13 The substantive form of the ecomuseum varies from one place to the next. It may show up as an interpretation centre, as an instrument for development, as a park or makeshift museum, as well as a centre for ethnographic conservation or for industrial heritage. The recurrent feature of these institutions is the focus of their mission, based on the possibility of serving their territory and community starting from the heritage resources which they manage in a participatory way (Varine 1985).

IMG. 6.11 —Museum Neukölln, Berlin, Germany. The permanent exhibition “99 x Neukölln,” illustrating the local identity through 99 original objects related to collective and personal memories. Photo by Friedhelm Hoffmann, courtesy of Museum Neukölln.

Having discarded their racist overtones, Heimatmuseums have undergone a revival in the reunited Germany (Davis 2011, 52), where they have become places for inter-cultural dialogue and active instruments for the inclusive development of local identities.

The Museum Neukölln, originally ensuing from the didactic work of Emil Fischer in 1897, and operating as the Neukölln Heimatmuseum since 1936 (when all the collection inventories and captions were refocused under the pressure of the National-Socialist regime), throughout the years has undergone several transformations (as well as relocations), culminating with a renovation on the basis of a modern conception of social memory, which started in 1985. The museum illustrates the history of the Berlin-Neukölln district with a particular focus on everyday culture, which is observed through a multi-cultural perspective strictly related to the variegated composition of the local community. It has now become a place of encounter and dialogue for the different groups living in the area, fostering integration and social cohesion.



places and to their special “cultural touchstones”—which, as defined by the Common Ground promotional leaflet (1996), are certain features of places, tangible and intangible, that make them meaningful to people and that are given special significance. This trend can be detected in the shift towards “contextual” approaches in the development of archaeological areas—archaeological sites, rather than history, have now become the focus of attention: for example, each park tent to have its own museum, thus avoiding the removal of the finds to other institutions and fostering the visit of the specific place (Imgs. 6.12, 6.13)—and, in general, through the outstanding augment in the musealisation of heritage sites. Also the range of the places which are valorised because they bear significant memories and/or historical signs and sedimentations has relevantly widened in recent years, with a particular emphasis on those which are recognised as “lieux de mémoire” (Nora 1989), and especially on those related to dissonant heritage (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1995) and the “archaeology of war”—trenches, fortifications, bunkers, shelters, concentration and extermination camps, cemeteries, memorials and monuments, remains of bombed buildings, and all the sites which recount the devastation of places, but also of cultures, sense of belonging and identities dispersed and shuttered by military events, that still mark cities and territories—which play an important part in the narration (and construction) of modern European history. (See Chapter 7)

This “epidemic” (Anico and Peralta 2009, 2) interest for heritage is also related to its potentialities as a form of objectifying identity—an effective material and symbolic support for unifying narratives of belonging, a resource for the representation of identities and a place for its performance. More than ever, heritage is a social and cultural arena. Its extended use—and abuse, through the manifest instrumentalizations of the past and its commodification—has contributed to discredit it, often emptying and banalising its role, as well as its relationship with a renovated context—characterised by augmented multiculturalism and multi-

ple levels of identities and affiliations: the raise of minorities and cultural particularities previously marginalized from dominant narratives have started challenging the unilinearity and universality of hegemonic versions of heritage. Nevertheless, these phenomena have fostered a renovation of its use and meaning. Today heritage is increasingly concerned with negotiation and multivocality, and with the need to express the diversity, ambivalence and fragmentation of identities which are present in the contemporary world, through a more comprehensive approach of the processes implicated in the public representation of the past and in the definition of collective references.

This attempt can be detected in the experimentation of a wide range of new museologic and museographic strategies and tools, which are developing according to the differentiated mission and statute of the diverse museum typologies.

The narration and the presentation of heritage sites, for example, is more and more often validated through the use of individual’s sense of place and identity—this is, the integration of individual experiences and stories that connect objects, sites and manifestations to the members of the local community, who share their personal memories to implement the cultural archive bearing witness to the place identity.

Several folklore museums and local ethnographic institutions, which have proliferated throughout Europe in these decades and evolved by adapting to different physical, political and cultural contexts, have started to renovate their approach to the narration of the local identity through the development of a more active involvement of the communities, which are increasingly involved in identifying the cultural elements conveying prestige and distinctiveness, and thus in refocusing of contents and tools (Img. 6.14), as well as through the experimentation of new installation strategies, aimed at fostering further and multiple readings of the collections. For example, the construction of innovative interrelations between different elements, such as ordinary objects (domestic or working traditional tools related to the local material culture) and works of art, is intended to evoke unexpected interpretations and connections of meaning which may foster inter-cultural readings of the exhibitions. (Img. 6.15) These practices are often aimed to explore and highlight the effects of the contacts, exchanges and relationships among the different cultures which contributed to the formation of the local culture. The emphasis on the global stances which participated in the definition of the identity of a territory in history and contemporaneity is also one of the main features concerning the renovation of regional museums, that are currently developing new models and frameworks characterised by improved involvement of the public, enhanced educative offers, experimental network programmes and innovative grounded relationships with the territory, turning them into more and more crucial cultural catalysts.

The deleterious consequences of the current economic crisis, which is having considerable effects on the life of small institutions, appear now

to threaten the resources available¹⁴ but not the widespread interest in local museums and heritage activations. Through a growing significance of local and regional affiliations in an increasingly globalized world, they are acknowledged as instruments to foster social cohesion and support the definition of different perceptions of local identities. As living archives of tangible and intangible heritage, cultural forces and strongholds of identity roots anchored to the values of place, enhancing the growing attitude towards the “materialization of memory” (Nora 1989), they have been identified as potential instruments for contributing to the contemporary socio-cultural context, and their structure—site-specific, differentiated, diffused and networked—as a crucial model for the museums of the future (Edwards and Bourbeau 2008).

→ THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL ROLES OF CONTEMPORARY LOCAL MUSEUMS:
RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF THIS “AGE OF MIGRATIONS”

The period in-between 20th and 21st century is being depicted in different ways. It has been defined as “an age of migrations” (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012), because of the augmentation and potentiation of mobility of individuals and groups, transfer of materials and goods, movement of information, ideas and knowledge, encounter and integration of different cultural systems. It is a time of global acceleration (Glieck 1999), “of bewildering change, unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies (...) and the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial and dynastic bonds” (Said 2000, 179). It has also been called “an era of disparition” (Virilio 1996), due to the effects of the unrelenting social-political-economic forces called globalisation (Harvey 1989; Lowenthal 1996), which have irreversibly modified and/or vanished common markers (Appadurai 1996). These mutations appear in the modified relationships between people and places; the contracted perception of time, worldly and instantaneous; the standardisation of space, whose distinctive characters are weakened by the globally recurrence of materials, figures and forms; the homogenisation of material culture, produced by the acceleration of industrial production and the world-wide diffusion of objects and goods. The cooperation of these complex phenomena has triggered dispersion of collective memory, dilution of cultural belonging and shifting of identities. While “migration (forced or selected), diaspora and transience are now commonplace (at least in the developed world)” (Schofield and Szymanski 2011, 3), the tokens and values that used to root self-awareness are questioned and blurred.

So, if our familiar markers disappear, periodised time, memory, diverse landscape, near-by relationships, real communication, unique objects, made redundant by the new technologies, reduced to standardised production or

14 The data provided by EGMUS illustrate that the number of local institutions had significantly increased by the end of the 20th century—also following “the so-called museological boom of the 1970s and 1980s” (Poulot 1994, 66). In recent years this trend has started to decrease, though it seems to be related to the general contraction caused by the current economic crisis, which is highly affecting the cultural sector.



IMG. 6.12, 6.13 — Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina, Italy. Photos by Peppe64.

The musealisation of archaeological areas can play an important role in the call for new forms of interpretation of the past and collective representation—e.g. by altering the notions of time and space, and fostering the disclosure of cross-cultural references—as well as in the definition of new uses and meanings of heritage sites. In particular, through the current raise of interest for a “contextual” approach, they contribute to valorise the importance of identity places and materialisation of memory.

This special attention can be read in the Archaeological Park pertaining Villa del Casale in Piazza Armerina, a Roman villa renowned for its outstanding decorative features and mosaic pavements, widely celebrated as a result of an interesting merging of Roman and Northern African artistic cultures. The archaeological investigation of the area started at the beginning of the 19th century but actually culminated with the 1950s excavations, which started a sequence of operations aimed at consolidating, preserving and allowing its fruition. The musealisation of the site was completed by the work of architect Franco Minissi, who designed the walkways and a special laminated-plastic structure covering the remains (1957). Despite this solution did not foster optimal conservation (and is currently under renovation), the innovative approach by Minissi allowed the conservation in situ of the whole heritage, including the mosaics, thus avoided the removal to a museum and promoted the valorisation of the site.

IMG. 6.14 — Museu Marítimo de Ílhavo, Ílhavo, Portugal. Courtesy of ARX Portugal Arquitectos.

Among the strategies aimed at controlling the manipulation of heritage in the representation of local identities, the active involvement of the communities in the definition of a discourse about the past is being experimented in different museums, contexts and scales—e.g. the renovation of the Maritime Museum of Ílhavo, based on the articulation of distinctive cultural elements through collective imagination and memory. Founded in 1937, this institution operated as a regional museum with a historic and ethnographic orientation until 1997, when the evolution of the socio-economic conditions—among which, the abrupt decline of cod fishing, which was a fundamental activity for the population and a relevant asset of the cultural identity—together with the election of a new mayor, triggered its renovation—and relocation in a new building designed by ARX architects (2001). Its mission, collections and displays were completely refocused through the specialisation on maritime activities and, especially, on the exploration of cod fisheries. Despite the conflicts about the balance among the different voices (masters, ship-owners, fishermen, etc.), by centring the representation of the past on a specific cultural symbol, recognised and appraised by all the different members of the community, the museum supported the valorisation of the town's identity, fostering sense of belonging and enhancing the image of the territory.



simply destroyed in space and time, where should we look for identity? (Bellaigue 1999)

In this context, the role of museums, which have been conceived as emblematic spaces for consolidating cultural values and cooperating to the construction of personal and shared identities (Karp et al. 1992; MacDonald 2003; Newman and McLean 2006; Graham and Howard 2008; Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason 2012), may be crucial, and especially that of local museums, as they can contribute to awakening the consciousness of temporality and territoriality, thus supporting the search for sense of belonging, awareness and roots. Through their efforts in preserving and valorising the material signs of history (the visible elements that are part of the physical and mental landscape participating in the construction of cultural identities) and the immaterial traditions (costumes, knowledge and know-how which are derived from it), the museums drawing on the particular nature of a place seem to create the possibility to oppose resistance to some of the effects of globalisation and augmented migrations. They stand against the standardisation of space and the homogenisation of tangible and intangible culture, by contributing to perpetuating and emphasising the unique characters and values of local heritage (Augé 1992)—they are meant to “preserve those cultural elements that supposedly define the distinctiveness of the locality and which, at the same time, operate as indicators of prestige and distinctiveness for those that hold or preserve them” (Knell et al. 2007, 195); thereafter, they operate as strongholds for the specificity of particular cultural sites, objects and manifestations. They participate in the protection of special environments and tokens menaced by destruction or disappearance—they often act as presidia of significant places (such as the ecomuseums which have been recently founded in remote areas e.g. the latest cases in China and Taiwan) or of dismissed traditions and artisanal know-how (revitalised, for example, through reconstructions, commemorations and educational activities pro-



IMG. 6.15 — Museo delle Trame Mediterranee, Gibellina, Italy. “Montagna di sale,” installation by Mimmo Paladino beside the museum courtyard. Courtesy of Fondazione Orestyadi.

In contemporary museums, the combination of “high” (artistic) and ordinary (everyday) material culture is increasingly used to encourage the development of innovative interpretations of the museum heritage, and to foster the construction of cross-cultural references among the different cultural contributions which it may bear or recall. This practice is currently employed in several local museums, such as the Museo delle Trame Mediterranee. Since its foundation in 1996, this multifaceted institution aims at studying and exhibiting the symbolic and material signs identifying the different populations inhabiting along the coasts of the Mediterranean, thus proposing an open and inclusive interpretation of the cultural histories they developed and highlighting the relations and contaminations which were built along the centuries through past and present contacts and exchanges.

motivated by open-air museums). They fight the dispersion of individual and collective memories through the conservation of sites, objects, images, words, personal stories and knowledge which bear witness to the human history ensuing from a specific environment, by collecting—as archives of memory—and teaching it—as learning centres and job starters.¹⁵

Furthermore, in a context in which identities are being reconfigured, they may have the possibility to support the profound transformations of subjectivity and self-awareness, by supporting the re-assessment and the re-appropriation of the stable roots related to local places and historical cultural systems. Indeed, on the one hand, their mission is mainly connected to past realms, this is, to identity frameworks that used to have steady boundaries and a clear definition;¹⁶ though the presentation of past cultural roots may not exclude distortions and instrumentalisations (Lowenthal 1985; Karp et al. 2006; Rivera-Orraca 2009), due to implicit or explicit ideological purposes,¹⁷ several attempts are being developed in order to enhance museum narrations into objective and inclusive streams (Img. 6.16). On the other hand, the values of the environmental heritage, especially those anchored to the natural, aesthetic or symbolic features pertaining to specific sites on which several types of local museums focus their mission, according to some scholars (Maggi 2001) possess a “neutral” character, in that they seem to be less affected by the relativity and ambivalence connoting other systems of cultural belonging (e.g.

¹⁵ Today, the restoration and dissemination of artisanal practices and skills seem to attract particular interest also due to the current economic crisis, which fosters the development of new activities but, above all, the recovery of those which had been set aside.

¹⁶ Nations, ethnic communities, peoples and cultures have always been constituted historically, that is, by reference to a certain—more-or-less stable—past (Anico and Peralta 2009, 105). Today, the past still represents an anchor for identities, as often happens in times of crisis (Lowenthal 1985).

¹⁷ This has often happened in the past, for example, in the articulation of the open-air museums and Heimatmuseums, that were used as a means of political and cultural propaganda. Throughout the 20th century, also folk, ethnographic and history museums have often excluded voices and distorted presentations (Karp et al. 2006; Watson 2007; etc.)

religion and politics). As widely discussed (Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason 2012), place can thus be considered an inclusive asset on which to restore awareness and to anchor shifting identities. Furthermore, the active involvement of the population in the environment preservation, for example the increasing acts raised to save local habitats or sites stimulated by ecomuseums, can turn into an important educative experience for citizens, fostering sense of belonging (Fitch 1990, 404).

The past and the local are often seen as reassuring propositions, optimistically applied to society's wounds, especially in times of crisis. Because of their relationship with these assets, local museums can be instruments for bridging the past and the future, defining a balance between local and global stances, and thus supporting the stability of questioned and evolving identities.

The focus on contemporary local communities: asserting stability and continuity in a shifting cultural context

Though the interest in local museums has also extended to tourists—especially through the expansion of travel routes in places that were previously hard to reach (Davis 2011)—the focus of their mission and activities remains directed towards the inhabitants of the area which they aim to represent. They are not only the main audience, rather they often actively contribute to development and management practices. In general, volunteers represent a fundamental task force for small institutions and, in special cases (i.e. the ecomuseums), the local population is assigned significant responsibilities in the decision-making processes concerning the location, the raising and use of funds, the scientific programme, the educational and display set-up, etc. (Varine 1991; 2002). This issue has become even more important with the high raise of the interest for participative practices in contemporary museums (see: Écomusée du Val de Bièvre).

The strict relationships which local museums are able to develop with the indigenous population represent a crucial issue for their role as strategic cultural forces within the actual socio-cultural context, because they enhance the possibility to work effectively as social agents. This task has become more and more important in the last decades, due to the effects of the potentiated forms of globalisation significantly questioning the traditional “borders” of cultural identities, on the one hand menacing distinctiveness and specificities, on the other fostering the encounter of different individuals and ideas, thus defining new layers and meanings for multiculturalism (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996). The consequences of the multi-cultural and pluralistic reconfiguration of the local communities have implied a radical redefining of individual identities as well as of forms of being-together—especially after the profound transformation of the relationships which, in recent centuries (in the West at least), have been regulated by traditional bonds, mainly defined by religious and political structures: in the second half of the 20th century, they have been modified by the erosion of traditional national identi-



IMG. 6.16 — Museu de Cerâmica, Sacavém, Portugal. The number 18 furnace of the old faience factory. Photo by Filipe Rocha.

In the context of the globalisation of culture and the raise of cultural diversity, heritage is increasingly being used as a means of promoting new forms of re-imagining culture and sense of place. Local museums can participate to the construction of a renovated heritage discourse through the enhancement of inclusive museum narrations.

The Ceramics Museum of Sacavém was created with the aim of preserving the cultural memory and legacy of the ceramics factory, which, since its opening in 1856, became a significant part of Portugal's industrial and artistic history, as well as of the life of the local population, influencing the daily routines and activities of this community. The museum was built in 2000 on the site where the factory had previously stood, around one of the old furnaces which remained after demolition. As recognised by the assignment of the Micheletti Prize in 2002, through an inclusive representation of the factory's artistic production and its social history ensued from the involvement of the members of the community in the setting of exhibitions, storytelling and educational programmes, the institution has turned public the industrial collective memory and reinforced awareness and sense of belonging.

ties¹⁸ and the emergence of individualised forms of identity (Nora 2011, XI), together with a growing interest in local cultural systems (Rolland and Murauskaya 2009). In this context, the institutions drawing on the distinctive nature of a place may play a crucial role in:

- Educating the population about local history and identity. While ICT has simplified and expanded access to information, paradoxically collective memory has become diluted. The primary role of local

18 Though a multiplicity of identity markers has always existed (e.g. within religious, ideological and linguistic frames), since the 18th century the Nation has been the principal frame of reference for the collectivity, and the primary vehicle of progress, civic and social identification, respect for common rights and obligations. In the last decades, the traditional bonds which have been subsumed under the figure of the Nation have been eroded, fostering the emergence of individualised forms of identity.

museums is to save from oblivion distinctive heritage, traditions and values rooted in the history of a place, to transmit them to future generations, and therefore to stimulate knowledge and awareness¹⁹—especially in an age in which memory is mainly “acquired” rather than “transmitted.”²⁰ This task is enhanced by potentiating the educative offer (in quantity as well as in quality, for example through interactive practices), intensifying strategies to attract members of the community and stimulating return visits. A key role in these plans is played by temporary activities, and in particular by short-term exhibitions or the semi-permanent management of displayed collections: they allow to vary the cultural offer and to explore several thematic declensions, also proposing different focus and points of view.

- Fostering or restructuring the sense of belonging to the culture arising from the distinctive characteristics of a place. Local museums are intended to oppose resistance to the diffusion of what has been defined as “placelessness”²¹ (Relph 1976), in particular those institutions valorising specific buildings, environments or “lieux de mémoire” (Nora 1989). By magnifying the distinctiveness ensuing from these places and by allowing the members of the community to acknowledge and experience the local cultural assets, they are to build or restore identification with rooted cultural systems.
- Offering stable roots on which to anchor identity systems. By preventing the dilution of local specificities and revitalising cultural memory—today “people look to this refashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world.” (Said 2000, 179)—heritage²² today arises “as a particularly effective resource for asserting continuity and stability, which enables societies to define and anchor their identity.” (Anico and Peralta 2009, 63)

The effectiveness of the role of contemporary local museums for the inhabitants also relates to their ability to assume an inclusive approach towards the complexity that characterises them. The construction of local communities, especially in those areas situated along moving or permeable borders (administrative or cultural margins, the sea, etc.), has always been enhanced by emigration and immigration flows. Though several local museums have often been characterised by hegemonic nar-

19 The tasks of local museums for the indigenous population focus on presenting the past history and the resources that are often forgotten—sometimes triggering “a Socratic process of drawing out the cultural wisdom that everyone possesses but too rarely is aware of.” (Poulot 1989)

20 In his “Illuminations,” Walter Benjamin defined “transmitted memory” as the knowledge handed from one generation to the next (an educational heritage that includes history and the way in which it is taught), and differentiated it from “acquired memory,” or lived memory, which is implemented through direct (thus individual) experiences.

21 As illustrated by several studies, such as those by Edward Relph, 20th century globalisation has significantly menaced the distinctive nature of places, triggering the dilution of distinctive features, the loss of “authenticity” and the proliferation of “non-places,” thus weakening the connections between people and local environments.

22 “Together, memory and place conjoin to produce much of the context for modern identities.” (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, 347)

rations—as some still are (e.g. Museum Sønderjylland)—some recent experiences have demonstrated the implementation of a democratic approach. Engagement in developing a multi-vocal narration today characterises especially ethnological museums—and, in particular, “Musées de Société” (see: Musée Dauphinois)—but is also part of the renovation programmes of various regional museums (e.g. Museo Memoria de Andalucía). Some of these institutions illustrate local identities through an inclusive and pluralistic presentation, describing the different contributions which participated to their evolution, and highlighting the cultural diversity that may have characterised them, from the development of their ancient roots to contemporaneity.

The inclusion of the new members of the community: enhancing connections and mutual understanding to foster social cohesion

Migration flows have always contributed to shaping the European population. Nevertheless, in recent decades, augmented mobility has modified the structure of local communities in a more profound way. They are becoming increasingly articulated and heterogeneous through the assimilation of large numbers of people born in other places,²³ bearing highly differentiated familial codes and cultural backgrounds (in terms of language, religion, rituals, ideas, traditions, alimentary habits, etc.). These phenomena are obviously concentrated in urban and metropolitan districts, but also affect suburban and rural areas.²⁴

Though their effective integration may involve a long and complex process, the immigrants who remain for substantial periods enter into the economic and social life of the place, interact with the native population and develop relationships with the environment; they become the new members of the community. Therefore, while up to a few decades ago the community was defined by strong relational parameters (Gusfield 1975), today the population inhabiting the same environment develops inter-relations mainly on the basis of territorial assets, and share profoundly different values, habits and views.

By presenting the local heritage, the natural and artificial resources, the material and immaterial culture emerging from a territory, local museums may play a crucial role for the new members of the community:

- Alphabetizing about the local identity. The educational tasks of local museums may be particularly effective for the new inhabitants, presenting and teaching the historical development of tokens, customs and know-how which characterise the territory.

23 According to EUROSTAT, among the 501 million people living in Europe in 2010, 47.3 million (9.4% of the total EU population) were born outside their country of residence; 31.4 million (6.3%) were born outside the EU and 16 million (3.2%) in another member State.

24 In the United Kingdom, increasing proportions of new migrants have settled in rural areas—the growth rate of immigrant workers in rural areas increased by 186% from 2002 to 2008 (according to a study by Business and Community)—where many are employed in agriculture, food processing and the hospitality sector. In Italy, the percentage of foreign residents in minor districts changed from 2,3% in 2003 to 6,2% in 2011 (according ANCI’s “Atlante dei Piccoli Comuni 2012,” elaborating figures provided by ISTAT).

- Supporting the construction of new connections. People commuting over ever-increasing distances, experiencing a loss of contact with the places which mean most to them and which they call home, need to establish new relationships with a different physical and cultural landscape. Local museums can help them to become more familiar with diverse places, mores and traditions—as stated by the UNESCO Faro Convention (2009). By promoting awareness of the cultural identity of the new homeland, as well as offering opportunities for cultural²⁵ and social²⁶ encounters (and, eventually, job opportunities in local handicraft workshops), they may encourage the grafting of new roots and the construction of affective memories and emotional belonging, which are at the base of the construction of a sense of community (Sarason 1974; McMillan and Chavis 1986).
- Enhancing sense of awareness and mutual knowledge. Acquaintance is a crucial condition for the development of harmonious and democratic societies.²⁷ The role of local museums as social agents refers to their ability in educating and disseminating awareness about the heritage, resources and costumes which define the identity of a place. It may also relate, however, to the possibility of alphabetize the natives about the values, traditions and mores of the new members of the community who share the same environment. Though the mission of local museums is deeply focused on the presentation of the distinctive culture ensued from a specific environment, an increasing number of institutions are starting to programme temporary activities (exhibitions, conferences, film festivals, etc.) aimed at illustrating various aspects of the new inhabitants' original cultural systems, to which they remain linked. Several Italian civic and small ethnographic museums, for example, are promoting occasional initiatives aimed at celebrating and proposing a glimpse on the costumes, rituals, gastronomic habits, etc. of the migrant groups that are more consistently present in the territory—e.g. the exhibition “Miracoli in legno” at Gallerie Piedicastello in Trento, showing the admirable wooden Romanian churches (December 4th, 2010 to February 13th, 2011); the series of inter-cultural events within the “This Land is Your Land” project at Museo Civico Archeologico Etnologico in Modena (December 10th, 2011 to July 15th, 2012); the photographic exhibition “Madre India” at Museo delle Genti D’Abruzzo in Pescara (2–10 March 2013), etc.

25 The workshops and educational experiences designed to reconstruct, exhibit and teach traditional customs and know-how are a typical part of the original mission of some specific local museums (i.e. open-air museums and ecomuseums), but are now included in the programmes of most contemporary institutions. They represent a very effective way of entering into contact with a traditional culture, as they exploit the power of direct practice.

26 Celebrations of ancient traditions and events represent the most attended activities promoted by open-air museums, ecomuseums and folk museums; although it is not easy to involve all the members of the community, they provide various opportunities for the meeting of different groups.

27 “Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.” Excerpt from UNESCO Public Libraries Manifesto (1994).



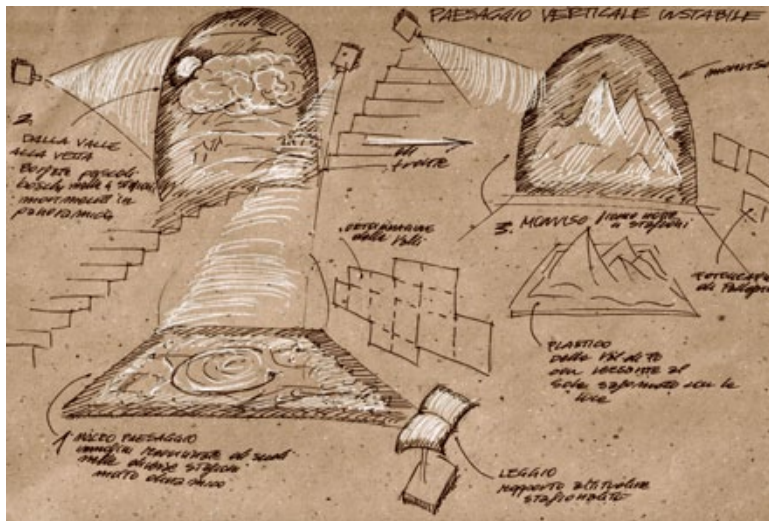
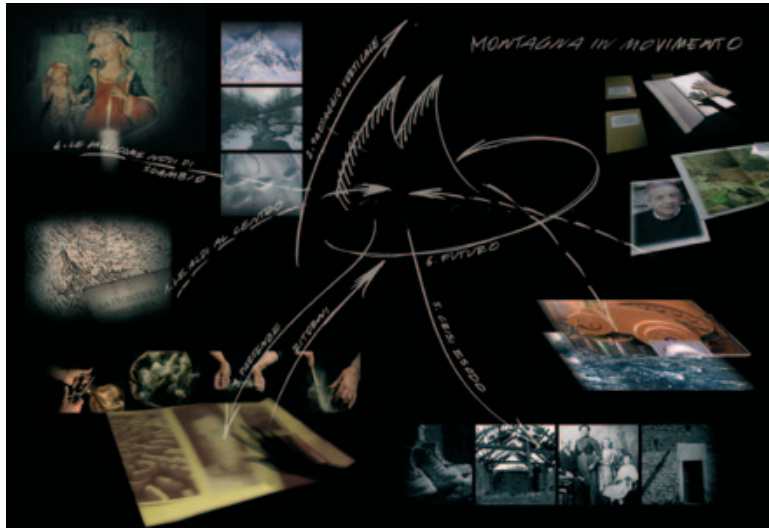
IMG. 6.17, 6.18 — Museo del Quotidiano di Ettore Guatelli, Ozzano sul Taro, Italy. Photos by Mauro Davoli, courtesy of Museo Guatelli.

In the last years, several experiences concerning inter-cultural mediation highlighted the potentialities of everyday material and immaterial cultures in the construction of cross-cultural references within the interpretation of local heritage. The experience “Plural Stories”, promoted within the Grundtvig project “MAP for ID - Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue” (2007-2009), demonstrated the potential role of small local ethnographic museums such as Museo Guatelli in the enhancement of inter-cultural dialogue—as well as the problems and limits affecting these small-scale realities. The experience was addressed to a group of ten women with a different cultural background, selected among the various ethnic groups living in the area. For five months (February to June 2009), they met each week at the museum to attend theatre workshop activities, aimed at fostering their interaction with the museum rich collection and evocative spaces related to everyday domestic and professional life. These objects were able to trigger the trans-cultural memory of gestures and life stories, expressed through spoken and body language. Theatre, in fact, allowed to surpass linguistic barriers and enabled a strong interaction between the women involved. The initiative was intended to initiate inter-cultural dynamics in the province of Parma, opening the museum to an often excluded audience, inviting the “new citizens” to recognise, interpret and conceptualise tangible and intangible elements, and acquiring a heritage value with respect to both their original culture and the culture of the place where they have settled.



IMG. 6.19, 6.20, 6.21 —
 “Montagna in Movimento,”
 Forte Albertino, Vinadio,
 Italy. Courtesy of Studio
 Azzurro.

The museum settings of Forte Albertino designed by Studio Azzurro (2007) offer an intensive experience of the recovered historical places, emphasising their capacity of evoking memories and impressions through the superimposition of eloquent immaterial layers on the original architectural structure. The intervention transformed the 19th century fort into a living archive where the objects, the know-how, the collective mores and the personal stories conveying the local culture are brought to life through multi-sensorial and interactive installations, transfiguring the physical spaces by means of video projections, voices and sounds.



These practices, which now mainly appear as isolated experiences, still need to be enhanced—for example, through the construction of collaborative networks coalescing the efforts of the different local institutions (museums, libraries, municipalities, associations, etc.): this is the crucial condition for the involvement of immigrants in the local cultural programs, especially in rural areas, where they often live in unstable conditions, struggling with difficult economic situations and arduous integration processes. They may be considered an important means to foster inter-cultural understanding and social cohesion, which could also be encouraged by the potentially trans-cultural nature of the material culture related to everyday life.²⁸ In fact, as demonstrated by some recent projects (Imgs. 6.17, 6.18), the devices and objects ensued from the domestic or the work activities developed in the territory—e.g. from harvesting to forging iron or kneading bread—embody knowledge, stories, ideas, emotions, desires, fears and hopes, that are common to different contexts and, therefore, can easily be read from different cultural perspectives, thus trigger alternative interpretations through the evocation of memories and personal reminiscences. Although specifically forged and associated to the peculiar environment that produced them, the know-how, techniques, rituals and gestures related to ordinary life allow to detect recurrences, evoke similarities and build cross references among different cultural systems. These potentialities can possibly support the different members of the community in revealing unexpected links between artefacts and individuals, highlighting “resonances,” thus absorbing cultural frictions, and developing mutual knowledge and understanding.

Museums have always had a role in supporting awareness, constructing a sense of belonging, and educating to citizenship. For example, in 19th century Europe and North America, the “exhibitionary complex” provided public spaces and modes of classification that helped the masses become “a voluntary, self-regulating citizenry” (Bennet 1988). The local museums of the future, by substituting hegemony with negotiation, should potentiate strategies to support the formation and consolidation of the mutual understanding and inter-cultural values that are needed to ground contemporary communities.

→ LOCAL CULTURAL FORCES IN ACTION: HIGHLIGHTING DISTINCTIVE STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

At the turn of 21st century, several museum typologies are going through significant revisions²⁹ aimed at repositioning both collections and visitors in order to improve the role of these institutions as active and inclusive social agents; these transformations are being implemented within

28 The attachment or symbolic connection to certain objects and places is not generated by their tangible properties, but for the way in which they evoke other people and places, other times and realities. Despite their extremely specific character, “popular” and ordinary objects and sites seem to stimulate and evoke cross-cultural connections.

29 As demonstrated also by the present publication, “at no other point in their modern history have museums undergone such radical reshaping as in recent years.” (MacLeod 2005, 1)

museological settings and scientific programs, as well as in the creation, conformation and organisation of physical structures, spaces and exhibition hardware. The interest in local museums does not mainly deal with the rethinking of museum spaces or peculiar new realizations and renovations, but rather with the fact that the potentiation of their typical structures and means, actual or potential, may turn them into positive cultural forces in the context of the contemporary “age of migrations.” The specific strategies and tools implemented by the different institutions related to the valorisation of a place—varying according to the specific forms and statutes of the diverse contexts and typologies—are in fact particularly effective in opposing resistance to the phenomena triggering the dilution or shifting of identities, as well as in fostering the preservation of stable roots, acknowledging mutual understanding, thus supporting social cohesion.

How can contemporary local museums interact with evolved contemporary communities? Which museological, museographical and architectural practices, tools and strategies enable them to act as positive cultural forces?

Materialisation of memory: expanding preservation and fruition practices

The preservation, production and presentation of individual and collective memory are general museums’ tasks (Newman and McLean 2006); nevertheless, the role of local institutions as vectors of memory is emphasised by their distinctive mission, be it related to conservation, testimony or “materialisation” (Nora 1989)—materialisation may concern the preservation and restoration of signs or markers of the local culture (Bellaigue 2000, 39), as well as the activation of heritage sites, which are tangible archives of memory, special assets which allow the past to “take place.”³⁰ Furthermore, local museums often represent a museum of memory in themselves, since they are situated in ancient buildings and significant places characterised by special historical and symbolic values,³¹ which the architectural interventions (aimed at adapting spaces originally created for different purposes) usually try to respect and valorise (see: Gallerie Piedicastello).

In the context of this “age of migrations,” the mission of local museums has a twofold crucial value. On the one hand, while globalisation seems to dilate and dilute personal and shared memory, they oppose resistance to this loss by transmitting and perpetuating sites, objects and manifestations (Young 1998). On the other hand, while the ICT enhancement overproduce and disseminate an unprecedented amount of information,

30 According to the assumption that the past cannot exist but in space and in the histories representing the past, which represent the places of human action—“All human action takes and makes place. The past is the set of places made by human action. History is a map of these places.” (Ethington 2007, 465)—museums perpetuate space-time coordinates and provide the opportunity for the past to “take place.”

31 In local institutions, the history, the meaning and the values of the building or the site play a fundamental role. In some cases—e.g. the musealisation of heritage sites or places conveying “difficult memories”—they represent the main content of the museum, in some others—ecomuseums, small ethnographic museums, etc. located inside a particular venue—an installation describing the history and value of the building is usually included within the display settings.



IMG. 6.22 — St. Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff, United Kingdom. © St. Fagans Museum.

This renown open-air museum, conceived to represent the life and culture of Wales, has recently received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Welsh Government to realise the “Making History” Project, aimed at enhancing the museum collection and narration, transforming the visitors experience and encouraging their participation through the implementation of new spaces and tools. Over the next years, new galleries and historic buildings will be added, as well as new facilities (dedicated to meetings, educative activities, performances and events) in order to extend the timeline of the stories (from the first human inhabitants to the present day and beyond) and to improve the active participation of the local population.

stories and images, museums assume a fundamental role in selecting, verifying and transferring thousands of micro-histories into a broad and coherent vision.

This task assigns an even greater responsibility to museum operators and curators, who are meant to define and depict the representation of memory and identity. The decision-making concerning the production of memory through the “exhibitionary complex” has always represented a relevant problem—and sites, objects and manifestations have often been politically or ideologically instrumentalised.³² The point of view through which the museum exhibitions are set and presented is a pivotal issue for the contemporary museography and museology debates and practices. One of the most diffused strategies implemented in recent years regards the development of a “biographical approach” to the narrations—this is, the use of individual memories to construct the main narration—which offers a more democratic and inclusive presentation of heritage. The museums celebrating historical figures or periods have complemented the main collections with the diaries, images and interviews of different witnesses (soldiers, countrymen, common citizens), which allow to illustrate the facts from various viewpoints (see: Museo Storico del Trentino Foundation). The “voices” of the local people are often implemented as the narrators of the heritage sites celebrating particular events (see: Museo della Resistenza). Also the institutions presenting material culture (rural, industrial, urban or popular) have improved their techniques to document the origin, use and meaning of objects, rituals and know-how, by implementing the memories of the users, whose contribution is furthermore helping to upgrade the collected and presented heritage to include contemporaneity (see: Écomusée du Val de Bièvre). The current enhancement of this

32 Memory conveys special issues and “difficulties”—the continually unfolding nature of memory; the importance of forgetting in every act of remembering; the pressures of the marketplace and commodification of the past; the unpredictability of group memory and its centrality in the maintenance and contestation of political identity; the fact that memory is often both particular and universal; and the inextricable link between memory and place.

“biographical approach” to the narrations seems to reflect a general trend in potentiating the role of memory—which is by nature multiple, collective and plural (yet individual), rooted in the concrete (space, images, gestures) and in the place—over that of history—which is a representation and reconstruction of the past, thus an intellectual and secular production—according to the definition provided by Pierre Nora (1989).

These practices are now aided by the implementation of new technologies in the museum settings, conservation activities and fruition. ICT allows also small institutions to widen their historical collections through the integration of new virtual archives of words, images and digital objects³³ which are integrated in the narration through several strategies (Allen and Lupo 2012). The use of advanced technologies promises to be particularly fruitful for local museums. They offer sustainable and affordable means—they may not be necessarily onerous, nor require significant renovations or transformation of existing spaces—to expand the collective memory preserved, interpreted and illustrated by the museum. They provide visitors with the possibility to view a larger number of documents, as well as to develop networked collections and narrations—through the virtual connection between the heritage preserved in different places. They can also enhance the experience of the audience through the production of more immersive and impressive environments—possibly produced by ephemeral and reversible forms of alteration of exhibition spaces (e.g. applying new layers with light, colours, etc.) thus not physically transforming existing spaces, which may be protected because of their historical or architectural values (Imgs. 6.19, 6.20, 6.21)—as well as the enhancement of the interaction between visitors and place.

Performative practices: promoting awareness through experience

In the realm of material culture and landscapes, the constitutive relationship between memory and place is also performative (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, 350). When cultural objects, practices and costumes began to have a significance as cultural heritage, their presentation was mainly related to reconstructions and celebrations; the experience of gestures, rituals, festivals and ceremonies (involving visitors both as spectators and actors) has been a major way for societies to remember (Connerton 1989). Local museums—especially open-air museums, but also Heimat-museums and folk museums—have been the promoters of a performative approach to the promotion of heritage (Magelssen 2007). Their experiments, based on the total immersion of the visitors, have contributed to trigger the implementation of direct experience³⁴ in museum activities, which has recently grown in variety and extension, and has turned into a fundamental strategy for the development of contemporary institutions

33 Several ethnographic museums are promoting the potentiation or construction of new virtual archives of memory, which seem particularly strategic in collecting and preserving intangible heritage—e.g. pictures, recorded interviews and videos are used to perpetuate the use of ancient objects, regional languages, mores and costumes, etc.

34 Performance is “a means of carrying out a cultural practice—such as memory—thoroughly.” (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, 420)



IMG. 6.23, 6.24 — Ecomuseo Urbano Metropolitan Milano Nord, Milano, Italy. Courtesy of EUMM.

The activities promoted by this ecomuseum aim at promoting the tangible and intangible heritage conveying the cultural identity of the northern area of Milan, through the involvement of the multi-cultural local communities. They focus on the valorisation of the dismissed heritage—by offering the possibility to experience neglected places, e.g. the shelters in the Breda Park (23)—, the articulation of innovative research paths about local resources, the construction of new archives of memory through the collection of documents and stories from the population, and the development of inclusive collective narrations—for example through the participative design of Parish Maps (24).

IMG. 6.25 — Écomusée du Fier Monde, Montréal, Canada. Overview of the permanent exhibition “À cœur de jour! Grandeurs et misères d’un quartier populaire.” © Écomusée. Photo by Marie-Josée Lemaire-Caplette.

Founded in 1980, the ecomuseum operates both as a Montréal working class and industrial history museum and a community museum. It promotes inclusive exhibition and education activities through participatory projects developed in close collaboration with the neighbourhood’s citizens, institutions and organizations.

(Hooper-Greenhill 2007). The raising interest for “performative practices” in 21st century museums is also testified by the inclusion of hybrid and adaptive spaces dedicated to special interactive experiences in most new realisations and expansion projects (Img. 6.22).

Performative practices in museums also represent a powerful means to develop inter-cultural experiences (Imgs. 6.17, 6.18) offering a wide range of linguistic potentialities.

Participative practices: fostering effective connections between the museum and a diversified audience

The role of local museums as active social agents is particularly enhanced by the special relationships which they establish with the community inhabiting the territory they purport to represent. Effective interactions with the population are based on the possibility to involve groups or individuals in their activities, both as spectators (visiting the exhibitions, participating in education and dissemination practices, etc.) and actors (operating in management or decision-making processes, enhancing the collections, contributing to the choice of exhibition themes and the production of contents, operating as educators or guides).

Community involvement has become a ubiquitous element of heritage management in recent years (Walker 2011). Participative practices are one of the ways in which contemporary museums are attempting to challenge the dominant view of the museum as a site of power relations, by invoking and encouraging new relationships between institution and community. Though the interference of participation on the authoritative position of heritage professionals is being discussed,³⁵ several scholars affirm that,

by “placing” community at the heart of the museum enterprises (...) it will be possible to overcome their role as hegemonic institutions. In giving voice to the powerless, a process of self-discovery and empowerment will take place, in which the curator becomes a facilitator rather than a figure of authority. (Witcomb 2003, 79)

The participation strategies have been inflected in a wide variety of experiences (ranging from “consultation” to more active forms of inclusion), on the one hand raising the interest of the population towards the institution and, on the other, getting the museum’s offer closer to the real needs of the

35 The social benefits of involving local communities in heritage management have been highlighted in heritage policies for decades, and in particular since the 1990s; this issue, in particular, is being discussed because of its relation to the political notion of social exclusion/inclusion, as well as to the issue of cultural production. Several scholars affirm that, in order to achieve such goals as social cohesion or empowerment, local people need to be actively involved in the decision-making that affects the representation of their identity and the development of cultural initiatives in the territory, rather than merely leaving it to professionals implementing top-down economic regeneration projects. Nevertheless, this position is not universally shared; the importance of the role of curators and heritage professionals is claimed as a strong position of power—they are “cultural technicians” often working for the government, thus playing a political role as committed to “modifying the functioning of culture by means of technical adjustment to its governmental deployment” (Bennet 1998, 185)—because “museums need to be understood not as institutions which just represent communities and cultures (...) but as institutions which actually produce the very notion of community and culture.” (Witcomb 2003, 80)

people and extending its action to several social categories, including those who are usually not involved. The current increasing interest in participation practices and the expectations attributed to them can be detected, for example, in the recurrent redefinition of the functional organisation of the museum spaces, often re-structured in order to dedicate specific environments to cooperative activities (see: Écomusée du Val de Bièvre).

After the spread of New Museology, this effort has become diffused in a variety of institutions (especially in art galleries and anthropological and history museums); nevertheless, collaboration practices remain a distinctive feature of the ecomuseum, in which local viewpoints and actions are not a footnote in a mainstream version of heritage, but rather a fundamental contribution. This institution was “conceived as a hinge between a heritage and a population” (Varine 2004, 6), that is, not as a static cabinet but as an instrument reflecting the community.³⁶ Intended within a progressive museological framework, ecomuseums are designed to be run via continuous dialogue with the inhabitants, and thus to be constantly upgrading their tasks in parallel with social transformations. However not all contemporary ecomuseums nourish their relationship with the local population (Varine 2004), which often remain quite exclusive, tending to involve mainly the natives and particular categories (e.g. the elderly). This consideration should trigger a rethinking of the mission of these institutions towards current society. In fact, though they now rarely involve the new members of the community, these institutions have a potentially crucial role for the alphabetization of the immigrants towards the local culture and the construction of opportunities for meeting and mutual understanding. The key issue for the future of these institutions is perhaps not to be planned in the inclusion of “other cultures” within their narrations (since their mission is focused on a specific territory), but in the possibility of extending their educational tasks to all the members of the community, and foster encounter and dialogue between different audiences, by engaging them through shared tasks and activities. These strategies are currently being experienced particularly by urban ecomuseums (Imgs. 6.23, 6.24) and often refer to the design of inclusive Parish Maps. The enhancement of these projects is triggering the upgrading of scientific programmes (Img. 6.25), supported by professional sociologists and educators, and the renovation of the architectural organisation of the spaces (see: Écomusée du Val de Bièvre).

Though participation practices may be pointed out as an ecomuseum typicality, several museums have recently started to implement new strategies to foster the collaboration of the community. Especially professionally run

36 The critical innovation of this project was its orientation toward the community, expressed both in its specific geographical scope and in the emphasis placed on participation by the inhabitants. The most effective description of the ecomuseum is indeed that of “a mirror in which a population could seek to recognize itself and explore its relationship to the physical environment as well as to previous generations; also an image offered to visitors to promote a sympathetic understanding of the work, customs and peculiarities of a population” (Rivière 1989, 142). This peculiar connection is emblematically represented in the formula proposed by René Rivard, comparing the definition of traditional museums —“Museum = building + collections + experts + public”—and ecomuseums—“Ecomuseum = territory + heritage + memory + population.” (Rivard 1988, 124)

IMG. 6.26 — Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, United Kingdom. © Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

The museum, established in 1974 in converted Victorian herring curing works, aims at preserving and illustrating the transformation of Great Yarmouth from a sandbank to the present day, through a special focus on the maritime and fishing heritage which connote the history of the area. The presented exhibitions are articulated around to two main themes—the fishing industry and the “Rows” alleyways—which were chosen as representative and iconic tokens by local people through a series of focus groups, to represent their history, identity and sense of place.



local history museums, which have always been authored by curators or exhibition teams (Img. 6.26), “who usually draw on academic histories to construct their narratives but who pay little regard to the way such histories are used by local audiences,” are now trying to give more attention to the historiographic needs and historical perceptions of these audiences, in order to more effectively articulate community identities and sense of place.” (Knell, MacLeod and Watson 2007, 160)

The opportunities offered by the active participation of the community to the museum’s tasks may foster the involvement not only of the native members of the community, but also of the new inhabitants of the territory. Several types of local museums are currently enhancing experimental participative projects designed to involve immigrants and representatives of minorities, for example by training them as special guides for inter-

cultural visits. In particular, art museums are presently experiencing these possibilities—works of art are a powerful trans-cultural means, operating as the common ground for diverse interpretations—as well as several archaeological and ethnographic museums, by training multi-cultural guides for specially mediated visits³⁷—though the implications involved in the multi- or inter-cultural interpretations of material culture displayed imply more complex negotiations.

Network patterns: developing cooperation at local and global scales

The participation practices experienced demonstrated that the possibility to achieve the involvement of different members of the community in the museum activities often relates to the cooperation between the museum and the cultural or administrative institutions in the territory. On the one hand, the contribution of museums in activating social inclusion, dialogue and integration is not sufficient to generate long-lasting solutions, if it is not accompanied and sustained by multi-layered actions, which must, above all, be coordinated by governmental bodies, providing information, teaching common codes, offering continuity to the inter-cultural experiences, etc. On the other hand, the approach to some social categories who are usually not interested in museum activities (i.e. the younger generation and immigrants) have to be fuelled through the complemented and coordinated intervention of museums, libraries, social agencies, cultural associations, etc. which can enhance their stimuli and contacts (see: Écomusée du Val de Bièvre).

Because of their wide relationships with the territory, several local museums (especially ecomuseums³⁸) have always been characterised by a networked structure. Today networking is becoming a more and more important strategy for contemporary museums; it contributes to opposing resistance to the effects of the economic crisis, it allows for the sharing of information, expertise and collections through global interconnections,³⁹ and it fosters the development of multi-faceted cultural programmes, which are especially crucial in the regions characterised by a complex historical development and a multi-layered identity (see: Museo Storico del Trentino Foundation).

Local institutions are building various types of network (Innocenti 2012), which differ in their objectives, forms and scales—the range of coordinated programmes among museums (and between museums and other institu-

37 Among the inter-cultural mediation experiences promoted in recent years, it is interesting to report those organised by the European project Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue (MAP for ID 2007–2009), funded by the European Commission as part of the Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme. By supporting thirty pilot projects in the partner countries (Italy, Hungary, Netherlands and Spain), the project analysed and experienced innovative tools and practices to foster inter-cultural dialogue in museums, to promote a more active engagement with the communities they serve, to develop guidelines for good practices.

38 They were conceived as “integrated museums,” because they are “integrated with society and with the environment, but also integrated with other organisations that serve local people.” (Davis 2008, 398)

39 “Museums are now part of a global network of information and cultural flows in ways that have no precedents” (Karp et al. 2006, 49) and they cannot avoid developing relationships with the so-called “Network Society.”

IMG. 6.27, 6.28 — The ancient blast furnace in Újmassa, Miskolc, Hungary, pertaining to the network of sites and museums celebrating the metallurgy tradition in the region. Photo by TgrBot. Museo Chillida-Leku, San Sebastián, Spain. Photo by Gerardus.

These two sites are included in the Iron Road in Central Europe and in the Iron Road in the Pyrenees, which are two Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe conceived to retrace the common traces of the history of industrial heritage throughout Europe, from pre-history to present days. These networks aim at magnifying the paradigmatic conjunctions between the local and the global stances which associate the history and the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe, thus contributing to the construction of a transnational European Identity.



tions) varies from local, to regional, national or universal. Innovative types of cooperation strategies are currently also being developed at trans-national and global levels. Several projects are in fact highlighting the cultural connections between the heritage diffused in different European countries, which share transversal thematic bonds. For example, the European Cultural Routes project, launched by the Council of Europe in 1987, aims to demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe have contributed to a shared common heritage. By constructing thematic global networks between various local institutions (research centres, universities, libraries and museums), European Cultural Roots combine the celebration of the specific distinctiveness of each site and the acknowledgment of the linking features which historically established connections, cooperation, shared knowledge and values across Europe—thus making visible the roots of a common culture defining a European trans-national identity, which can be seen through the thematic routes which cross the whole territory. In an increasingly multi-cultural context, the relationships between the local and the global are becoming crucial factors in the mission of contemporary museums. (Imgs. 6.27, 6.28)

Glo-cal models: narrating a globally contextualised local distinctiveness

The mission of local museums is concentrated on the preservation and validation of the cultural roots arising from the history of a particular area, or from the values of a specific place. In the final decades of the 20th century, some types of institutions started to include in their mission the recognition of the important role of the arrival of different people, objects, know-how and ideas in the evolution of a territory: by illustrating their interactions with the autochthonous population and environment, they intend to highlight their contribution to the shaping of the local material and immaterial heritage. The opening of the local institutions to the illustration of the “other” contributions depends, first of all, on the *geographical context*. On the one hand, the museums narrating the history of a border area (including ports and places abutting with the sea, which is an open margin) or of a territory characterised by a “negotiated” identity, are significantly more inclined to acknowledge cultural difference as part of the local identity; on the other, while the institutions focused on the rural past seem to aspire to depict “circumscribed” cultural environments (which sometimes maintained their definition also due to physical boundaries, for example the mountains), those illustrating the industrial renovations seem to show a wider perspective (Img. 6.01). Another relevant parameter is the *typological focus*. Museums designed to illustrate the ethnological evolution of a place—e.g. community museums and *Musées de Société*—have enhanced a narration model that tends to include the contribution of migrations to the construction of the identity referred to a place (see: *Musée Dauphinois*). Their approach to the presentation of the cultural diversity that has characterised historical and contemporary evolution is based on a glo-cal museological model: their mission is meant to emphasise the local

identity by illustrating its distinctive features, but also to recognise the role of the relationships with different cultures and the specific results of these encounters within the construction of a place's identity. This museological approach is often accompanied by recurrent strategies concerning architectural organisation and museographical practices, focused on the reduction of permanent displays (or their semi-permanent management, entailing a constant renovation) and the enhancement of temporary exhibitions,⁴⁰ which own a strategic value—on the one hand they contribute in widening, enriching and differentiating the cultural offer of the museum, thus encouraging return visits; on the other, bearing less official bounds than the permanent ones, temporary practices allow a higher level of experimentation: they dare testing striking propositions and investigating special thematic issues, in particular those connected with contemporaneity and delicate societal questions.

The development of the glo-cal model can also be detected in the contemporary development of heritage sites. The recent musealisation of places conveying the traces or the memory of past civilisations or relevant events (from ancient times to the modern era, from archaeological sites to places of “conflict” memory) tend to project the valorisation of the specific history into an overall cultural framework. On the one hand, the presentation of these sites, especially the archaeological ones, highlight the stratification of the signs produced by the different cultures and acknowledge the role of each one—thus, of cultural diversity—in the construction of local history and identity (see: Sagunto Archaeologic Site). On the other, the special stories that characterise these places, illustrated through visible traces and presented through museological supports, are contextualised within global human history, inviting visitors to read the distinctive identity of the place in the light of the connections with distant civilisations (e.g. understanding the value of the Roman theatre in the context of the history of Roman culture and its spatial and temporal development) or diverse events (e.g. acknowledging the memory of a battlefield through the context of the war in which it developed). The global connections that are presented through the “lieux de mémoire” help different visitors to identify a point of contact between the site and their own story. By highlighting the past and present connections between different cultures, these sites enhance an inclusive comprehension of the museum experience.

→ ENVISIONING LOCAL MUSEUMS AS CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL FORCES

The multifaceted tensions which characterise the contemporary socio-cultural context—increasing global connections and interrelations, evolution

40 One of the recurrent actions in the renovation of contemporary museums concerns the expansion of the spaces dedicated to temporary exhibitions, conferences and presentations, courses and participative practices. In local museums, when the architectural features—and/or the historical values—of the building impede these transformations, one of the most diffused solution refers to the use of in-between spaces (distributive areas, stairs, etc.) which turn into efficient sites for “lifelong learning, spaces of mutuality and inclusive spaces, where physical, intellectual and cultural barriers to access may be overcome.” (MacLeod 2005, 1)

of networked society and spaces, enhancement of cultural diversity as a constitutive element configuring cultural systems, widening and cross-disciplinary revision of the concepts of memory and heritage—are fostering the transformation of cultural practices and activations. Such issues as the revision of the uses of the past and places in the re-shaping of identities, a more clear focus on people and human values, the reconfiguration of the relation between local and global stances, are deeply influencing the projects for the renovation or the birth of new contemporary museums. Among the strategies and tools which are contributing to the re-focusing of their mission—ranging from the shift from collection to narration, to the potentiation of the programs aimed at encouraging participation processes, the inauguration of enhanced educative activities, the implementation of performative practices, etc.—a particular attention is being concentrated on the strategic role of the values embedded in place. This trend can be detected in the general tendency of contemporary museums to redefine themselves in relationship to the territory (Rolland and Murauskaya 2009)—to anchor their statute and programmes to the specific history, population, resources and heritage of a precise area—as well as in the raising importance of sites of memory. These places, where the collective remembering takes shape, are increasingly being used as means of promoting new forms of re-imagining cultures and identities, because they reveal most validate and authenticate consensual notions of the past, invite alternative readings and, by enabling everyone to find their own place, in their own time and space, with regard to those that came before, they are apt to represent the plural and multi-cultural features of contemporary society.

Although they have always been spaces for the negotiation of competing claims, often locally interpreted as being both identity bunkers and cultural forums (Anico and Peralta 2009), the museums drawing on the distinctive features of a place are developing considerable efforts in representing the different ethnic and social identities that coexist in their cultural landscape, in order to promote an effective and intercultural dialogue among all the members of the communities. By making visible, legible and visitable the different layers coexisting in the cultural legacies ensuing from the past and present of a territory, and through a more inclusive acknowledgment of the roots which anchor them to their society and public, local museums could be main cultural actors, places for education and exchanges, encouraging human relationships and strengthening a sense of communal purpose. In the past, the development of the different types of local museums has had profound impacts on the evolution of museological and museographical practices, fostering a broader transformation of the static display of traditional institutions, encouraging the implementation of new issues, stimulating a holistic interpretation of the local history and heritage, triggering the involvement of the community, thus proposing an empowered role for museums in linking people, their heritage expressions and places. Today, again, local museums have the possibility to take part to the renovation triggered by the challenges which contemporary cultural institutions are facing—although this possibility still mainly resides in their potentialities, which need to be appraised and actualised.

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Local Museums of the Future

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→ HALF A CENTURY OF ACCELERATED TRANSFORMATIONS

The period after World War II has been characterised by an acceleration of history and by abrupt cultural, social and economic transformations, which have generated spontaneous reactions mainly independent of public policy, both in developed and developing countries.

Among these changes, that have often represented real fractures, I will mention some particularly significant events such as de-colonisation, the achievement of civil rights and the resistance to dictatorship, the modification and desertification of the rural world, the resulting industrial crisis, inner and outer migration, uncontrolled urbanisation, the uprising of the young and globalisation.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG 6.29
— Entrance of the Musée Basque, Bayonne, France.
Courtesy of Musée Basque.

As far as the reactions of society is concerned, (especially in some categories, to a large extent referring to the new middle class) I will mention conscious and unconscious nostalgic expressions and the search for reference points in the past, intended as a sum of material and intangible values—this is, heritage in its various forms.

At the same time, we were witness to the acknowledgment regarding the interdependence between culture and nature, man and his environment, consumption needs and the limits of available resources, which are heritage in themselves, and mainly non-renewables. This situation highlighted a paradox, in which there was a coexistence of the legitimate desire to lead a better life in the present, thanks to apparently limitless growth, and the awareness of the need to preserve the same opportunities for our descendants, that may be guaranteed only through the sustainability of our decisions and activities.

→ THE IMPACT ON THE MUSEUM INSTITUTION

The museum institution has been the legacy of a slow and relatively stable world, guided by the élite holding knowledge, power and possession. This institution has been naturally selected as an instrument promoting the knowledge, conservation and appraisal of these different types of heritage, in combination with some other means implemented by public authorities (monuments and protected sites, parks and nature reserves and UNESCO heritage list). The museum has an advantage in that it can easily be created by anyone, who may be a collector, an association, a university or a local politician. This feature caused a museum boom in the 1960s and 1970s and the trend was even accelerated throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Nowadays, in such a country as France, it is possible to count the same number of museums than it was possible to do so in the world 50 years ago. All the cities—often also simple towns—wanted to have their own museum, while the most important art museums, such as The Metropolitan in New York, The Louvre in Paris and The Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, started to operate as great points of convergence. In the meantime, the phenomenon of mass tourism turned the museum into a privileged destination for travellers and an important target for local politicians looking for easy growth. Within this context, in 1971 and 1972, a series of apparently unconnected events changed the development of the museum realm, thus demonstrating that even professional curators were able to acknowledge that the world was changing and the traditional models were no longer sufficient to respond to the new social and cultural needs. During these two years, we were present for:

- the addition of the term “development” to the official Museum definition, as established by ICOM (ICOM General Conference, Grenoble, 1971);
- the invention of the term “ecomuseum,” intended to illustrate a new relationship of the museum with nature and the environment (1971) as a prologue to the United Nations Conference in Stockholm in 1972;

- the creation of a museum without collections at Le Creusot (1971–1972), focusing on the territory, the population and local heritage. This innovation became later an international reference point;
- the UNESCO-ICOM Round Table at Santiago de Chile, where the most important museologists from Latin America have acknowledged the complexity of contemporary society and invented the concept of “integral museum” at the service of society.

These four events led to the unexpected birth, and consecutive expansion, of the movement named “New Museology.” It fostered the foundation of national groups and, later on, of an organisation called MINOM (International Movement of the New Museology). Finally, it enhanced the generalisation of two terms with a similar meaning, namely eco-museum and community museum. In general, I think it is possible—and necessary—to distinguish between traditional local museums, centred on the preservation of “dead” collections, and those mainly focused on the participative management of the heritage of a community and territory. Besides, it would be important to highlight a further distinction between the museums characterised by catering to tourist, and those aimed a local population. Eventually, it is relevant to observe another recurrent parameter, which focuses on the quality of the relationship between the museum and the cultural, social and economic dynamics which connote the territorial development.

→ TODAY AND TOMORROW: A CHALLENGING CONTEXT

For ten years, we have been witnessing a threefold phenomenon concerning local museums:

- Ageing of institutions and, frequently, of their founders.
- Lack of voluntary work and the growth of management costs.
- Gradual disengagement of public administration, as far as the funding issue are concerned.

As a consequence, in most countries in Europe and beyond (Sweden, Portugal, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, just to list the countries with which we have been in contact) several museums are closing down, or will be obliged to close or will have to drastically reduce their activities. This is happening while the creation of new museums, interpretation centres, ecomuseums and art centres continues. It is normal to wonder whether this may be a sort of “bubble” which is about to explode, similar to the “bubbles” related to new technologies or real estate markets, though the consequences for economic and social development are less spectacular!

Since 2008, the global economic crisis exacerbated this situation because of its direct and indirect consequences on public and private finances, on foundations, and the different forms of patronage.

In many areas, this inclination to the disaggregation of “local worlds” of museums in Western Europe seems irreversible. Beyond the inner causes

mentioned above, the pressure on the priority sectors—welfare, employment, safety, social inclusion, childhood, the non-independent elderly, and education—is growing in all communities, both at public and private levels, without leaving sufficient space for the funding of activities that can appear less essential. As a matter of fact, these activities are not very profitable, neither from the economic nor from the electoral point of view. Tourism often tends to justify public policies connected with heritage. It privileges large museums and monuments, the most relevant sites or resounding events (such as important exhibitions and festivals), to the detriment of community institutions, which operate within proximity relationships.

Up to the present, the museum was able to defend itself, though some periodical meetings among museologists have highlighted the consequences of the critical situation and launched a plea to the traditional sponsors, both public and private. Nevertheless, these activities were fostered by cultural reasoning. Heritage is important for the identity of populations and museums manage collections with outstanding scientific value. They also play a crucial educational role supporting public schools and they attract tourists. Unfortunately, this is not enough to induce public sponsors or foundations to make favourable choices or offer permanent support, especially when visitor numbers decrease and operational costs increase. Furthermore, even communities will not rise up in favour of “their” heritage or “their” museum.

It seems to me that if we want local politicians to really appreciate heritage and promote the museum institution, we must modify our approach and move back to the intuition of the Santiago meeting,—turning heritage and the museum into useful instruments at the service of society and its development. In this case, development should be intended as a (sustainable) improvement of quality of life and of the environment. This approach thus implies the understanding and the use of heritage as a resource for the territory and the community. Since the 1980s, a local movement focusing on the “social function of the museum” was founded in Portugal. A university department enhancing “socio-museology” currently operates in Lisbon.

→ WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

At present, no consensual answer to this question is available. Therefore, we will try to outline some areas for discussion and exploration by regional networks (both existing and yet to be created) in order to come to collective, concrete and viable results.

→ FIRSTLY, A MORATORIUM

The most urgent action that should be implemented is the immediate interruption of the creation of new museums. Inaugurate a museum means assuming the responsibility to start a permanent institution. It will require a mobilisation of human and financial resources, continuous renovation,

and it will inevitably produce the accumulation of collections and documents that must be conserved and managed forever. When the initiative is promoted by a single person or group (for example, a no-profit association), sooner or later the founders will not be replaced or private funds will not be sufficient and it will be necessary to ask for public funding and official recognition of the museum, which is a procedure subordinated to demanding norms. If the initiative stems from a municipality or a public body, the appointment of a new councillor after the elections, the reduction of the annual budget, or the lack of a well-organised transition from a phase of investments to the implementation of a professional management, will weaken or block the development of the museum.

We should, therefore, stop irresponsible initiatives. The most important art, history and science museums, situated in cities or within important sites, will always be active institutions, since they are national or even global treasures. Thus, they are assigned the responsibility of privileged attention at a national or regional level. Local museums, independent of their focus, do not have same advantage and can easily be neglected, closed or destroyed.

The moratorium I propose should be widely disseminated. It should be complemented by a recommendation to be extended to all sponsors of heritage and museums as well to the institutions themselves, in order to avoid ambitious extensions of collections and/or exhibition space.

→ SECONDLY, DIAGNOSIS

Museums represent only the emerging, selected and sterilised tip of the iceberg of heritage. They are affected by socio-economic and socio-cultural transformations and even fractures, which produce consequences on the general set of heritages—landscapes, urban or rural structures, traditions and know-how, and dialects. Therefore, I think it is crucial and, above all, urgent, to foster evaluation, or diagnosis, of the situation characterising heritage and the existing museums in all territories. This procedure should produce an inventory, a balance of the current or on-going activities and an evaluation of the opportunities and risks for the future, near and far.

The diagnosis will have to be developed in a participatory way in order to involve as many heritage actors (owners and users), professionals (museologists, directors, experts) and local managers (politicians, association members, economic operators) as possible. This process will allow inventory, and also the convergence of groups of motivated people, who may be able to play a role in future strategies. It will also be necessary to compare the diagnosis with the objectives, programmes and development needs of the territory, so as to acknowledge possible cooperation and conflicts. One of the results of this diagnosis will lead to the abandonment of some museums and projects, which may be revealed as objectively impracticable. Concerning these cases, it will be necessary to find new and imaginative solutions.

→ FINALLY, ORGANISATION

Every level of the territory (district, province, region, etc.) should be provided with an instrument for heritage management, not only operating on monuments and sites, but also on diffused material and immaterial holdings, landscapes, and all the institutions that serve them (museums, libraries, archives, cultural centres, parks and nature reserves). This tool should foster the interaction, both in planning and in decision-making processes, among public powers, the community, its organisations and, finally, all other stake-holders, from largest to smallest. As in most cases, it will not ensue from the will to “preserve heritage” or to strengthen “cultural identity.” It will try to pinpoint the stakeholders’ interests and needs, which will eventually prove to be the best promoters of heritage, being aware of the fact that they need it. This represents the unavoidable conditions for heritage management structures (such as museums and ecomuseums) to obtain the means for their activities and overhead expenses. They will provide the opportunity to respond to the needs of the territory with continuity (and thus, sustainability) together with the scientific, professional and ethical standards, which are common to all heritages.

I believe that these organisations should be renovated in order to turn them into “social businesses” operating within the “Third Sector” or in the “Social Economy.” They should gradually abandon old municipal, para-municipal or association statutes (with the exception of large institutions, of course). According to the different countries and regional customs, it will be necessary to implement cooperative models which foster interaction among local heritage stakeholders, towards the hybridisation of resources: shareholding, grants, patronage, services and earned income.

At a wider territorial level, it will be necessary to prepare a map and a multi-year plan concerning heritage funding. It could take on different forms, for example:

- mutual networks between local museums and similar institutions (libraries, archives, cultural centres, nature areas);
- connection among local museums and larger institutions, provided with professional means and tools;
- mergers of similar institutions, which may be close in geographical and/or thematic aspects, or closure of the museums and subsequent deposit of their collections into an adequate regional museum.

These activities will imply in-depth studies, the participation of specialists (including legal and financial consultants) and, often, intense negotiations. They should be strongly supported and promoted by provincial and regional authorities, which could dedicate resources, grants and expertise, subordinated to the achievement of tangible results.

→ WHAT HERITAGE AND MUSEUM POLICIES?

As the general approach has been outlined, we are now going to illustrate the modalities and contents of the strategies and programmes focused on the institutions that are responsible for heritage management.

→ OFFERING SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

If we consider the local museum, or any similar institution, as a co-operative company focused on social and cultural benefits, we should be able to offer products and services which respond to the stakeholders’ expectations. For example:

STAKEHOLDER	SERVICE OFFER
Researchers, teachers, officials, artists, tour operators, politicians and administrators.	Resource Centre (maps, documents, collections of objects, pictures, videos, recordings) available on location and online. Internet portal and digitised database.
Public bodies focused on landscape monitoring, valorisation and management (at a provincial, regional and national level), education centres for the management of rural and urban contexts, industrial districts, etc.	Landscape management: monitoring, conservation, education, analysis, event organisation, interpretation, pathways, etc.
Entities developing Agenda 21 programs, environmental NGOs, universities, and archaeology, botanists, zoologists and anthropologists, etc.	Inventory of archaeology, ethnology, ecology, biodiversity, environmental management and education, development of Agenda 21 and its outputs.
Municipalities, public and private organisations focused on artistic and cultural activities, schools at different levels.	Realisation of cultural activities: exhibitions, visits, itineraries, events, art programs, entertainment. Educational action, Logistics.
Social entities, municipal administration, permanent education.	Programs dedicated to the cultural and social integration and inclusion of new inhabitants; cultural literacy.
Agencies and agents focused on local economic development and agricultural, artisan and commercial labour organisations.	Identification and organisation of production, transformation and commercialisation chains focused on food products, both natural and related to local artisan traditions.
Travel agencies, tour-operators, individual visitors.	Reception, tourist information, organisation of group or personalised programs, publication of promotion and orientation material, supply of professional guides, development of itineraries and events.

Within this context, it is clearly evident that each stakeholder should guarantee the possibility to fund the services which are offered. This could happen directly, that is, by paying the price, or through capital investment. This operation presupposes that the company is able to competently respond to the professional requirements of the stakeholders

(who become the clients and possible shareholders). These will include appraisal of real costs, negotiation of contracts and agreements, quality control and communication. I must repeat that it will always be done within the limits of the Third Sector, i.e. Exclusively for in the best public interest and without ever looking for purely capitalistic profit.

→ MONITORING

The organisations focused on the collective/co-operative management of heritage require the establishment of a permanent and participatory evaluation system, which involves not only the actors, but also the beneficiaries and the users of services, products and activities. It is necessary to define the parameters and criteria to be employed in three main areas:

- cultural: management of the heritage (cultural asset) of the territory, depending on the context, living culture of the involved communities, general interest (public policies in the different administrative levels) and consequences on the school system and life-long learning;
- social: impact of heritage and related activities on social cohesion, dissemination of traditions and values, development of individual creativity, inclusion of new inhabitants and improvement of life styles (social asset);
- economic: assessment of investments and procedures, impact on employment, appraisal of productions chains, assessment of the products quality and commercial practices, private heritage transmission.

It would be preferable to start beginning with a permanent mechanism for the evaluation and dissemination of the results and observations from community members and stakeholders. It could be useful to include external assistance of an independent expert or academic for a balanced and independent view.

→ A PERMANENT ADAPTATION TO SOCIETY

Because of their bond to associative, community or individual initiatives, one of the main problems of contemporary museums and other local institutions is likely to be found in their ageing, at least regarding the less recent experiences. The original project, the legal status and programme usually correspond to the ideas and values of the founder's generation. Time goes by, and the institution develops according to the initial guidelines. In the meantime, new generations succeed, life conditions evolve, as well as the living culture and the social, political and economic contexts. Organisations age, from a material point of view, and start to require investment for conservation and maintenance. Above all, the members of the community no longer acknowledge the appearance and the role of the museum. Their expectations and needs change, and they are not willing to invest significant amounts of money and time in preservation or improvement. Voluntary work and philanthropy languish.

An even more serious concern is young people, who are not at all interested in a heritage view anchored to the past. Beyond the compulsory school visits, they are not attracted by a museum conceived for, and by, their grandparents. How can we then hope that the people who are going to be the actors of tomorrow start to invest in heritage again? Monitoring will not be sufficient to solve these problems. Heritage politics, museums, ecomuseums and similar organisations will have to adapt to the turnover of generations and thus remain active and periodically evolve or resign themselves to disappearance.

→ HERITAGE, MUSEUM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

In its widest meaning, heritage is an essential resource. Together with human capital, it is the main asset of the territory. Heritage interacts with all the sectors and phases of the development of a territory, within what we could refer to as local development.

By local development, we do not mean the growth in wealth of an area and its inhabitants, rather the sustainable improvement of the quality of life and of the context of the life of its inhabitants. Obviously, quality of life has an economic component, but this is not the only one. Heritage, instead, is part of all sectors and development programmes—referring to different sectors such as cultural and natural contexts, education, leisure, agriculture, artisan and commercial activities, human relationships and employment, attractiveness and image of the territory, local strategic plans, etc. This means that social actors and heritage institutions should participate in the decision-making processes, modalities and activities focused on local development. Reciprocally, the agents of local development have to strongly invest in heritage management and to cooperate with heritage agents and actors, starting with museums.

Furthermore, the heritage institution is an instrument promoting de-



IMG. 6.30 — Núcleo do Moinho de Maré de Corroios: the Corroios Tide Mill venue within the Ecomuseu Municipal do Seixal, near Lisbon, Portugal, pictured with the “Baía do Seixal” frigate. © EMS/CDI. Photo by António Silva.

velopment. It owns equipment, has experts and all the information that is necessary to enhance development programmes and activities (services indicated in the above table). The museum thus has to take part in local development, participating in both official and ordinary practices, decisions and activities.

Through the efficacy of its role on territory development, the museum will obtain legitimacy, as well as the resources it needs.

→ AFTERWORD

It is possible to mention other phenomena confronting contemporary local museums and, in particular, community museums (or ecomuseums). One of these focuses on the mobility of people, within a country's borders or between different countries: young people, professionals, refugees and poor people move, with their families or alone, often under difficult economic and cultural conditions.

In our local urban and rural territories, we receive these people for more or less extended periods, sometimes through a permanent installation. Their presence and their lives among us represent a challenge for the social cohesion and cultural life of the communities. I have often come across these problems, and I have recently reflected on the potential role of museums as active participants and experimenters.

The following text is an excerpt from a speech given during the a seminar organised by the French association "Génériques," in Paris on Le patrimoine de l'immigration en France et en Europe: enjeu social et culturel, 10 and 11 December 2012. The French original will be published shortly was part of the online Papers of the Seminar (see www.generiques.org).

It would be possible to suggest a different approach to social integration, which may start from the territory, the community and the local heritage. As far as I know, a systematic application of this idea still hasn't been proposed. It would ensue from the development of a simultaneous education for both populations which are meeting each other in order to foster mutual understanding:

- by encouraging the new inhabitants who have settled in the territory and within the community to construct new roots through acquaintance with the local heritage and the acknowledgement of its values, recognised in the perspective of their own cultural reference system;
- by offering to the "rooted" (native) inhabitants an interpretation of the heritage which these new inhabitants have imported from foreign countries, through a presentation offered by the immigrants themselves, who should participate in the definition of the display exhibiting the culture and the heritage of their homeland.

Concerning the first point, a mere visit to the protected heritage is not sufficient: it is necessary to take into consideration, above all, the living heritage of the community, the way people live and their values.

Likewise, it is not possible to expect the school to facilitate the cultural assimilation of the children. Actually, the point here is not about assimilation, but about fostering understanding of a new environment both for parents and children, in order to enhance their everyday lives and social relationships. Some research I carried out concerning the cultural customs of the inhabitants of a working-class district in Dijon highlighted the fact that the local immigrant groups are more attracted by the anthropological Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne than the local Art or Archaeological museums; via its exhibitions exploring rural practices, the first evokes a shared rural cultural background, while the others refer to concepts and codes which are alien to both immigrants and the autochthonous population.

In general, the approach to the local culture and heritage should be promoted in relationship with the living culture of the new inhabitants and their reference systems, so that they can assimilate them in their own way. And it is even more important that the children, who receive a "banking"¹ education from the public school system, are not shifted from their parents and their local reality. Substantially, this issue deals with the same principle which forms the basis of the decision to teach French as a foreign language: it is about teaching heritage not as a natural heritage, but rather as an asset to be acquired and used.

The second proposition, which is addressed to the natives, is more complex and requires the participation and cooperation of a network of public institutions, which may employ a variety of different practices and strategies. (...) The common objective is focused on the possibility of changing the point of view of the majority of the "rooted" inhabitants about their fellow citizens with a foreign provenance, through the discovery of the art, literature and cinema of their countries of origin, but also of their everyday practices, religion, traditional values, monuments and landscapes. Unfortunately, in most cases the local cultural structures do not accept changing their habits and refuse to be instrumentalised.

Indeed, these practices are about instrumentalisation, though in this case it is clearly related to the public interest and it should be integrated into the policies concerning social development—e.g. in the framework of what is known in France as "politique de la ville" (urban regeneration policy). The Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble has already acknowledged this process, as demonstrated by the exhibitions promoted, such as that illustrating the Italian city of Corato, which was the origin of many inhabitants of the city, as well as the "Un air d'Italie"² initiatives. For several years, the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre (Fresnes, Val de Marne) and the Écomusée du Fier Monde (Montréal, Québec) have been developing various programmes (participative surveys, network practices

1 This definition refers to the words of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who highlighted the distinction between a type of education which imposes normalised information from the top to the bottom, and another type, liberating and based on the living culture and the sharing of experience and knowledge among the trainer and the trainee.

2 Grenoble and Corato are "sister cities"; this agreement particularly fosters cultural programmes; see: <http://www.musee-dauphinois.fr/2580-un-air-d-italie.htm>.

with socio-cultural associations, exhibitions, events) dedicated to the integration of the “different” groups within local communities through the enhancement of the local heritage.

(...)

Another part of this approach deals with the transmission of the original cultural heritage of the emigrants to their descendants, which may support the transmission process happening in the familial environment, and which is often assertive or degrading in comparison to the overvalued local heritage: the institutional label gives a special value to the acknowledgment of the “culture of the others.”³ It is important to deal in an egalitarian way with different types of heritage, major or minor, famous and recognised or modest and intimate.

In order to allow this hypothesis to be fulfilled and to achieve the related objectives, it is necessary to respect a certain number of principles, both ethical and functional. Here are a few of them:

- mutual respect, in order to avoid the creation of a hierarchy among the values embedded by each heritage, including the cultural and aesthetic ones;
- participation, since it is important to prevent the monopolisation of the information about heritage by institutions and experts: everyone could and should bring along their own knowledge, memory and know-how about each element of the heritage of its community;
- reciprocity, which may foster a dynamic balance between the groups holding the different heritages, each one enhancing the knowledge and appreciation of the others: this is how the inhabitants of Lorraine have adopted Italian pasta and the inhabitants of my home village have discovered couscous as a consequence of the construction on the A6 motorway;
- mediation, which should encourage the use of the means of expression and the reference systems of the different individuals and groups; this issue concerns neither a cultivated public, nor scholars, but rather the whole population, with its knowledge and gaps, and code systems that vary according to age, education level, social origin or geography, native language, etc.

In order to put these principles into practice, it is necessary to implement the instruments which may be able to make the above mentioned programmes successful, stimulate the participation of those interested in the promotion of their heritage as much as possible, and fulfill these actions speedily without depending on militancy and/or voluntary work. Apart from archive centres and public libraries, we feel that local museums may be very a important means, whose generalist competences can more or less cover all their original territory and the populations which make up their

3 Varine, Hugues de. 1976. *La Culture des autres*. Paris: Le Seuil.

natural public. This assumption is based on the possibility for these museums, which are too often centred on their own collections, to take part in the exchange of the living heritages of these populations, including those who come from different countries, as well as drawing on their collections in order to explore some of the themes related to these heritages.

The museums which best prepared for these processes are community museums (often known as “ecomuseums”), since their mission is mainly focused on the possibility of serving their territory and community, starting from the heritage resources which they have to manage in a participatory way.

(...)

Though these ideas and propositions are still personal considerations, I believe this is a very fertile field for research and, above all, for an analysis of those case studies which have already obtained results which may be verified and evaluated.

Source: this essay reports the presentation given by Hugues De Varine during the Conference held at Pontebarnardo (Cuneo, Alta Valle Stura, venue of the “Ecomuseo della pastorizia”) on May 22nd, 2011.

The Afterward was added after a fruitful and stimulating confrontation with the author.

Translated by Elena Montanari

Case Studies



IMG. 6.31 — Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France. A glimpse on the exhibition “Pieds Noirs ici et la tête ailleurs,” 2012. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.

Écomusée du Val de Bièvre

Val de Bièvre Ecomuseum, Fresnes, Paris, France

The Écomusée du Val de Bièvre is an urban ecomuseum, articulating its mission around the main issues concerning the community inhabiting the southern area of the Île-de-France region. By positioning such topics as urbanisation, work, immigration, the status of women, citizenship and identity at the core of the notion of heritage, the institution operates as an active instrument at the service of the population, on the one hand preserving collective memory, on the other, triggering critical debates about social problems, promoting awareness and a sense of belonging, and fostering inter-cultural dialogue.

The foundation of this ecomuseum participates in the original evolutionary process affirming the definition of this special institution at the end of the 1970s, along with the enhancement of the Nouvelle Muséologie theoretical framework. The idea of establishing an ecomuseum in Fresnes originated in 1976, through the development of a public debate on the preservation of an ancient farm, the Ferme de Cottinville, and benefited from the enthusiastic contribution of George Henri Rivière and Françoise Wasserman, who sustained the creation of a museum operating as a centre for cultural promotion, networking with existing institutions. Though the restoration of the farm was completed in 1984, the research and display activities officially started in 1979 through the construction of active relationships with the community, the development of new investigation and collection practices focused on the local material and immaterial heritage, and the inauguration of the first exhibitions, that took place in the municipal polyvalent room. These initiatives were enhanced when the ecomuseum moved into the Ferme de Cottinville. This ancient farm, which from the 12th to 16th century was the residence of a noble family, is part of Fresnes' historical architectural heritage. It is an articulated struc-

ture composed of different buildings surrounding a central courtyard, which evolved over the centuries. Today, the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre shares its location with a national school of music, the Regional Conservatory, and the local theatre, the Grange Dimière; this spatial cohabitation is representative of the cooperative approach which characterises the ecomuseum, fostering and benefiting from the network with several local cultural institutions.

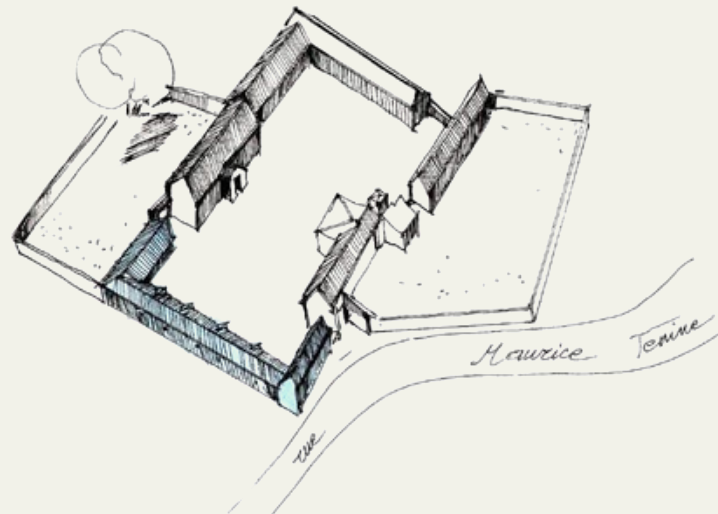
Originally, the ecomuseum was dedicated to the promotion and development of the municipal territory, and was thereafter known as Écomusée de Fresnes. The focus of its theoretical and operational activities was mainly directed towards the rural past of the area and its historical heritage, illustrated through temporary events and a permanent display, aimed at presenting the development of the city and the Ferme de Cottinville. At the end of the 1990s, the ecomuseum underwent several profound transformations. In 1999 the territory was included in the Communauté d'Agglomération de Val de Bièvre, thus in 2006 the institution re-defined its relationship with the area at an inter-municipal level, extending its research and exhibition practices to an expanded cultural perimeter (including seven municipalities), as reflected in the change of the name to Écomusée du Val de Bièvre. This transformation also led to the removal of the original permanent display about the history of Fresnes (2009) and the evolution of this space for the presentation of exhibitions arising from the participative workshops.

As highlighted by its recognised position within the main national networks—Fédération des Écomusées et Musées de Société, Association Muséologie et Experimentations Sociales, Les Neufs de Transilie—over the last twenty years,

IMG. 6.32 — The courtyard of the Ferme de Cottinville, 2006. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.33 — Axonometric sketch of the Ferme de Cottinville, 1999. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.34 — Information panels at the entrance of the Ferme de Cottinville, 2012. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.35 — Educative activities in the resource centre, 2005. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.36 — Set up of the participative exhibition "Les Jeunes s'exposent," 2012. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.37 — Exhibition of the outcomes of the Atelier de l'Imaginaire "L'ordre des choses," 2012. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.

the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre has confirmed its role as a preeminent social agent, mirroring contemporary urban society, reflecting with the local population on its own future, as well as communicating through its collective memory.

→ AN INCLUSIVE INSTRUMENT SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Within the typological ecomuseum context, the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre stands out as a unique institution, which has been strengthening its position as an active social and cultural instrument at the service of the community, through an innovative and ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions, participative activities triggering an inclusive representation of the local identity, and research and collecting practices focused on contemporary heritage.

Its distinctive features first draw on the particular nature of the ecomuseum institution, conceived by George Henri Rivière as “a mirror in which the local population views itself to discover its own image,” this is, a progressive tool of knowledge and auto-analysis. A more specific characterisation of the institution ensues from its peculiar focus—as stated by Hugues de Varine, some ecomuseums centre their mission on natural heritage, while some others relate their programme to a socio-cultural mission—and context, bearing the reading of urban and border areas as epicentres for the enhancement of particularly committed institutions, actively reacting to the phenomena related to this “age of migrations.” The suburban territory of the Communauté d’Agglomération de Val de Bièvre could be described as a geographical and cultural frontier lying in-between the city and the country, on the one hand straining towards metropolitan dynamics, on the other clinging to its rural past and decentralised position. The Department, venue of the main prison in France (Fresnes), is characterised by a lively and diversified economic structure and a heterogeneous demographic frame (including 12% immigrants, according to INSEE).

In this socio-cultural context, the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre presents itself as a tool aimed

at investigating, displaying and promoting the topics and people which usually remain unmentioned and excluded. This task is enhanced through the choice of the themes explored and exhibited—the initiatives promoted have dealt, for example, with the condition of workers throughout the economic crisis, “Quand le travail ne paie plus” (2008), or the discrimination against “people of nomadic origin,” “Insaisissables Voyageurs: Tsiganes” (2000). The institution was also one of the first museums in France to deal with the topic of immigration, showing “Rassemblement: un siècle d’immigration en Île-de-France” (1993), or “Paroles de femmes tunisiennes” (1998)—as well as through the involvement of the community in all phases of the ecomuseum’s work.

The participation of the population is encouraged and supported at different levels and via a variety of strategies. For example, the adoption of a programme based entirely on temporary activities not only fits the contemporary nature of the socio-cultural heritage presented—which is probably not possible to fix into a permanent display because of its multifaceted and evolving character—but also feeds the interest of the people through the constant renovation of the activities proposed, stimulates the participation of different types of public, reinforces the role of the ecomuseum as a place for cultural encounter, and provides opportunities to enhance the active cooperation of the members of the community as actors of the museum.

The Écomusée du Val de Bièvre is the promoter of special participative activities, specifically conceived to foster the contribution of the population to the cultural production. In particular, these experiences include two types of practice which produce short-term exhibitions displayed in their own dedicated space, the original stable (previously occupied by the permanent exhibition). Firstly, since 2006, the institution has been organising annual “Ateliers de l’Imaginaire,” plastic art workshops dedicated to the exploration of local heritage, identity and citizenship through experiential

tion in artistic practices. Each year, from October to June, four school classes and a group of fifteen adults are guided by the ecomuseum staff and a special educator, a plastic photographer, through an interactive programme aimed at increasing acknowledgment, awareness and sense of belonging to the territory through the reading of a transversal theme, by analysing its features, documenting its elements, thus producing a personal interpretation. The final outcomes are presented in two/three-month exhibitions—e.g. “Témoins de l’éphémère” (2007), “Secondes peus secondes vues” (2010), “Lieux d’écrits, lieux décrits” (2010), “Territoires, à la limite” (2011) and “L’ordre des choses” (2012). Secondly, the ecomuseum promotes participative exhibitions organised in cooperation with local art centres, socio-cultural associations and the Fresnes prison. The partnerships with these institutions, operating as fundamental mediators fostering the relationship between the museum and the population, are crucial strategies to involve a wider public and, above all, different demographic categories (e.g. young people and immigrants), who become the main contributors in the definition of special activities focused on the themes that concern the community or a particular group, in the production of the narration, in the creation of the display, and therefore in the promotion of a critical debate about contemporary issues—e.g. “Lieux et histoires de vie” (2010–11), “Des jeunes s’exposent” (2012).

A further form of participation supported by the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre concerns the collection strategies. Beside traditional conservation activities—objects, photographs, cards, journals, videos and interviews, organised into four specific areas (Communication, Transmission, Life and Social Actions, Architecture and Urbanism), document the local history, the material culture related to its rural and artisanal past, but also such topics as the physical development of the suburban area, sociological evolution and the immigration flows—in 2000, the institution started to include testimonies narrating the recent history of the territory through the direct contribution of the community. This strategy was inaugurated by the exhibition “Vos objets au

musée racontent Fresnes,” which attempted to reconstruct local memory by presenting objects lent by the population. The initiative triggered the development of a new collection methodology, based mainly on the donation of representative objects, each one documented with a description of its history, social value, technical use and anthropological meaning. This information is always accompanied by the personal story of the donor, recorded in interviews and images illustrating its original (physical and cultural) context. Through the direct combination of material and immaterial culture, as well as personal and collective memories, this “biographical approach” to the collection contributes to a complex representation of the local identity. By including several pieces from people’s houses, this heritage offers an interesting overview of the effects of political, economic and cultural phenomena—e.g. the consequences of globalisation on the material culture—and, potentially, the multicultural evolution of the community. These practices trigger significant questions related to identity—for example, should a Maghrebi immigrant donate an object from his country or one produced in Fresnes?

Identity, citizenship and controversial societal issues are often the core of the major events promoted by the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, the long term exhibitions aimed at presenting the territory, its heritage, the pivotal events and the socio-cultural issues. These representations are developed through significant depictions—arising from the words and images produced by the community e.g. “Parle ma banlieue. Le Val de Bièvre vu par ses habitants” (2007–08), or from representative artistic expressions e.g. “Doisneau en Val de Bièvre” (2011)—or through the reading of relevant transversal phenomena (ranging, for example, from socio-cultural conditions and work issues to urban transformations), mainly observed from a contemporary critical point of view. Even when they explore historical events or topics, the presentations always include an overview about their effects on the current situation—e.g. the integration of French citizens from Algeria,

IMG. 6.38 — The exhibition “Vos objets au musée racontent Fresnes,” 2001. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



IMG. 6.39 — The exhibition “Pieds Noirs ici et la tête ailleurs,” 2012. Courtesy of Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.



“Pieds Noirs ici et la tête ailleurs” (2012). These exhibitions are displayed in modest but evocative settings, which enhance their communicative power through the combination of diverse means—the display of objects and documents, providing evidence and scientific documentation, the support of audiovisual devices (though any ICT tool may be included), the setting of evocative scenographic projects, achieved using simple techniques and exploiting the symbolic representations conceived by a designer, immersing the visitor into a personal exploration (rather than guiding him/her through a fixed documentary path). The narrations are usually accompanied by the interviews of selected members of the community, prepared in cooperation with specialists such as ethnologists, sociologists and economists. The intensive use of the population’s actual words, reporting experiences and opinions, permits a reading of the topic with plural voices.

Through the paradigmatic modulation of cultural actions and participative practices, this institution fulfils the ecomuseum mission as an instrument for the promotion of information and self-awareness, and allows a pluralistic presentation of the territory and of the local heritage.

Elena Montanari

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IMG. 6.40 — Musée Dauphinois, Grenoble, France. A panel of the exhibition “Un air d’Italie,” 2012. © Musée Dauphinois.

Musée Dauphinois

Grenoble, France

The Musée Dauphinois is a regional museum based in Grenoble, aimed at preserving and presenting the testimonies of the collective memory of the ancient Dauphiné Province, a south-eastern French region situated in the Alps, along the Italian border, which was reorganised into three different Departments (Drôme, Hautes-Alpes and Isère) after the 1789 Revolution. Its innovative museological programme, focused on an inclusive relationship with the locals, adopted inhabitants and guests of the territory, marks it out as a paradigmatic “Musée de Société”—or Musée Regional de l’Homme. Through an engaging programme of temporary exhibitions (two/three every year), conferences, publications and research activities, it promotes archaeological, historical, ethnographic and ethnological investigations of the territory, presenting its physical and socio-cultural development from rural and industrial past to contemporaneity, in order to depict the local identity, its roots, present features and questions for the future.

The institution was founded in 1906 by the anthropologist Hipolyte Müller, who conceived it as a people’s museum, mirroring the material and immaterial culture ensuing from the relationship between man and this particular environment. Originally, his ethnographic research was displayed in the Chapelle Sainte-Marie-d’en-Bas, a 17th century chapel that was rapidly over-filled by the constantly growing collection. In 1968 the institution was therefore moved to the Couvent Sainte-Marie-d’en-Haut, a renovated 17th century monastery situated on the slope of the Rabot-Bastille hill overlooking Grenoble’s historic centre, and characterised by a traditional typological framework. Though its mission remained unaltered, this move coincided with an important revision of the institution, following the interdisciplinary and

progressive museum programme that was being theorised by George Henri Rivière. In particular, in order to revitalise the decreasing interest of the public, the director Jean-Pierre Laurent (1971–1986) gradually started to dismantle the permanent display and to promote new temporary exhibitions, which soon occupied all 5000 sq.m available. This museological renovation, which was meant to react to the evolving social, cultural and technical needs, triggered an expansion of the archives through the addition of a 2000 sq.m recovered military building; this choice also responded to the need to expand collection activities (previously focused on objects only) to further material, such as photos, recordings and videos, to add ateliers as well as new image and sound archives to the museum services, and to digitalise the heritage collected.

In 1992, the management of the institution, previously the responsibility of the Municipality, was taken over by the Isère General Council. This shift not only modified the use of funds but also strengthened the relationship with the local area. By potentiating its role as a catalyst for interdisciplinary research and educative activities, and coordinator of a network of cultural institutions and heritage sites, the Musée Dauphinois has become the pivotal element of a departmental service dedicated to the “Conservation du Patrimoine de l’Isère” (CPI), and promoting the value of the local heritage.

The history of this institution demonstrates that the Musée Dauphinois has been able to evolve in parallel to the transformation of the society it serves, and to adapt its scientific and cultural project to the changing socio-cultural circumstances without deviating from its original mission and tasks. The current programme of the museum is still mainly based on temporary exhibitions, investigating various historical or contemporary issues. However, since 1998 it

IMG. 6.41 — Couvent Sainte-Marie-d'en-Haut, plan of the ground floor in 1905. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.42 — Couvent Sainte-Marie-d'en-Haut. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.43 — View of the Chapel. © Musée Dauphinois.



has also re-integrated some permanent settings aimed at presenting local cultural roots, in order to commemorate and increase appreciation of some of the aspects to which the identity of the Alpine area is anchored. The upper floor of the building is dedicated to the “People of the Alps,” an interactive and multi-sensorial display (renovated in 2006) which presents objects, sounds and images depicting the life of the ancestral mountain-dwellers, illustrating their daily domestic and working activities, and celebrating their skills and ingenuity. This exhibition is accompanied by another installation exploring “The Great History of Skiing,” which focuses on this characteristic means of Alpine transport, where it was used to move, hunt and fight. The lower floor, where it is possible to visit the Chapel and the display illustrating the history of the monastery and the building itself as classified “place of memory,” also participate in the general presentation of the territory.

→ AN AUTHORITY OF RECOGNITION FOR LOCAL DIVERSITY

The analysis of the articulation of the exhibition spaces in the Musée Dauphinois highlights the fact that the architectural conception of the museum follows the layout of a monastic typology. All the rooms are gathered around a central courtyard, avoiding the relationship with the surrounding environment; most of the windows are screened and contact with the exterior is mainly limited to the entrance and panoramic terrace, which is the only place where it is possible to enjoy the privileged, elevated view of the city. Nevertheless, the introverted spatial character of the institution does not correspond to the open and dynamic cultural relationships it establishes with the city, the surrounding area, as well as the global context. The research and exhibition activities promoted by the museum are designed to offer a thorough, multi-layered and inclusive exploration of the local identity, combining an analysis of embedded ancestral roots with an investigation of the connections with the world and the contributions of different cultures (through the migrations of people, know-how, ideas and objects) to the construc-

tion of the history of the territory. The Musée Dauphinois is a bridge between past and present, near and far, local and global.

The intensive programme of temporary exhibitions, publications and conferences explore a variety of themes, focusing on different, distinctive features of the area, including archaeological finds, heritage sites, rural and industrial know-how, specific events or characters and ethnological findings. Among the activities promoted, a main focus is dedicated to both historical and contemporary societal questions and, specifically, to the analysis of the diverse components that have contributed to shaping the local population. Since the 1980s, the Musée Dauphinois has regularly promoted significant research into the cultural diversity that characterises the territory, highlighting the economic and social role of the various immigrant groups that have settled locally over the centuries (although the most significant migrations took place in the 20th century).

From November 2011 to December 2012, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Italian Unity, the museum promoted a series of events aimed at investigating, debating and celebrating the presence of Italian immigrants in the Isère territory and their contribution to its historic and contemporary development. This rich programme, enhanced through cooperation with several administrative and cultural institutions, included conferences (e.g. “Présence de l’Italie an Dauphiné,” “L’Italianité Aujourd’hui,” “Résistance et Identité Démocratique France/Italie,” “Histoire et Mémoire des Migrants Italiens”), musical, theatrical and dance performances, film, eno-gastronomic events and various exhibitions (“Les Émigrés Italiens en Isère: 150 Ans de Fidélité à Leur Patrie Depuis l’Unité,” “L’Abécédaire Voyageur d’Italie,” “Mon Voisin est Italien”). In particular, the first floor of the Musée Dauphinois was dedicated to “Un Air d’Italie,” a display designed to illustrate the history of the connections between the Dauphinoise and the various Italian cultures.

The museographical articulation of the exhibition arose out of the structure of the narration,

IMG. 6.44 — Setting of the exhibition “D’Isère et d’Arménie,” 1997. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.45 — Poster of the exhibition “D’Isère et d’Arménie,” 1997. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.46 — A glimpse on the exhibition “Un air d’Italie,” 2012. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.47 — A view of the exhibition “Des Grecs,” 1993. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.48 — One of the display cases in the settings illustrating “Des Grecs,” 1993. © Musée Dauphinois.



organised into three main themes. The first room reports on the traces of Italian representatives in the history of the Dauphiné area, who contributed to the original development of the civilisation (mixing the Allobroges population, even before the expansion of the Roman Empire) and were later integrated into the economic and administrative system (through the transfer of professional skills and know-how, such as the Lombard merchants and bankers during the 13th century, and the masons in the 16th century). They contributed to urban growth and fostered architectural and artistic production. These connections are explained, documented through data and figures, and illustrated via significant objects, works of art (ancestors' portraits and urban scenes) and maps, geographically and temporally depicting the migration flows. The next spatial sequence is dedicated to immigration stories, whose narration is supported by personal memories: after an initial glimpse at the emigration experiences, presented through “testimonial objects” (tools, luggage and passports, associated with pictures of their owners and accompanied by a popular song), the display explores the phenomenon of immigration, presenting the gradual positioning within the work structure, illustrating the increasingly active involvement in the political and social life of the area, reporting on the specialisation and contemporary mobility of qualified professionals and researchers, and finally highlighting the effects of the integration process; This is not presented as mere assimilation of the French culture; the exhibition demonstrates the preservation of original roots (through the persistence of family bonds and the survival of particular traditions, such as linguistic and culinary habits) and exemplifies current Italian influences on the local identity, rather like the interaction between different cultures, arising from the possibility to balance the conservation of some distinctive features and the implementation of new bonds. The definition of the inter-cultural identity of the new generations, characterised by the coexistence of the Italian roots and the French culture, is depicted in the space dedicated to the third

theme, through a photographic installation and the video “Un Air d’Italo-Isérois.”

The main focus is on the successful stories of immigration and inter-cultural integration—as emphasised also by the contextualisation of the Italian stories into a chromatic French-connoted environment: the central sequence of exhibition spaces is in fact characterised by the dominant use of red, white and blue lights and panels—and the very limited references to social frictions and racial incidents, lends an exceedingly “positive” slant to the presentation. Nevertheless, the Musée Dauphinois stands out as a relevant authority of recognition for minority communities. The sequence of initiatives presenting the various cultural identities that contributed to the shaping of Isère society, analysing their encounters and validating mutual contributions—e.g. “Les Grecs de Grenoble” (March 1993–January 1994); “Pour que la vie continue... D’Isère au Maghreb: Mémoires d’immigrés” (October 1999–December 2000); “Français d’Isère et d’Algérie” (May 2003–September 2004); “Face au Génocide. Du Cambodge à l’Isère” (April–October 2009); “Ce que nous devons à l’Afrique” (October 2010–January 2012)—shows that the museum operates as an inclusive societal agent. By triggering an acknowledgement of cultural diversity as a distinctive feature of the historic and contemporary development of the territory—and thus promoting the idea of a particular “Dauphinoisité” (a specific local identity constructed through the interactions among the diverse components who gathered and mixed in the region)—this institution fosters inter-cultural understanding and social cohesion.

Cultural diversity is, in general, a peculiar and recurrent focus of the activities promoted by the Musée Dauphinois, and is transversally mentioned in several exhibitions. This approach is paradigmatically exemplified by the final part of the display concerning the international traditions of hat design, “Voyage dans ma Tête” (March–September 2012). This journey through Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Asia, via a rich private Alpine hats,



IMG. 6.49 — A view of the exhibition “Un air d’Italie,” 2012. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.50 — One of the thresholds separating the different parts of the exhibition “Un air d’Italie,” 2012. © Musée Dauphinois.

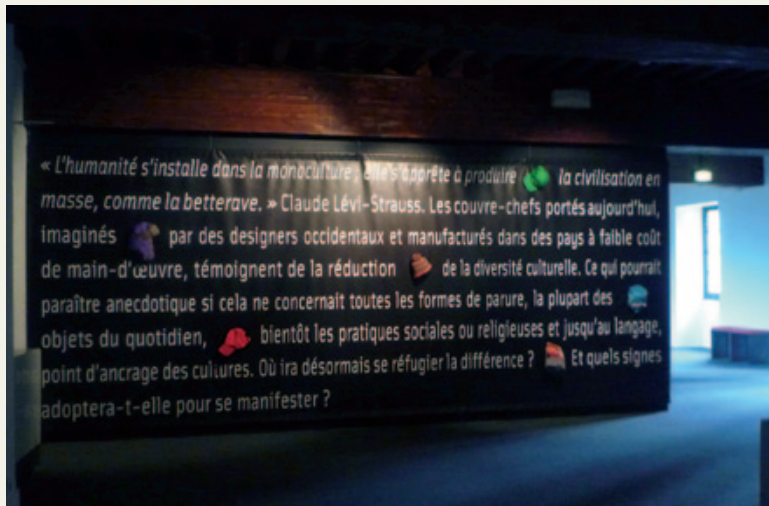


IMG. 6.51 — The panel closing the exhibition “Un air d’Italie,” 2012, fostering a reflection on the contemporary migration issues. © Musée Dauphinois.

IMG. 6.52 — The cloister of the monastery is often used as an exhibition space. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.53 — The panel closing the exhibition “Voyage dans ma tête,” 2012, inviting a consideration about the deleterious effects of globalisation on cultural diversity. © Musée Dauphinois.



IMG. 6.54 — The starting setting of the permanent exhibition “Gens de l’Alpe.” © Musée Dauphinois.



illustrating the distinctiveness of local products; this display becomes the opportunity to highlight the dispersion of differences and specificities in the contemporary material culture, and to envision the consequences of the dilution of the identity roots, as emphasised by a quotation from Claude Lévi-Strauss. The mission of the Musée Dauphinois may therefore be characterised as the acknowledgment and preservation of cultural diversity as a distinctive feature of identity.

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IMG. 6.55 — Gallerie Piedicastello, Trento, Italy. The exhibition “Ritorno sul Don,” 2010–2011. Courtesy of Fondazione MST.

Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino

Trentino History Museum Foundation, Trento, Italy

This complex institution, aimed at investigating, presenting and adding value to the historic evolution of the Trentino Province and historical South Tyrol, works as a catalyst for an interconnected system of research and exhibition activities diffused throughout the territory, playing a crucial role in the production of a coordinated cultural programme. Though it has a physical base in Trento, where the administrative offices, library and research centre are located, the “Museo Storico del Trentino” Foundation is the operative core of a widespread network of different initiatives and actors, fostering and enhancing cooperation among the institutions, associations and communities distributed throughout the valleys, stimulating interaction and supporting participation practices, thus promoting an inclusive representation of the multi-layered cultural identity which characterises the region.

The Foundation operates as a living archive of local memory, managing several collections and supporting new collecting activities—historic objects, photographs, paintings, prints, maps, cards, diaries, letters, journals and popular literature are currently being integrated with new media and tools, which are implemented through innovative projects, such as “Trentino Italia storie pop” (2012–13). The intention is to present significant stories of contemporary citizens via modern means of communication, and to document and present the history of the region from the 18th century up to the present day. In recent years, it has also been supporting the constitution of new archival and documentation centres, such as the “Archivio della Scrittura Popolare” (1987) and the “Centro di documentazione sulla storia dell’emigrazione trentina” (2004), in order to promote further conservation and retrieval practices, organise educational and informative events, and guarantee wider accessibility to artifacts and information. The Foundation works

as a cultural interface patronising the construction of a networked conception and fruition of the diffused local heritage, for example through the coordination of tourist itineraries connecting significant sites characterised by natural, architectural, symbolic or historical values. It also promotes and funds permanent and temporary research projects, mainly developed by young local scholars, which focus on different aspects of the local area’s identity. These include the history of the city of Trento and of the region, the physical and social transformation of significant “places of memory” (“Il parco di Piazza Dante: imparare a leggere i monumenti pubblici come fonti per la storia,” 2011; “La monumentalizzazione del Doss Trento,” 2011; “Vuoto di memoria: la riscoperta del quartiere del Sas di Trento,” 2011–12), the diffused cooperative economic structure, as well as various linguistic and distinctive cultural issues (“Confini demarcati - percepiti - superati,” 2007–11; “Per una storia del turismo nell’arco alpino,” 2009–12). One major focus of these investigations is dedicated to the 20th-century emigration flows from Trentino to neighbouring countries (“Partenze, Arrivi, Ritorni: Trent’anni di emigrazione trentina in Svizzera,” 2010–11; “Gli archivi della Vallagarina: fonti per lo studio dell’emigrazione trentina negli anni settanta del 19 secolo,” 2010–12) and to the Americas (“Trentini Americani: memoria di emigrazione negli Stati Uniti,” 2009–12; “Emigrazione trentina in Colombia,” 2010–11), although some recent activities have also demonstrated an increasing interest in contemporary immigration phenomena (as illustrated, for example, by the photos by Adelfo Bayr exhibited in January and February 2012, in “Trento né ieri né domani,” which highlight the heterogeneity of men, women and objects flowing through the permeable spaces of the city). The outcomes of the collection and research activities are present-

IMG. 6.56 — Simulation of the development of the galleries throughout the mountain, 2010–2011. Courtesy of Studio Terragni.



IMG. 6.57 — Plan of the exhibition “Storicamente ABC,” 2009–2010. Courtesy of Studio Terragni.



IMG. 6.58 — The exhibition “Storicamente ABC” in the Black Gallery, 2009–2010. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.



IMG. 6.59 — View of the entrance. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.



IMG. 6.60 — The library in the White Gallery, 2010–2011. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.



IMG. 6.61 — The exhibition “Ritorno sul Don” in the Black Gallery, 2010–2011. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.

ed through the promotion and/or coordination of conferences, public events, publications, a TV channel (HistoryLAB) and, above all, permanent and temporary exhibitions, organised in cooperation with partner institutions and associations (municipal offices, libraries, cultural associations, historical sites and ecomuseums).

In particular, temporary exhibitions play a crucial role in the development of the Foundation's mission. They allow a diversification of the cultural offer, the enhancement of networked initiatives, the presentation of transversal topics and engagement with controversial themes. In order to enhance and develop these aims, the Foundation supported the constitution of the Gallerie Piedicastello, an exhibitivite institution founded in 2007, designed to present the histories of the places and of the communities of Trentino. The Gallerie are situated in two former highway tunnels, built in the 1970s to permit rapid crossing of the urban district of Piedicastello, and transformed into a cultural venue through the contribution of architect Jeffrey Schnapp and Studio Terragni. The Black Tunnel is a 300 metre non-stop, immersive exhibition space: the completely dark linear path offers an evocative setting with a high degree of visual impact for the long-term, temporary installations (one to two years), promoted by the Foundation and with the aim of exploring major thematic issues related to the history of Trentino. The White Tunnel was conceived as an operative space, improving the acknowledgement of the Black Tunnel contents and providing further instruments and opportunities to enhance the cultural offer. It includes a specialised library, characterised by a territory-oriented collection, and a permanent exhibition dedicated to "The Invention of a Territory. The boundaries of Trentino: 18th–21st Centuries." The latter illustrates the historic evolution of the definition, delimitation and perception of the region through cartographic documents. In addition, it provides facilities for the promotion of conferences, events and educational activities, and a space for short-term temporary exhibitions (one to three months), that may be promoted by different institutions and associations (such as libraries, schools and

cultural organisations) or even by specific communities and individual citizens. This Gallery is, in fact, presented as a laboratorial space hosting an "open cultural programme," designed to experiment with innovative forms and languages for investigating, communicating and debating the local history and memory, in order to promote knowledge and awareness and give voice to the population. The institution represents one of the most significant instruments of the "Museo Storico del Trentino" Foundation, and was conceived to promote the cultural diversity which characterises the Trentino communities and, at the same time, facilitate recognition of the common roots which are found in the history of the Province.

The current structure of the Foundation is the result of the recent transformation of an ancient institution. Indeed, it represents the final evolution of a traditional history museum founded after WWI, in 1923, when Trentino was annexed to Italy, and situated in the ancient Buonconsiglio Castle in Trento. Originally known as "Museo Trentino del Risorgimento," this civic museum was conceived of as an instrument to preserve and display the memory of that particular moment in the history of the region in-between the 19th and 20th centuries, and to foster a patriotic sense of belonging to the Nation through a politically oriented narration. The institution was renovated after 1945, when new research and exhibition activities were integrated with testimony of the contemporary history relating to WWII and, in 1995, it was renamed "Museo Storico in Trento" in order to remove the emphasis on the history of the Risorgimento and to extend its mission to wider themes and perspectives related to the entire regional territory. This revision represented the first step in the evolution of the traditional institution towards a new, inclusive and democratic model, re-imagining the history museum as an institution of memory through the implementation of a "biographical narration"—the historical events began to be illustrated not only through the description of the "heroes' deeds," but also via the testimonies (from diaries, interviews, etc.) of ordinary people, such as soldiers and peasants. This

was the development of a new approach to the production of local history, integrating a plurality of voices and combining the main stream with different socio-political studies. The renovation process could be depicted as a passage from a "monumental" (celebrating the greatest achievements of humanity) to an "antiquarian" historical knowledge (revering the past in order to encourage appreciation of contemporary lives and culture), as described by Friedrich Nietzsche (1980). This could be achieved by adopting a "critical" historiography (avoiding a conservative approach and considering attentively the flaws and failures of the past) through the transformation of the museum into an innovative institution, the Foundation "Museo Storico del Trentino," established in 2007. This institution was designed to respond to the new political, economic and cultural policies promoted by Provincial Law 3/2006, which transferred major decisional powers to sixteen territorial strongholds, the "Valley Communities," thus fostering the devolution of the centralised system and increasing the power of local bodies. This promoted the diversity and distinctiveness which characterise the cultural structure of Trentino, and enhanced, empowered and created links between all the diffused centres (and peripheries) that build this complex region.

→ A CATALYST FOR A NETWORKED CULTURAL PROGRAM

Trentino is characterised by particular physical connotation and geographical location, which has had a significant influence on the development of its historic evolution, political and social organisation, economic structure and cultural system. The mountainous territory across the Alps has encouraged the constitution of a network of scattered communities distributed throughout the valleys and coordinated by the main city of Trento. The different centres have always been clustered together according to socio-political and cultural connections, which can be seen in their shared, common history. Examples include the affirmation of the institutional autonomy in 1972 (allowing the Provincial Government to autonomously administer health,

education, welfare and infrastructures), and the constitution of a strongly codified material and immaterial heritage, arising from a unique relationship with the local resources, topography and ecology. Nevertheless, deeply-rooted diversity has always been a feature of the area. On the one hand, the physical boundaries separating the communities favoured the construction of "cultural perimeters" and the development of a multi-layered regional identity. Each valley is characterized by particular declensions in the rituals, mores, dialect and popular literature, which have fostered strong community bonds and a sense of belonging. On the other, the cross-border position of Trentino, which has always been the historical route connecting northern Italy with the rest of Europe (and is today a part of the Euroregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino), stimulated the development of a complex history. This margin has always been fluid—it has often "moved" and was permeable to flows and exchanges—and the territory has been influenced by various political and cultural systems, encouraging the formation of a highly diversified identity, especially in the transitional areas, where local, national and transnational characters have met, interacted and coalesced. Cultural diversity is a prominent feature of the Province. In recent decades, more attention has been paid to acknowledging, preserving and promoting this diversity, as demonstrated since the 1990s, for example, by policies regarding the three indigenous linguistic minorities, Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian: they are now protected by laws and regulations, as well as being recognised and valued in areas such as bilingual school curricula and street signs.

In this unique context, the "Museo Storico del Trentino" Foundation plays a crucial role as an active cultural force, critically depicting the complexity of the region and fostering a multi-layered sense of belonging; this is centred, on the one hand, on the distinctiveness and specific features of the single communities and, on the other, on the acknowledgement of the common roots, thus demonstrating the reasons for the special autonomy of the region. This institution is meant not only as an instrument to

IMG. 6.62 — Setting of the exhibition “Ritorno sul Don” in the White Gallery in the making, 2010–2011. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.



IMG. 6.63 — Forte di Cadine, Trento, Italy, 2011. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.

The Austrian stronghold was part of the defense system of Trento during the WWI; currently, it is managed by the Foundation as a cultural venue for exhibitions and conferences.



IMG. 6.64 — The exhibition “DiStilla InStilla” at Palazzo Baisi di Brentonico, Valle Lagarina, Italy, 2011. Courtesy of Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino.



coherently present Trentino to visitors, but also as a mirror in which the local population views itself to discover its own image, in which it seeks an explanation of the territory to which it is attached. Its main mission, in fact, focuses on the active involvement of the Valley Communities in the Provincial cultural programme. This task is developing through the construction of networked research, educative and exhibition activities, which are not merely produced by the Foundation and distributed in the territory, but rather achieved via cooperation between the Foundation (offering economic, technical and scientific support) and the members of the local communities; these initiatives are thus developed in relation to a specific place and ensue from its specific features and themes.

The diffusion of coordinated activities and initiatives throughout the territory takes shape in the “Portals of History and Memory.” These cultural centres, generally based in historical buildings with a particular symbolic or historical value (e.g. the Enel House near the dike in Val di Non), represent the physical presence of the Foundation within the region, established and managed in cooperation with local institutions, associations and population. Each Portal may also potentially become the core of a further network of cultural strongholds, encouraging and supporting further diffusion of the system. The activities they promote are specifically tailored to the distinctive location and addressed to the inhabitants, who are meant to participate in the conception of the initiative (temporary or permanent exhibitions, conferences, publications, etc.), the selection of the themes investigated (historic explorations of single issues or transversal studies, generally varying according to the specificities of the Valley in question: e.g. the analysis of the economic, social and cultural effects of fruit cultivation in Val Di Non) and the realisation of the project. For example, involvement could include interviews, donations and management. The networked strategies of the Foundation are thus strengthening its role as an inclusive cultural force, presenting the plural identity of the territory through adding value to both distinctive and common features.

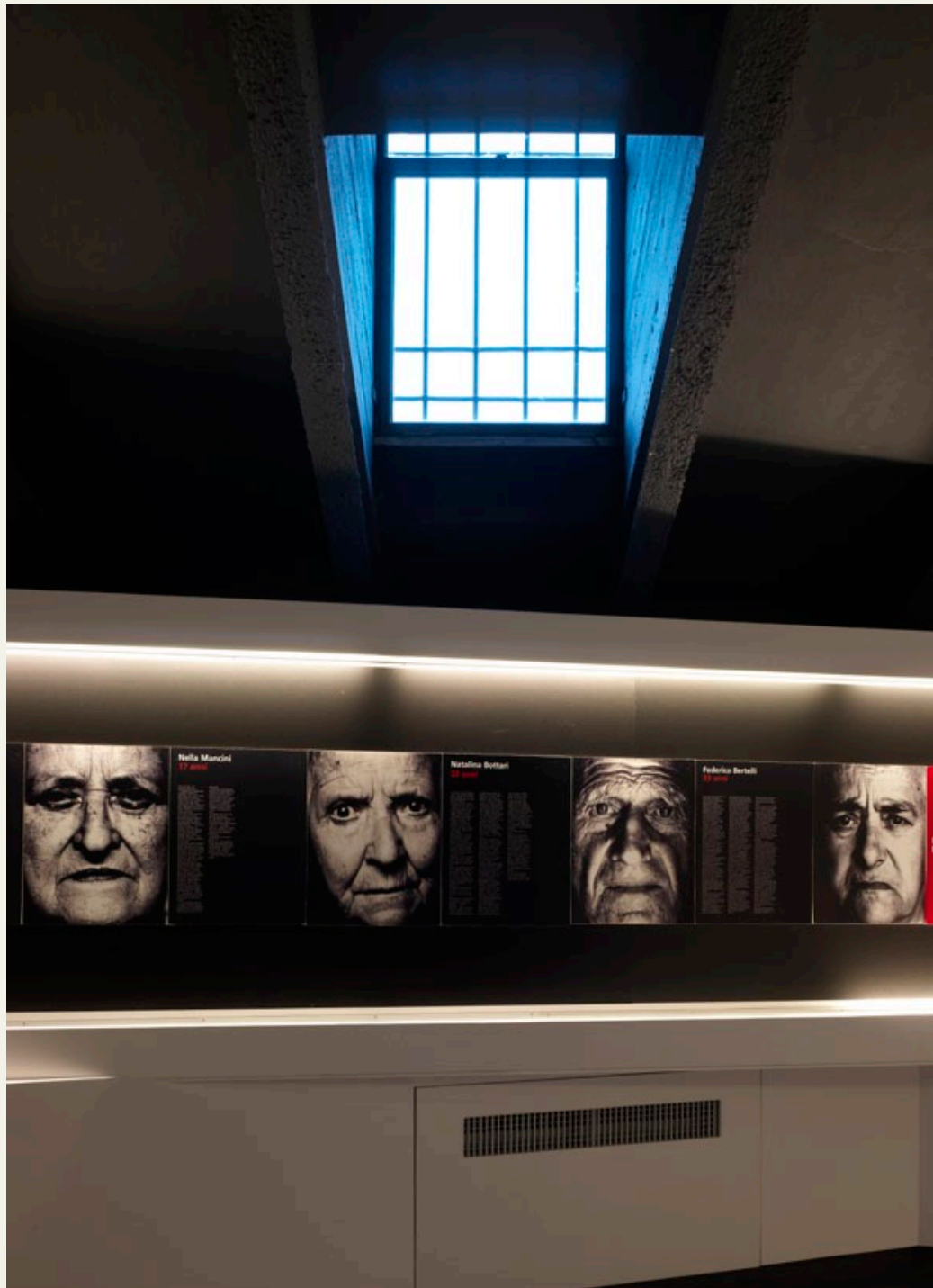
The involvement of the population in the Foundation’s activities is currently being extended to all the members of the community: on the one hand, the voices of the immigrant citizens integrated in the socio-economic structure of the Valleys—in 2011, according to ISTAT, 13.6% of the Trentino population arrived from Albania, 11.6% from Romania, 9.1% from Morocco, 6.2% from Macedonia and 5.8% from Germany—are included in the narrations which came out of the participative practices (especially via interviews and photographic reports). Several of the activities promoted are beginning to explore and present the cultural features of the minorities that settled in Trentino—e.g. the exhibition “Wooden Miracles” promoted by Gallerie Piedicastello in 2011, showcased the outstanding religious architecture of the Sinth.

Through experimentation with new forms of exploitation and valorization of local memories, the active participation of the population and the power of networking among different institutions, the Foundation is contributing to the creation of an inclusive and participative history of Trentino which, in turn, is becoming a cultural factor in the promotion of integration and the enhancement of cultural pluralism.

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IMG. 6.65 — Museo Storico della Resistenza, Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Italy. A view of the exhibition "Children Remember" by Oliviero Toscani. Photo by Pietro Savorelli, courtesy of Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.

Museo Storico della Resistenza di Sant'Anna di Stazzema

Sant'Anna di Stazzema Historical Museum of Resistance, Stazzema, Italy

The Historical Museum of the Resistance is located at Sant'Anna di Stazzema, a small village surrounded by the mountains in the extreme southern branches of the Apuan Alps. This place bears witness to a tragic event that took place in World War II, a painful episode of the history of Italian resistance. On the 12th of August 1944, 560 innocents, among whom women, elderly people and children, were killed by the Nazi and Fascist soldiers in their houses and in the square in front of the small church of the village.

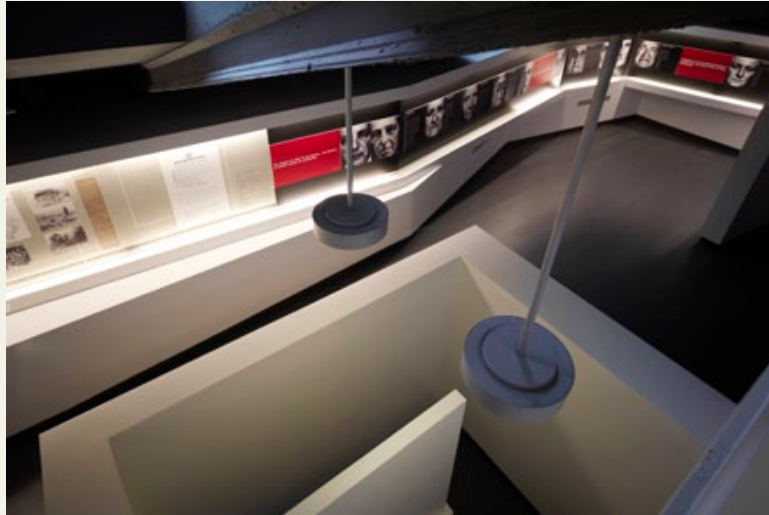
The place where the event took place has been transformed into a heritage site. The visit runs through the remains of the village—the church, the Charnel-house monument and the few houses that are still standing, which convey a powerful historical memory—and it is complemented by a museum, that develops celebrating and educative tasks.

The museum, which is housed inside the old building of the primary school, was opened as a theme gallery in autumn 1982 by the President of the Italian Republic Sandro Pertini. In 1991, the approval of the Regional Law 39/91 allowed to turn it into the current Historical Museum of the Resistance. From 1991 to June 2005, it hosted a historical-documentary exhibition that chronologically retraced the phases of Resistance in Versilia and the massacres committed by the Nazi-Fascists in the Tyrrhenian sector of the Gothic Line. The museum was conceived as an open path, enriched through the eloquent relationship between interior and exterior spaces. The exhibition areas inside the building were designed to include places and visual points highlighting the spatial relationship between the internal display and the surrounding territory. The façade was characterised by a commemorative stone reporting Calamandrei's ode to Kesselring, which is next to a relief depicting a detail from Picasso's "Guernica."

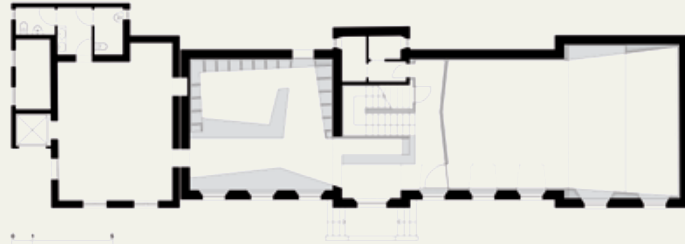
In February 2007 the museum underwent a renovation process that deeply modified the setup of the exhibition rooms inside the primary school. The project was designed by the architect Pietro Carlo Pellegrini. The ground floor is dedicated to the ticket office, a small archive and a room named after Father Ernesto Balducci, which is used for shows, debates and conferences. The exhibition spaces are concentrated on the first floor, which is articulated in two rooms. In the first one, the larger one, documentary materials are presented in a chronological sequence, starting from the Armistice in 1943. At the centre of the room there is a sculpture by Harry Marinsky, which is part of the series "Una Guerra per una pace" ("A War for a peace"). The itinerary continues with an excerpt from the photography exhibition by Oliviero Toscani "I bambini ricordano" ("Children remember"), with pictures portraying the survivors' faces and their stories. The itinerary in the exhibition spaces is organised through some curved white plasterboard walls. The movement created by the new walls, symbolising the pain and sufferance, reaches the climax in the second room, which illustrates the slaughter. The journey in the museum ends in this space, which is completely clad and painted in red. The room is entirely devoted to the massacre; the visitor retraces the phases of the events that took place on 12th August 1944 through documents, found objects and pictures. From a spatial point of view, the tragedy of the event is expressed through the red colour of the walls and the ceiling, the irregularity of the room and the fragmented light coming from on high.

The mission of the museum focuses on the necessity of passing on the memory of a place and an event. Since oral testimonies risk disappearing with the death of survivors, they are replaced with a narration that hands down the

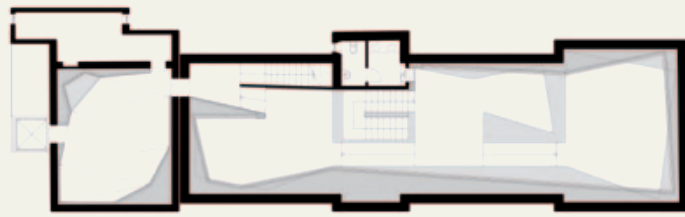
IMG. 6.66 — The multifaceted plasterboard walls articulating the exhibition path. Photo by Pietro Savorelli, courtesy of Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



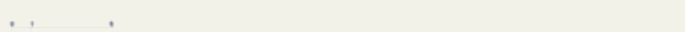
IMG. 6.67 — Plan of the ground floor of the museum. © Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.68 — Plan of the first floor of the museum. © Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.69 — Longitudinal section of the museum. © Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.70 — Transversal and longitudinal sections of the museum. © Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.71 — The main exhibition space. This picture includes the sculpture by Harry Marinsky, which participates to the first part of the exhibition, illustrating the Resistance's stories in Tuscany from 1943 to 1945. Photo by Pietro Savorelli, courtesy of Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.72 — The main exhibition space, where the exhibition by Oliviero Toscani, "Children Remember," starts. Photo by Pietro Savorelli, courtesy of Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.



IMG. 6.73 — The Red Room, illustrating the slaughter memories. Photo by Pietro Savorelli, courtesy of Pietro Carlo Pellegrini architetto.

memory of the stories that played a crucial role in the construction of the past of the population and of the local identity. Indeed, as the last witnesses of the event are passing away, we have the ethical duty to pass down the stories lived by our grandparents and great-grandparents to the new generations, as a strong warning not to repeat the tragedies of the past and not to forget. Therefore, the museum has an essential role in the transmission of the memory; it aims at preserving the memory for the community and handing it down to the future generations: it represents what Annette Wieworka defines as the passage from a testimonial pact—as the paradigm of the nineteenth century memory linked to the display of the body—to the “compassionate pact”—as sharing and re-narration of the past.

→ AN INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION OF LOCAL HISTORY

Sant’Anna di Stazzema is first of all a place of the memory, an uncomfortable memory linked to a tragic event. As we walk through the few remaining buildings of the old village, we have the feeling that time has stopped: the churchyard with the small wooden crosses that symbolize the people who were killed there, the old primary school that houses the museum and the charnel-house monument, which overlooks the surrounding landscape as a symbol of the massacre. Places have always played a key role in the transmission of memory; alongside writing, images and the body, they are one of the mediators, or rather, activators, which perpetuate, fix and stimulate remembering. Places are special mediators, as they have a special relationship with time: they are transformed, but they keep existing, and this is the reason why they have a memory that goes beyond human beings’ short-term memory: it is a latent memory that re-emerges when it is necessary, but remains hidden when it is not. As we walk through the remains of the small village of Sant’Anna, we find ourselves in a past and tragic time, where the place tells us what happened, in spite of the temporal distance. These traces are deeply rooted in the horizontal dimension, because of

the relationships and interactions of such places with the context they belong to, as well as in the vertical dimension, because of the strong interrelation of the various historical thresholds that are stratified in the single places. In his reflections on collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs already highlighted the importance of the place as a catalyzing element of a society, as it bears the imprint of a group. The theme of the relationship between memory and place is extended until the end of the World War II, when cities and landscapes appear as the remains of the theatres of war. In the Eighties, Pierre Nora defined the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, this is, a meaningful unit, either material or immaterial, which has become a symbolic element of a community through people’s will or as a result of the passing of time. The traces left by the war, indeed, represent a difficult heritage to manage and to relate to: they are linked to uncomfortable, often traumatic, memories which pose essential questions, such as the construction of a collective identity on a European scale. This issue can be read in the churchyard of Sant’Anna, which is characterised by a small but significant monument: a squared rock that links the small village to three other places in Europe that underwent the same tragedy: Oradour-sur-Glane in France, Lidice in the Czech Republic and Marzabotto in Italy.

In the last years there has been growing interest in the topic of difficult memories. Many critics, particularly in the Anglophone culture, have coined various terms to refer to those heritages that are connected to traumas and pain: *dissonant heritage* (Tunbridge 1996), *heritage that hurts* (Uzzell, Ballantyne 1998), *difficult heritage* (Logan, Reeves 2008). Sharon MacDonald defines *difficult heritage* as a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested for public reconciliation with a positive contemporary identity. On the one hand, this definition highlights the dramatic aspect of some heritages; on the other, it emphasizes the fact that memories bear a collective identity value which can be a resource for future generations. Contemporary society is “bulimic”—Pierre Nora talks about the “com-



IMG. 6.74 — The hill of Sant’Anna di Stezzama. Photo by Christa Nickel.



IMG. 6.75 — The entrance of the National Park of the Peace at Sant’Anna di Stezzama. Photo by Christa Nickel.

IMG. 6.76 — The Church in the National Park of the Peace. Photo by Christa Nickel.



IMG. 6.77 — The old primary school, which currently is the venue of the Historical Museum of the Resistance. Photo by Christa Nickel.



memorative bulimia” of our epoch. It conserves objects, writings, any trace that can testify and preserve the memory of an event or a person. Andreas Huyssen, one of the first scholars who have dealt with the changes of memory in the 19th century, identified some of the reasons that have led to the proliferation of studies on memory in the main events of the *short century*. Such reasons are mostly political: it is not a case that, at the end of World War II, some countries such as Germany and France tried to rebuild and re-define their identities through the re-elaboration of their difficult and contradictory past. The two world wars and the cold war are the basis of European history; this is why a small place such as Sant’Anna is important not only for its local history, but also for the collective history of Europe.

The heritage site at Sant’Anna bears the memory of the violent fights between partisans, Germans and Fascists. The facts that are illustrated in the museum refer to the local territory, and specifically they concern the resistance in Versilia, but they are also part of a wider European context, because the presented topics are part of a common and transversal history. In France, for example, the Mémorial de la Résistance focuses on the fights between the partisans and the Nazi in the region of Vercors, describing life in those years of terror. Oradour-sur-Glane is a village that was martyred by the SS division Das Reich in June 1944. Next to the remains of the village, which have been left untouched for all these years, there is the museum, which aims at retrieving the *erased memory* as a *place of conciliation* that triggers specific identity dynamics. These are local stories, which concern a specific territory and its community, but all these places were hit by the tragic events of World War II—and it would be interesting to develop a network among the various sites linked by a common historical memory, where a wider transnational collective view may emerge within the local history.

As regards the narration of the events displayed in the museum, the technical strategies adopted imply the use of descriptive panels that illustrate the story of the village from the beginning

of the war to the massacre. The documents are complemented by some artefacts that had been found after the slaughter, in particular pictures and personal objects. Within the exhibition path, a room is dedicated to videos and interviews, which display the stories of the few survivors of the war.

Though the display settings are very simple and no technological means has been implemented in order to increase the emphasis on the narration, the objects, the testimonies, the gestures and the silences of the witnesses transmit the emotions of the human density.

The Historical Museum of the Resistance has an essential role, it offers the opportunity to experience the spaces where history took place, and it informs the visitors about the facts that describe its contextual framework. The themes proposed by the exhibition are addressed to a wide public, but above all they speak to the local community, so as to help not forget and safeguard the historical memory of the territory and to pass it down to the future generations.

The museums connected with uncomfortable heritages will have to act as a tool to reprocess and overcome the trauma, as well as provide occasions for intercultural exchange, getting rid of national borders and opening up to a geographical and political permeability. Memory, thus, is meant as an evolutionary and continuous process that joins the past, the present and the future. Consequently, the museum turns from a national crypt and a commemorative cemetery into a migrant network of traces and memories, as stated by Iain Chambers. Places of the memory are strictly linked to the place of the event, but they are also connected to other stories and other places.

Michela Bassanelli

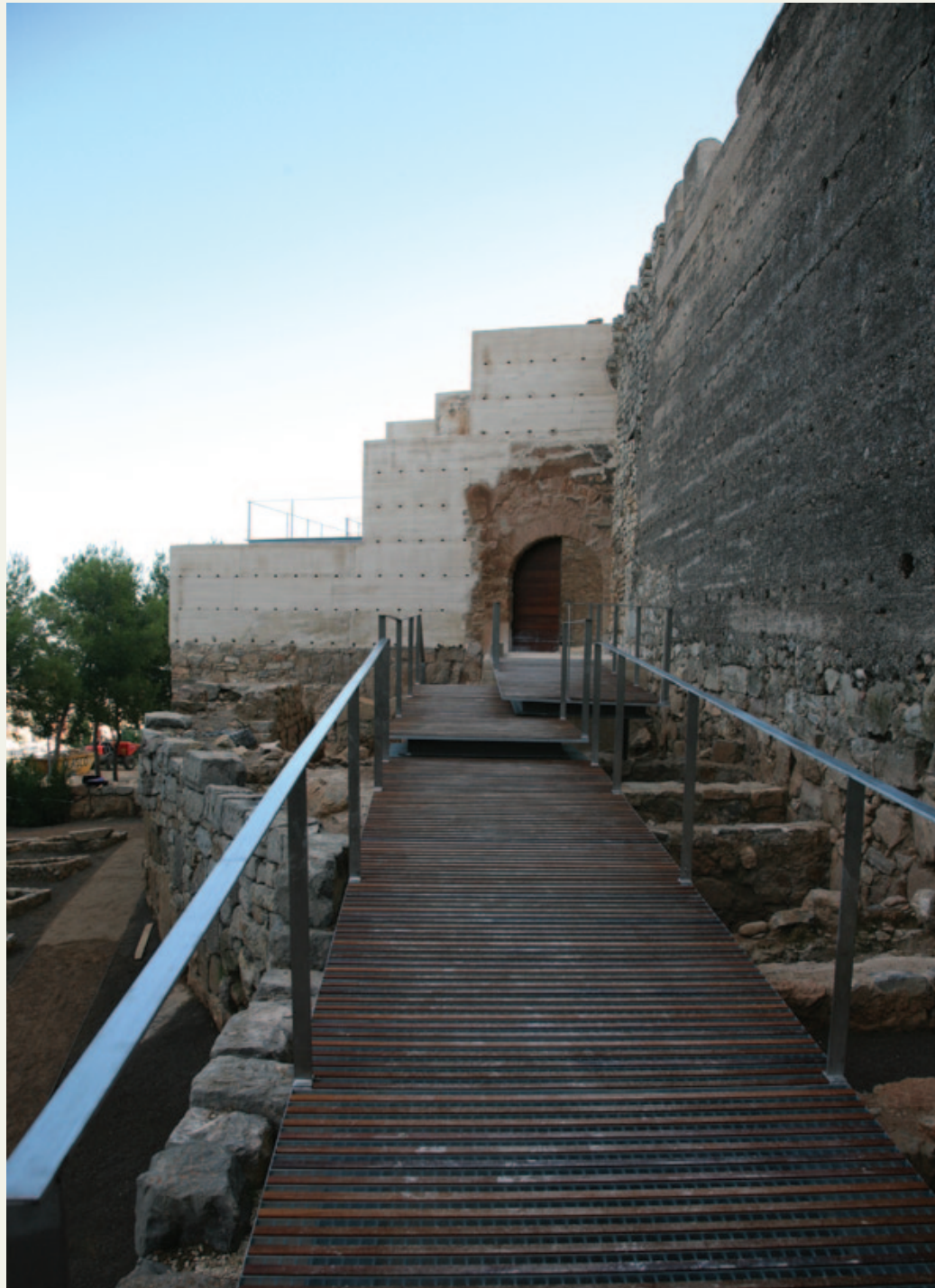
Text translated by Ilaria Parini



IMG. 6.78 — Sculpture by Harry Marinsky, "Una guerra per una pace." Photo by Michela Bassanelli.

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IMG. 6.79 — Restoration of the Knowledge Centre of the Castle of Sagunto, Spain. View of the new entrance of the archaeological site. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.

Knowledge Centre of the Castle of Sagunto

Sagunto, Spain

Not far from the historical centre of modern Sagunto is the archaeological site with the most ancient evidence of the first human settlements of *Arsè* (which date back to the 4th century BC) and the traces of the various Iberian, Roman, Visigoth, Arabic and Christian civilisations which occupied *Saguntum* (this is what it was called during the Roman epoch, in the 3rd century BC) over the centuries.

Visitors associate the vision of the Castle of Morvedre with the image of the city besieged by Hannibal and occupied by the Romans, which was the site of the first battle of the Second Punic War. However, because of its favourable position—it is perched on a hill of the Sierra Calderone and towers above the city—since ancient times it has been used for different functions. During the Iberian Age it used to be a place of residence, during the Roman Era it hosted the court, and from the Islamic Era to the Spanish Civil War it was utilized as a stronghold and a fortified structure to defend and control the territory. The present perimeter of the walls that surround the castle, which is about a kilometre long, is the result of the expansions and restorations carried out from the Islamic and Christian period up to the Napoleonic War. In the area around the castle, there are also the remains of a Jewish cemetery, of a theatre of the Claudian Era—which is now used as a place for shows, thanks to the restoration works performed in the 1990s by the architects Giorgio Grassi and Manuel Portaceli—and also of a Roman circus. In 1562, the fortress was divided into the seven squares, which can still be visited today, in a project by the architect Giovanni Battista Antonelli. In Plaza de Armas visitors can clearly see the remains of the Roman forum, a small foursquare *Capitolium* divided into three *cellae* with a cistern in its front part, which dates back to about 100 BC. Next to it, on the

northern side, is the Augustan forum. On the eastern side, there is a temple, the curia, and a *tabernae*. On the western side, however, is a three-nave basilica. During the Islamic and the Christian Eras, the castle was turned into the governor's residence. In Plaza de Almenara and Plaza de la Conillera, on the eastern side, and in Plaza de Estudiantes, Plaza de San Fernando, Plaza de la Ciudad and Plaza de Dos de Mayo on the western side, it is possible to see traces of the Arabic occupation, such as the *tapial* walls (formwork walls in clay).

The first systematic archaeological excavations were started in the first decades of the 20th century and continued till 2006. In 1931 the castle was declared a national monument, due to the many important artefacts that had been found, many of which are now preserved in the local archaeological museum.

In 2007, Sagunto City Council entrusted the architects Julián Esteban Chapapría, José Ignacio Casar Pinazo and Iván García Miñana, and the archaeologist Emilia Hernández Hervás, the director of the Museum of Archaeology in Sagunto, of the Roman theatre, and of the fortress, with the task of improving the accessibility to the site and facilitate its understanding. Between 2008 and 2010, many architectural fragments belonging to different epochs were restored and linked for the first time. Moreover, a series of boardwalks suspended over the ruins was built, through which it is possible to reach the new access to the castle. The new entrance was opened within the medieval walls, at the bottom of a Roman-Republican tower, which has been partially rebuilt. Furthermore, the premises of the Knowledge Centre have been located inside a Napoleonic construction of the 19th century, to the museological project of the architect Elisa Moliner, in collaboration with the archaeologist Carla Flors. The Centre houses a welcome and

IMG. 6.80 — Aerial view of the archaeological site. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.81 — Aerial view of the site illustrating the connection between the Knowledge Centre and the castle. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.82 — The Jewish cemetery next to the boardwalks at the entrance of the site. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



a rest area, a display room, and a room devoted to the narration of the historical evolution of the complex archaeological palimpsest. Unfortunately, the centre has been closed to the public for two years, due to the lack of funds necessary to provide it with electricity.

→ A STRATIFIED READING OF HISTORIC CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The musealisation project of the castle and of the new Knowledge Centre are part of the wider programme drawn up in 2009 within the *Plan Director del Patrimonio histórico, artístico, arqueológico e industrial de Sagunto*. Among the objectives of the plan, prominence is given to the arrangement and re-organisation of the entire city heritage, in order to facilitate its understanding and to make citizens and visitors perceive it as a whole entity. For this purpose, a coordinated image project was designed, which connects the various ancient cultures. Moreover, the plan envisioned the creation of a consortium to join the three agencies that are currently involved in the protection of the city heritage, in order to have uniform management and coordination. Even though the designed intervention means focusing attention on all the cultures that contributed to creating the specific identity of the place, it is interesting to note that the ultimate aim of the plan is to turn the city into a *Museo Europeo de la Romanidad*. Therefore, it is clear that priority is given to the validation of the important traces of Roman origin preserved in the Valencian city. Among these, it is worth mentioning public architecture works, such as the forum, the theatre, and the circus, and engineering works, such as the aqueduct, the Via Augusta, and the port. Such evidence will be compared and linked with those preserved in Roman museums in Germany, Italy, Romania, France, and Portugal, and in the Spanish cities of Tarragona, Cordoba, and Mérida. To this end, in 2010 the archaeological museum of Sagunto hosted the temporary exhibition “Sagunto y la Graufesenque de Millau. Raíces Romanas,” where the comparison between the Spanish and the French archaeological sites, both of Roman origin, aimed at highlighting the Roman

roots of Europe and the local peculiarities. This is symptomatic of a historical moment when people are trying to find their collective identity through a process of continuous research balancing integration with identities originating from similar cultures and the specificities of a territory (Maggi 2009, 65–74).

In our age, historical places have become more important than objects, as far as heritage is concerned. Therefore, the proposal of the plan director not to create a single large museum structure, but rather a *site museum*, is particularly noteworthy. According to the ICOM definition, indeed, though museographic and enhancement projects, a *site museum* preserves and protects natural and cultural property, movable and immovable, tangible and intangible, on its original site. As a result, a cultural and exhibition circuit has been designed, but, unfortunately, owing to the economic crisis, it still has not been completed. The circuit should include various historical architectonic structures around the city, which have been turned into museums or cultural places. Among them, it is worth mentioning the Domus Baebia, the didactic room of classical culture of Sagunto, the complex of Vía del Pórtico and the Casa dels Peixos—which date back to the Roman Era of the 2nd century AD—the southern door of a circus and a Roman theatre (venues for shows)—which represent the extension of the Roman city during the empire—the already existing local archaeological museum, and the castle museum.

According to the restoration project of the fortress, designed by the interdisciplinary group including Chapapría, Pinzo, Miñana and Hernández, the heritage has a double function. Ruins are both a means of territorial identification on a local scale, and a means of intercultural communication among the various communities involved in a network of knowledge, interests and cultural proposals on a global scale. Thanks to the numerous fragments from different ancient cultures, the castle represents the specific history of Sagunto, but at the same time it becomes a kind of transnational museum where all the civilisations that originated many European cultures are put together.

IMG. 6.83 — General plan of the archaeological site. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.84 — Preservation and exposure of the remains, in particular the Jewish cemetery. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.85 — Restoration on the Napoleonic wall at the entrance of the archaeological site. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.86 — Interior view of the Knowledge Centre. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



IMG. 6.87 — The Knowledge Centre. Courtesy of Sagunto Archaeological Museum.



Cultural identity and the memory of the place of settlement, which is made of layers of different civilisations, highlight an archaeological landscape loaded with meaning and values connected to the local identity, which became lost in time. Next to the new entrance, the fragments, which belong to different historical eras, are joined by light wooden or steel boardwalks, divided into four paths, leaning on each other, stressing the complex system of layers of the palimpsests, thus offering a diachronic interpretation. As a result, the ruins are differentiated in their historical phases, and, at the same time, are connected forming a single image.

The choice to place the new entrance to the castle at the base of a Roman-Republican tower located at the northern side of Plaza de Estudiantes was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that there was an existing door, which was used in the Medieval Islamic period and had later been closed. However, it could also be due to the importance—or rather, prominence—given to the Roman presence among the various stratified cultures. The tower has been partially rebuilt in order to make its typological structure recognisable, as it is the symbol of the primary role that the fortress has played over the centuries. Although the restoration works have brought back only part of the original structure—leaving the dialogue between the ancient traces and the restored parts open—architecture is once again the protagonist in this monument, eliminating its image of ruin. In the interior of the tower, a light metallic structure acts as a panoramic viewpoint over the city and the valley.

The restoration of the tower and the renovation of its function as a viewpoint, express the meaning of this place. It is the connection that joins the fragments of the different epochs, which are both outside and inside the walls.

From a synchronic and a diachronic point of view, it is clear that Sagunto has always been open to new cultural trends, which, in time, have integrated with the existing ones. This is probably due to its strategic geographical position and, above all, to its proximity to the sea. Many artefacts which were found during the

excavations carried out in the castle—and are now preserved and displayed in the archaeological museum—highlight historical moments of cultural syncretism. Among them, it is worth mentioning, for example, various coins, which have Roman and Iberian icons on either side, or some sculptures portraying symbols of worship such as Hercules or Bacchus, or inscriptions of bilingual texts—in Iberian and Latin—written on stone. Interculturalism is still present today. The population of Sagunto is composed of a remarkable number of people hailing from other regions of Spain which are economically depressed, such as Andalusia or Aragon, as well as numerous citizens who come from other countries, mainly from Eastern Europe, South America, and Maghreb.

Recent statistical analyses have shown that 70% of the castle visitors are Spanish tourists and citizens, mainly schoolchildren, and only the remaining 30% are foreigners. Despite the low number of foreign visitors, the exhibition and museum project is targeted at all kinds of visitors, through meta-narrations (cultural itineraries, display and audio-visual systems) that invite the public to reflect on and interpret heritage from a personal point of view, in order to foster the development of personal narrations. The increase of cultural diversity in the city of Sagunto has brought about new forms of collective representation that have called into question the role of history as an exclusive arena of national identification and have required new ways to interpret the past. The local archaeological museum has decided to focus on the Iberian-Roman past of the city, due to lack of space. The castle, instead, has included all evidence from all periods and cultures, which have been enhanced and emphasised by the new project, as documents of collective memory of contemporary society and potential resources for its future development.

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Text translated by Ilaria Parini

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War Museums



Narratives of Conflicts

Architecture and representation in European war museums

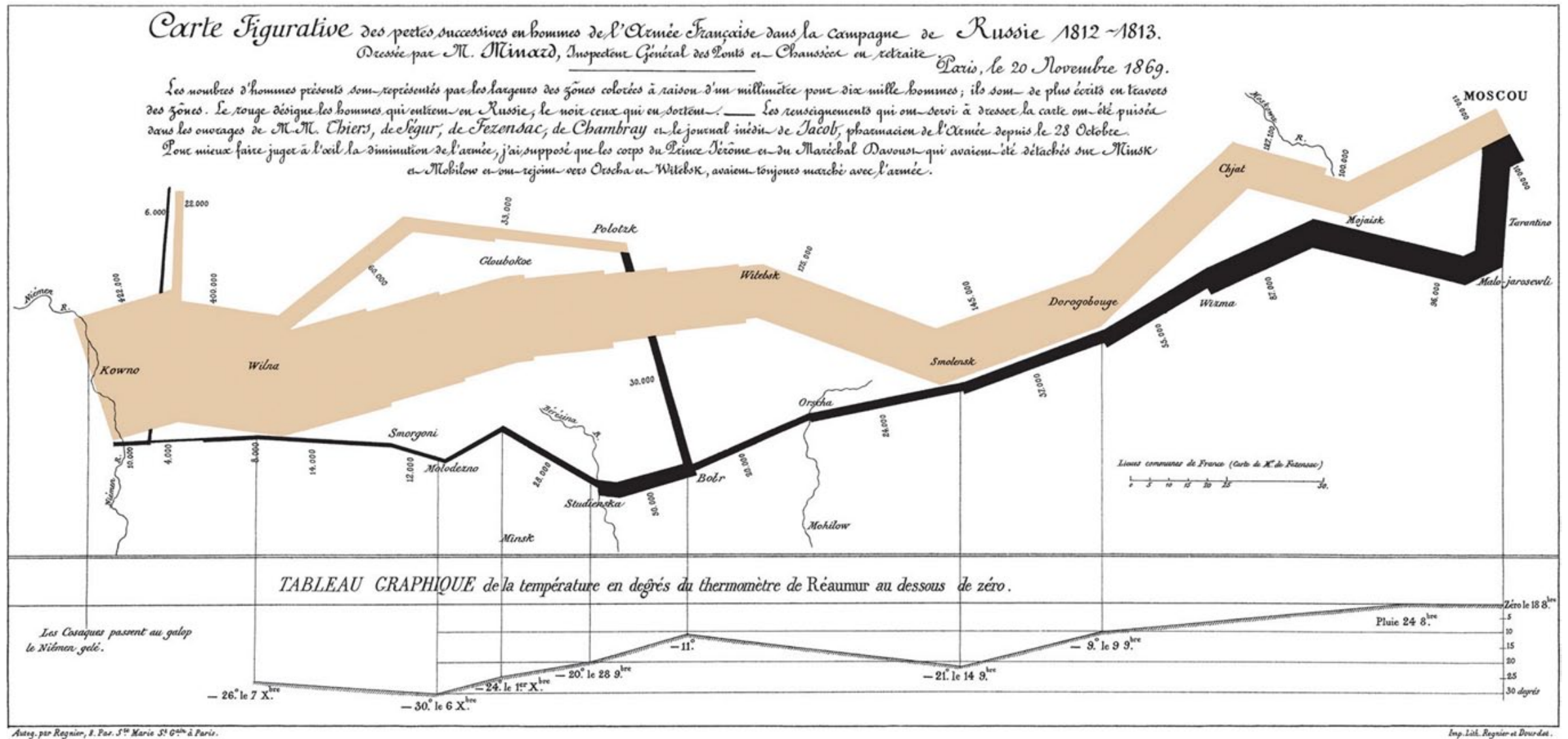
→ LUCA BASSO PERESSUT

War is a controversial subject, not only because of the death, destruction and suffering involved. Memory of war often forms part of a nation's self-image. (Whitmarsh 2001, 2)

Knowing about war is the business of an informed citizenship, and museums are those sites where moral questions are posed, questions inevitably raised about war, questions about sacrifice, suffering, brotherhood, courage, love, recovery, transcendence. Museums enable visitors to pose these enduring questions, by converting war time into museum space. (Winter 2012b, 150)

The most famous of the *tableaux graphiques* produced by the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard, the “Carte figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l’Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812-1813” (published in 1869), illustrates the catastrophic military campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte and highlights the related quantitative data through a spatio-temporal diagram depicting the “bloodstream” (arterial/red and venous/black), which decreases and eventually disappears as the army enters the immense Russian territory and finally retreats. Despite the geometrical abstraction of the drawing, the document is able to convey the tragic nature of the event, which resulted in the deaths of more than 400,000 soldiers and the almost total destruction of the army that

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.01 — Musée de la Grande Guerre, Meaux, France. Architecture and exhibition design by Atelier Christophe Lab, 2011. Interior view. Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.



IMG. 7.02 — Charles Joseph Minard (1781-1870), "Carte Figurative des pertes successives en hommes de l'Armée Française dans la campagne de Russie 1812-1813," Paris: Régnier et Dourdet, 1869.

Charles Joseph Minard graduated from the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, and he was one of the best French engineers of his time in the field of canals and ports designing, but he was also a pioneer in the field of cartographic representation.

Minard's maps became famous for their graphic quality and for their communication synthesis. As he himself stated, "The aim of my figurative maps is not so much to illustrate statistical results, which are better expressed by numbers, but to synthetically convey to the viewer's eye the relationships among the various data that cannot be promptly produced by numbers, as they require a mental calculation."

had started the invasion in the spring of 1812. The lower part of the paper includes a timeline which details the environmental conditions during the retreat between October and December of the same year; this element underlines the terrible consequences of winter in the Russian lands, also experienced by the Nazi-fascist troops more than a century later.

This representation seems “to defy the pen of the historian by its brutal eloquence” (Friendly 2002, 32), and inspires “painful reflections on the human cost of the thirst for military glory.” (Chevallier 1871, 18)

The document may be seen as one of the first descriptions (if not *the* first) of a terrible national military defeat. Almost the same years in which the first national military museums were founded, this representation called attention, as suggested by Chevallier's words, to several issues which would not be taken into account for a considerable time by museum institutions, especially those designed to narrate the triumphs and noble deeds of wartime.

We are talking about museums dedicated to the exhibition of sleek weapons and other military equipment, elegant uniforms, ensigns and flags, which cooperate in the act of remembrance of the deeds of warlords and soldiers, prepared to give their lives for the homeland through a death “sanctified” by valour and heroism.

Museums which aim to celebrate armies and wars through the presentation of military relics belonging to the nation, or conquered on the battlefield, such as the Imperial War Museum in London, where the material exhibited also included the weapons of enemies, displayed as war trophies, as used to happen in ancient times.

Museums which “are icons of past greatness, an endless array of items put together in more or less tasteful displays which, taken as a whole, reflect one of the most characteristic components of Western civilization: its obsession with, and relentless utilization, of war and violence stretching over two millennia of human history” (Bartov 1996, 154), whose rhetoric has long represented a reflection of “the destructive nationalism of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.” (Ostow 2008, 3)

Museums where, for a long time, the narration has covered ideological “amnesia” and historical falsifications in the name of the reigning nationalism, through institutional removals and distortions, as political practices aimed at concealing acts of violence and atrocity and at extolling military activities as the best expressions of society. According to Peter McIsaac, the despotic and belligerent foundation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (the Military History Museum) in Vienna has long been masked by an approach to exhibition based on “high aesthetic culture.” This was grounded, firstly, on an architectural programme focusing on the use of luxurious materials, spaces, decorations, frescos and mosaics, and a monumental entrance (whose aim was to “instill respect and fascination for Austrian military leaders and traditions”), but also on the installation design of the military machinery (characterised by a special technical quality), the uniforms, ensigns and

the panoplies of imperial armies. These were complemented by the inclusion of patriotic themes in the narrations, as well as the exclusion of the “difficult” ones, such as the representation of “internal enemies,” the working classes, peasants and the ethnic components which were present in this extensive territory (McIsaac 2011, 271, 273).

Museums which, in their taxonomic organisation of military phenomena, devices and machines, raise questions concerning the relationship between the war industry and scientific and technological advancements in times of peace, as well as the importance of war as a driver of economic and productive progress¹ through the presentation of technical issues whose (illusory) “objectivity” does not, or should not, arouse controversy. In relation to World War I, Gaynor Kavanagh states: “Science in particular was a beneficiary of war: it became popular and respectable in ways not experienced in the pre-war decades. As far as museums were concerned, the war gave ample opportunity for the science museums to prove their worth.” (Kavanagh 1994, 171)

Finally, from the architectural and museographical points of view, the first military museums join the long list of examples included within a building typology codified by treaties and design manuals at the end of 19th century. As in the case of the Vienna museum they were inspired by the forms and decorations of the buildings, and the organisation of exhibition spaces, which characterised museums dedicated to art, science and nature in previous decades.² In these museums devoted to “arms and letters” (as inscribed in the attic of the colonnade at the entrance of the Bayerische Armeemuseum in Munich),³ armed conflicts and culture were associated on the basis of a civilisation imposed *urbi et orbi* in class-conscious and colonialist terms.

If we consider today the several European museums that focus on war and its various representations,⁴ we can notice two distinct circumstances: on the one hand, the persistence of representative models typical of museums

1 In a 1918 document, Herber Bolton, director of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, explores the question related to the foundation of a war museum in the United Kingdom. He highlights the fact that a war museum “can furnish a constant reminder that a nation can, by taking thought, find new sources of mercantile and national development, when ordinary and well-known supplies cease, for under stress of war, the British Empire, has accomplished monuments of industrial, agricultural, mercantile and general progress which, under normal conditions, would have taken more than a generation to achieve.” (Bolton 2008, 66)

2 In the architecture treaties and manuals of the late 19th century, the museums dedicated to arms and armies are classified among “the museums of history and patriotism, wars and weapons,” or among those dedicated to “the exhibition of applied art and history,” or, more generically, among “the museums for special uses,” together with those dedicated to musical instruments, postal services, books, architecture, hygiene, history of religions (Wagner 1893; Tiede 1899; Donghi 1905).

3 The Bayerische Armeemuseum in Munich, designed by Ludwig Mellinger and Gottfried Kurz, was built in 1905 next to the 18th century Hofgartenkaserne of the royal palace. Due to the damage caused by World War II, the museum was moved to Ingolstadt in 1972, and located in the 15th century Neue Schloss and in two buildings included in the fortifications built between 1828 and 1841 by Leo von Klenze. The only part of the original building of the Armeemuseum to be preserved is the central block integrated into the new Bayerische Staatskanzlei, the Bavaria State Chancellery (Fuchs 2005).

4 At present, there are more than 1400 museums in Europe dedicated to World War II (Hervouet 2003). The website “War Museums: Places of Remembrance Throughout Europe” (<http://www.warmuseums.nl>, accessed February 2013) presents a wide catalogue of case studies.

Heeresgeschichtliches Museum

Military History Museum, Vienna, Austria

The museum is part of the Arsenal complex, which consists of 72 buildings built between the years 1850 and 1857 in order to house troops and weapons. It was originally an armoury and a museum of weapons, and in 1891 it was opened to the public as a museum of the army.

It was designed by Ludwig Förster and Theophil Hansen, with an eclectic mixture of styles, from Byzantine to Hispanic-Moorish. It was the first museum of this kind to be set in a building that had been specifically built for that purpose, and, according to Emperor Franz Joseph's intentions, it was not only supposed to house the imperial collections of weapons, but above all it should have exalted the glory and the memory of the Austro-Hungarian army, and house "a collection which all 'ethnic tribes' of the monarchy should be able to recognise themselves in" (see: <http://www.hgm.or.at/107.html?&L=1#c259>).

The celebratory feature of the museum takes shape in a central section crowned by a dome, located at the centre of the two galleries of weapons (whose total length equals to 235 metres with protruding cross sections and corner towers). In such section, on the ground floor, are located the entrance and the *Feldherrnhalle* (the Field Marshals' Hall). The space is adorned with 56 full-sized statues made of Carrara marble representing military commanders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and with frescoes with allegorical representations of "military values" such as tactic, strategy, bravery and wisdom, power and unity, honour and glory. The *Ruhmeshalle* (Pantheon or Hall of Fame), which is located on the first floor, is decorated by frescoes that represent the main successful military events of the history of Austria.

The architectural typology of the "temple of fame" in the Vienna museum was imitated in

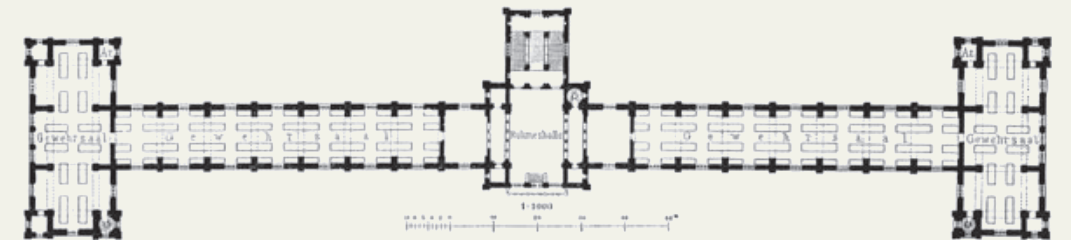
the military museum in Dresden (1876), in the Armeemuseum in Munich (1905), and above all in the Old Armoury in Berlin (1880).

During the Nazi occupation (1838-45) the museum was mainly used to glorify the military virtues of the "Great Germany" and to illustrate the campaigns of World War II with some temporary exhibitions. In 1944 the building of the museum was bombed. Since 1961, after a thorough reconstruction and restoration that began in 1946, the museum has been characterized by a wider view of the history of Austria and Europe in the last five centuries, and its name was changed into Museum of Military History.

Today the permanent collection of the museum is organized in seven sections:

- From the Thirty Years' War to the Prince Eugene of Savoy;
- The age of Maria Theresa;
- Austria and Europe: 1789–1866;
- Franz Joseph and Sarajevo;
- World War I: 1914–1918;
- Republic and Dictatorship: 1918–1945;
- Sea power Austria.

In the outbuildings there are galleries dedicated to the artillery and spaces for temporary exhibitions.





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IMG. 7.03 — Overall view of Vienna's Arsenal with the Royal Museum of Weapons, 1860. © Fotoarchiv des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums.

IMG. 7.04 — Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna, Austria. First floor plan in 1890. From *Handbuch der Architektur, Vierter Teil, 6 Halb-Band, 4 Heft*. 1890. Darmstadt: Arnold Bergsträsser.

IMG. 7.05 — View of the "Ruhmeshalle." Photo by Pappenheim, Creative Commons.

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IMG. 7.06 — World War I Gallery. Photo by Pappenheim, Creative Commons.

IMG. 7.07 — Republic and Dictatorship Gallery. Photo by Pappenheim, Creative Commons.



Zeughaus-Deutsches Historisches Museum

German Historical Museum, Berlin, Germany



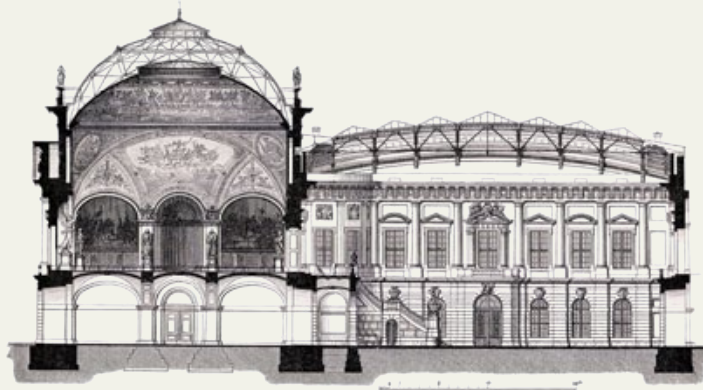
The Museum of the Army in Berlin was set up in 1880 as a Museum of Military Relics of the Prussian State (*Museum der militärischen Denkwürdigkeiten des preussischen Staates*), inside the building of the eighteenth-century armoury (Zeughaus), one of the first buildings of the Unter den Linden. For this purpose, architect Friedrich Hitzig covered the courtyard of the building with a glass dome and created the Pantheon, or Temple, of the Brandenburg-Prussian Army (*Ruhmeshalle der brandenburgisch-preussischen Armee*) in the northern wing. The Pantheon was dedicated to the "artistic glorification" of the army and its strategists, warlords, and heroes. The design combined technological-military with historical-celebratory aspects.

In 1944–45 the building was seriously damaged by bombings and it was only in 1952 that

the government of the German Democratic Republic re-opened the museum as Museum of German History (*Museum für Deutsche Geschichte*). After the fall of the DDR, the museum closed in 1990 and some of its sections were included in the project for the German Historical Museum. Between the years 1994 and 2003 the facade of the Zeughaus was restored and its interior was completely renovated, after a project by architect Winfried Brenne. Since 2006, Zeughaus—which was expanded after a project by Ieoh Ming Pei—has been housing the Deutsches Historisches Museum, in which several of the exhibits coming from the old museum are displayed in the permanent exhibition "German History in Images and Artefacts from Two Millennia."

PREVIOUS PAGE

IMG. 7.08 — Zeughaus-Museum der militärischen Denkwürdigkeiten des preussischen Staates, Berlin, Germany. The “Firearms Gallery” in 1905. Postcard. Königlich Preussische Messbildanstalt.



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IMG. 7.09 — Zeughaus. Section with the glass covering of the courtyard and Ruhmeshalle (Pantheon) at the end of the 19th century. Project by Friedrich Hitzig, 1877–1880. From *Berlin und seine Bauten*. 1896. Berlin: Verlag Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn.



IMG. 7.10 — View of the Unter der Linden and the Zeughaus at the beginning of the 20th century. © Library of Congress, Washington DC.



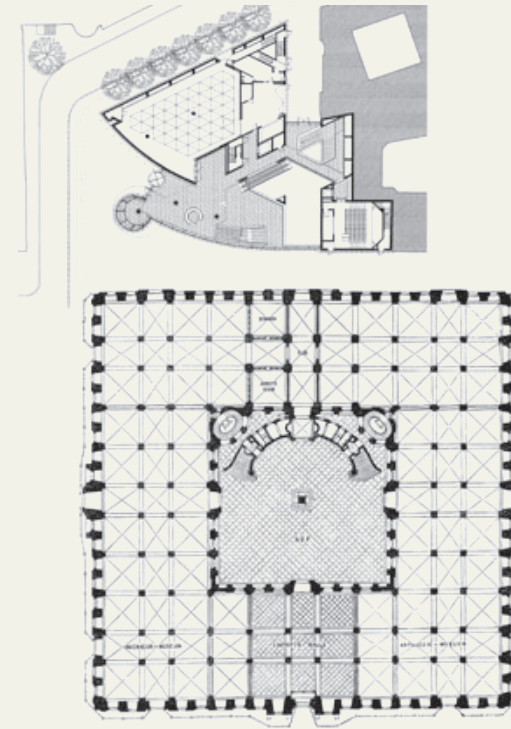
IMG. 7.11 — Glass-covered courtyard of the Zeughaus with display of firearms in 1908. Photo by Königlich Preussische Messbildanstalt.

NEXT PAGE

IMG. 7.12 — Site plan showing the historical ground floor of the Zeughaus and of the new wing of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, designed by I. Ming Pei, 2006 (Elab. by Luca Basso Peressut).

IMG. 7.13 — The Zeughaus courtyard today. Photo by Gryffindor, Creative Commons.

IMG. 7.14 — View of the Zeughaus and of the entrance to the Deutsches Historisches Museum. Photo by Luca Basso Peressut.



of weapons, of the armies, and of military history, which were set up between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century; on the other hand, the increase in museums that are committed to emphasizing how Europe needs to critically reinterpret its past and the conflicts that have marked it, both in a tangible and an intangible way.

As far as the former are concerned, among the museums that still exist, it is worth mentioning the Landeszeughaus, the ancient Styrian Armoury in Graz, which has been part of the Universalmuseum Joanneum since 1892; the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna, set up in 1857, which was the first example of a building that had been built for this specific purpose; the Swedish Armémuseum that opened in 1877 in the 17th century armoury; the army museum in Berlin, created in 1880 in the 18th century Arsenal (Zeughaus), which is currently part of the Deutsches Historisches Museum that preserves several military objects coming from the old museum; the Musée de l'Armée in Paris, founded in 1905 in the 17th century Hotel des Invalides; the Musée Royal de l'Armée et d'Histoire Militaire in Brussels, set up in 1923, and the Tøjhusmuseet, the Danish military museum, opened in 1936 in the arsenal of Copenhagen, a building which dates back to 1604.

In spite of several recent new arrangements, it is always possible to recognize the original features of these museums. This is the case of the Musée de l'Armée in Paris, where the restoration and the new design of the rooms of the "Department Moderne – 1643–1870," curated by Adeline Rispal in 2010, and the creation of the Historial dedicated to Charles de Gaulle in 2008, after the designs of Alain Moatti and Henri Rivière, do not bring into question the role of the museum, which still aims at contributing, through its collections, to the "awakening of military vocations and the development of the spirit of defence." (Musée de l'Armée 2010, 8)⁵

Similarly, the new design of part of the permanent exhibition of the Tøjhusmuseet in Copenhagen, designed by Johan Carlsson and Tove Alderlin, which was inaugurated in February 2013, focuses on the military aspects of the 21 wars that have involved Denmark in the last 500 years, with a multimedia narrative section next to an exhibition of the most important weapons of the historical collection of the museum.

The Imperial War Museum of London, founded in 1917, is a border case. It is the first museum to introduce features which are connected to a more articulated concept of war, which were reinforced by subsequent designs at the expense of the military sections. However, the exhibitions about arms are still among the strong points of the museum, as is clear by Sir Norman Foster's reorganisation of the building in Lambeth Road, which focuses on a scenographic redesign of the large entrance hall, where the biggest and most spectacular weapons have always been exhibited.⁶

5 According to Caroline Barcellini, the Parisian museum was meant to be "destined to glorify France through its military past, [by asserting] explicitly its nationalistic and military feats. The educational purpose is fundamental—it is intended to provide a military and patriotic education to the whole nation, in order to complete the training which was provided during military service." (Barcellini 2010, 11)

6 For an exhaustive description of the foundation of the Imperial War Museum, see Kavanagh 1988.

In the last decades, facing a constant interest in the "military machine" and in the "universal" aesthetic dimension of war and its tools (weapons, uniforms, rituals),⁷ it is possible to detect the development of a different perception of the role that war has played and plays in historical transformations, which originates in the events that have marked the change of register and scale with the traumas related to the two World Wars.

After World War I it became clear that war museums should start to include the social effects in the representation of military conflicts. Consequently, as stated in a document dating back to 1818, they "must not seek to exalt war, but rather show what war means in national and personal loss, in devastation, and in reversion to barbaric standards" (Bolton 2008, 67). This process, transforming meanings and contents, developed from the affirmation of such concepts as commemoration and admonishment, which arose from the events of a war which had no historical precedent in terms of its international dimension, the large-scale application of new destruction technologies, and in the enormous number of military and civilian deaths; all these factors were later reiterated during World War II, in an even more devastating manner.⁸

Since then, the representation of wartime events could no longer be limited to traditional factors connected to the rhetorics of the nation, to the myth of the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983), of the "beautiful war" carried out in the name of the continuity of those values which are considered as permanent in their historical development.

The epic dimensions of the two 20th century World Wars, the events and the data that testify these proportions are the clear sign of an age when the individual was dramatically turned into an anonymous cog, first in the economical-productive machinery, and later in the military one. This happened both in democratic countries and in totalitarian regimes, with terrible consequences in both cases. The battle of the Somme, the bombing of Dresden, the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Holocaust are four events that symbolically represent the climax of a ruthless violence which originates from the scientific-technological progress that can be interpreted as the extreme outcome of the modern age (Bartov 1996, 2000; Todorov 2000). A large-scale efficient logic and a militarized industrialization, which was extended to economics, to the production of artifacts and to the organisation of deportations and exterminations—the "administrative massacres" (Assayag 2007, 7)—resulted in millions of victims being hit by "the negativity that houses in society, the negativity that presented itself in its widest historical dimensions"

7 Such interest is confirmed by the presence of ICOMAM (International Committee of Museums and Collections of Arms and Military History) within ICOM. ICOMAM's main purpose is to "encourage scientific research about arms and armour and military collections, both in specialized and general museums, and in military collections." ICOMAM also publishes a journal in English (<http://www.klm-mra.be/icomam>, accessed February 2013).

8 The data are impressive, though they are not yet certain. During World War I, out of a total number of 16.5 million casualties, over 6.5m were civilians; during World War II, only in Europe, out of a total number of about 35 million fallen, 19 million were civilians. The number of the people who died during the 20th century conflicts was "more than triple the total number of the victims of all the wars which were fought during the previous nineteen centuries." (Revelli 2001, 7)

Tøjhusmuseet, The Royal Danish Arsenal Museum

Copenhagen, Denmark

The Tøjhusmuseet was created in 1928 in the Royal Danish Arsenal, which had been built by King Christian IV in 1598–1604. The building is 163 metre long and 23 metre large, and it has two large halls: the Arsenal Hall (one of the largest vaulted spaces of the time) on the ground floor, and the Armory Hall on the first floor.

In February 2013, the *Danmarks Kriege* (“Denmark’s Wars”) was inaugurated in the Armory Hall, the first new permanent exhibition in the museum since 1936. The exhibition narrates the twenty-one wars that have involved Denmark in the last five centuries: the Swedish wars, the wars against England, the 1864 war and World War II, as well as the more recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The curator, Emil Thirup-Sorknæs, has stated that “the aim of this exhibition is to focus on the fact that a significant part of Danish history has dealt with war and violence.”

Danmarks Kriege is the first step of the project *Krig og Menneske* (“War and Man”) which will involve the whole arsenal, and represents the passage from a museum that displays weapons as artefacts (with scenographic effects, as it is possible to see from the historical picture published here), to a museum that communicates history, culture, and wars among countries.

The “Denmark’s Wars” exhibition is a 140-metre long steel container that projects itself through the rows of columns. The long display case is divided into 48 sections, each section presenting one war. The sections provide space that invites the visitor into the core of the container, where the artefacts are exhibited.

The design by JAC.TA. Collaboration, a consortium between architect Johan Carlsson from JAC studios and scenographer Tove Alderin from Studio Alderin, extensively uses interactive media, lights and sounds, which accompany the exhibits, and presents the

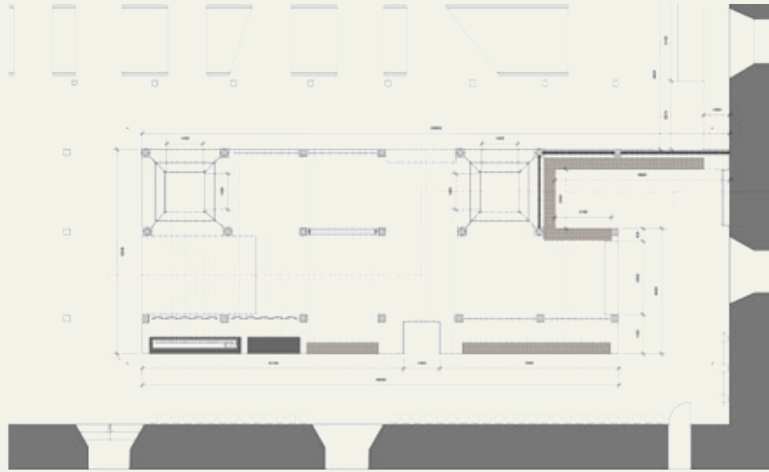
movie *MAGT* (Power), a long emotional journey through the war history, a staging of man, body, power and humility. The sequence ends with three empty display cases waiting to be fitted in, which represents a reflection on the fact that war history has never finished, and it can continue with future wars about which we do not know anything yet.

The designers have stated: “In the competition brief the museum asked for a series of closed spaces, one for each war, we challenged this thought and opened up for a transparency between the wars. This to give possibilities to make connections and references between the individual wars. (...) We believe that an exhibition should find its language through authenticity, not by trying to recreate or copy historical scenarios. The challenge at The Royal Danish Arsenal Museum has been to design an exhibition that marks itself, and at the same time preserves and shows courtesy to the 160 metre long arsenal hall, which is itself an artefact.” Such a statement highlights this continuity through the formal and spacial relationships between the historical building, with its values and meanings as a “repository of weapons” and the new hypothesized reorganization lines.



IMG. 7.15 — Tøjhusmuseet, Royal Arsenal Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark. Exterior view. Photo by Ib Rasmussen, Creative Commons.

IMG. 7.16 — Interior view of the museum during the first half of the 20th century. Photo by SFHM, Creative Commons.



IMG. 7.17 — JAC.TA Collaboration - Johan Carlsson, Tove Alderin, "Denmark's Wars" permanent exhibition, 2013. Floor plan. © JAC.TA Collaboration.

IMG. 7.18–21 — Views of "Denmark's Wars" permanent exhibition. Courtesy of JAC.TA Collaboration.



Musée de l'Armée, Historial De Gaulle

Army Museum, Paris, France

The Musée de l'Armée, which is part of the seventeenth-century complex of the Hôtel des Invalides, was set up in 1905, through the fusion of two military institutions, the Museum of Artillery (1871) and the Historical Museum of the Army (1896). It is one of the largest military museums in the world and it has half a million objects, among which weapons, armours, uniforms, military emblems and paintings, over a 12,000 square metre exposition area.

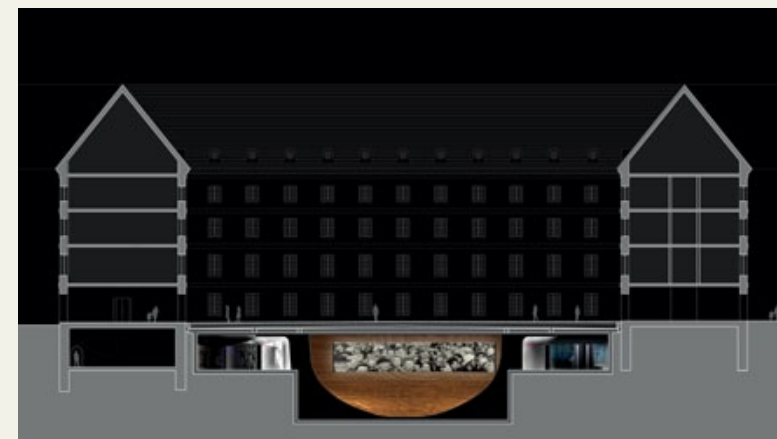
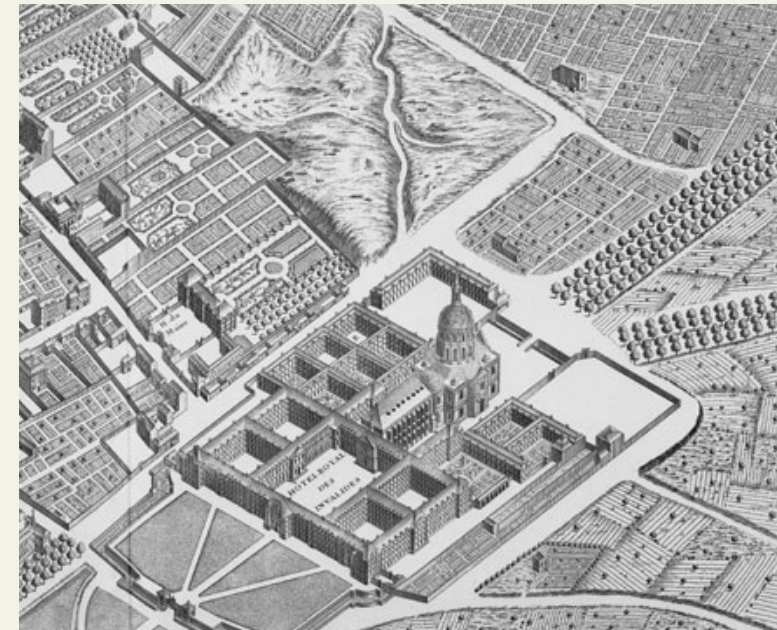
Since 2000, the museum has been the object of an important renovation plan, called ATHE-NA (acronym of Armes, Techniques, Histoire, Emblématique, Nation, Armée). The project involves, among the others, the Department of Arms and Armor (which was re-opened in 2005), the Department of the Two World Wars (which was reorganized between the years 2003 and 2006), and the Modern Department (2010), and it aims at turning a museum of objects into a museum of history. However, the purpose of the museum is still to convey a military education for national defence. Besides, it commemorates the war events of the previous century.

The Historial Charles de Gaulle was set up in 2008 under the Cour de la Valeur, after a project by Alain Moatti and Henri Rivière. It is characterized by an upside-down dome with an elliptical plan where the multi-screen room is located, and where a film by Olivier Brunet—which introduces the visit to the museum—is projected on rotation on five screens. The room is surrounded by a circular exposition gallery, and by a series of multimedia alcoves. The circular gallery, which is accessed through three informative “doors” and is called “path of the century,” presents the important moments of the life of the general and politician De Gaulle, from the war, the resistance and the liberation, to the foundation of the Fifth Republic and the 1950s and 1960s. In the peripheral alcoves, which are darkened and acoustically iso-

lated, the visitor can explore the topics in-depth through some interactive tools, documentary instruments and pictures.

The *image* as a tool for experience is the leading element of the exposition path. The image is a medium but also a representation of the historical controversial character of the leader. The Historial, though, is not completely devoid of the celebratory intentions that characterize more explicitly the Mémorial of Colombey-deux-églises, de Gaulle's home town. It is a fact that what emerges from the gallery is the figure of the “hero.” Nevertheless, the visitor's identification with the course of events results from the confrontation between those who have written history and those who have contributed to building such history in its entirety, piece by piece, such as most of the people who play a background role in the portrayal of the protagonist.

This is why the Historial at the Musée de l'Armée manages to keep a reasonable narrative balance, also thanks to a scientific committee who have pursued the critical articulation of the historical debate as much as possible.



IMG. 7.22 — The Hôtel des Invalides in the Turgot map of Paris, 1739. “Plan de Paris, commencé l'année 1734: Dessiné et gravé sous les ordres de Messire Michel Étienne Turgot, Marquis de Sousmons,” Paris, plate 16.

IMG. 7.23 — View of the Hôtel des Invalides, Paris, France. Photo by Sébastien Hosy, Creative Commons.

IMG. 7.24 — Alain Moatti, Henri Rivière, Historial De Gaulle, 2008. Longitudinal section on the Cour de la Valeur. © Agence Moatti-Rivière.



IMG. 7.25 — Axonometry: 1. "Multi-screen Room"; 2. "Circular Gallery"; 3. "Doors"; 4. "Alcoves." © Agence Moatti-Rivière.

IMG. 7.26 — View of the "Circular Gallery." Courtesy of Agence Moatti-Rivière.

IMG. 7.27 — Door of the 26th of August, 1944. Courtesy of Agence Moatti-Rivière.

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IMG. 7.28 — Alcoves of freed France. Courtesy of Agence Moatti-Rivière.

IMG. 7.29 — Alcove of the reconstruction. Courtesy of Agence Moatti-Rivière.



(Wahnich 2011, 49). It is a gloomy representation, where the names and faces of the single individuals compose a mosaic made up of countless tiles. Altogether, they create the image of a multitude that conveys the range of those events, which can hardly be imagined, especially by the younger generations.

As Nick Merriman observes, “the apparent certainties of modern thought, such as origin, evolution, progress, traditions, and value become replaced by the concepts of transformation, discontinuity, rupture, disorder and chaos” (Merriman 2000, 300). Therefore, the discontinuities and contradictions of contemporary age need to be tackled starting from the terrible events of the Short Century. Indeed, in the 20th century the idea of the past was seriously shaken by the blows of a “natural history of destruction” (Sebald 2004) that demolished the legacy of a human progressive and positive process, both conceptually and physically.

While honour, glory, patriotism, heroism and duty were the words that belonged (and still do so) to the museums of the armies and of military history, the representation of museums dedicated the history of the wars of the twentieth century is connected to different words—such as abjection, cruelty, monstrosity, horror, extermination, genocide, atrocity, degradation, humiliation, bereavement, pain, shame, anguish, rage, hate, ignominy, etc. This semantic evolution indicates a breach in the interpretation of war and its meaning in relation with society, populations and people, be they soldiers or civilians. Today, museums represent two different kinds of violence—that of the battlefield, and that of unarmed civilians. Over the last century these two types of historical narration (military history and cultural and social history) have been merging and, ultimately, coalescing.⁹

The character of these museums, which previously was technical and celebratory (focused on the illustration of weapons technology and the glorification of national values), evolved through an anthropological, cultural and social approach, fostering a reflection on the events whose signs are still fixed in the memory and in the sensitivity of people, as well as in the landscapes where they carry out their everyday lives, and where these catastrophic events have deposited physical and mental traces.

Europe is still studded with remnants of the recent wars; in these “markers of the past” (Macdonald 2009, 1) it is possible to read the devastation of places, but also of cultures, sense of belonging and identities, dispersed and shuttered by military events. Trenches and walkways, fortifications, bunkers, shelters, concentration and extermination camps, cemeteries, memorials and monuments, steles and tombstones, and, obviously, remains of bombed buildings still mark cities and territories. The case of

9 “What the First World War did [for the first time] was to bring family history and universal history together. Museums are places where this blending of different stories, large and small, can be visualized, represented, recalled.” (Winter 2009, 35)

the Neues Museum in Berlin is emblematic. Indeed, after more than half a century of abandon, the recent restoration designed by David Chipperfield has turned its ruins into a prime example of representations of the “disasters of the war.” The museum focuses on ancient art and archaeology; however, the evidence of the modern “archaeology of war” is underlined by the preservation of the ruins of the building, which are shown in their relationship with its reconstruction, in order to testify the devastating effects that hit European cities during World War II (Chipperfield et al. 2009). In this way, it is clear that, in some way or another, “war dominates museum space” (Winter 2012b, 150) and “more or less every museum is at one time or another confronted with displaying topics of war and violence.” (Muchitsch 2013, 10)

Considering the devastating and controversial nature of these events, creating convincing museum representations is not an easy task. Aphasia made it almost impossible to narrate the unspeakable for a long time, as Winfried Sebald stated while speaking about the removal of the references to the events connected to the strategic bombings in German cities during the final phase of World War II in the works by German writers.¹⁰ Such condition of aphasia keeps marking our memories, either directly or indirectly, as open wounds that have not healed.

We witness the necessity to leave behind these forms of amnesia, whether ideologically imposed or unconsciously sought out, and once more to bring memory to light, a memory which raises various controversies among the testimonies of witnesses, and which is not always settled by documentation such as photographs or videos. Temporal proximity to the two World Wars transformed the memories of those who lived such experiences into central elements in the narration of the museums focused on recent history (we refer to the 20th century as the Age of Witness). The witness has been (and still is) considered to be one of the main factors in the validation of the narration, playing a central role in the definition of an accurate perspective on past events. As stated by Jay Winter, expert in the history of World War I, while narrating his experiences the witness “affirms the moral category of establishing the boundary between good and evil” (Winter 2012a), and sets a methodological question related to the definition of “truth” within a representation of historical facts, where the limit between factuality and fiction needs to be clarified. We know that historical memory is not merely the memory borne by an individual, a family or a group, especially when it concerns traumatic or painful events; historical research requires critical elaboration, verification and validation. As noted by Sir Winston Churchill, “Memories of the war may be vivid and true, but should never be trusted without verification, especially where the sequence of events is concerned” (Churchill 1950, 687). Museum narratives must balance between the presentation of oral testimonies and the critical exhibition of documents and objects,

10 “If those born after the war were to rely solely on the testimony of writers, they would scarcely be able to form any idea of the extent, nature, and consequences of the catastrophe inflicted on Germany by the air raids.” (Sebald 2004, 69–70)

Imperial War Museum, London

London, United Kingdom

The museum was set up in 1917 as a national museum and it was later extended to all the British Commonwealth (hence, the adjective Imperial). It was opened to the public in 1920 in the Crystal Palace of Sydenham. In 1924 it was moved to the Imperial Institute in South Kensington. Since 1936 it has been settled in the central body—the only part that was not destroyed—of the nineteenth century Bethlem Royal Hospital in Lambeth Road at Southwark.

The museum was created to give account of the civil and military war effort and commemorate the sacrifice of Britain and its Empire during the First World War. As the Third Annual Report of the Committee in 1920 states: “The Museum was not conceived as a monument to military glory, but rather as a record of toil and sacrifice; as a place of study to the technician in studying the development of armaments; to the historian as an assembly of material and archives to instruct his work; and to the people of the Empire, as a record of their toil and sacrifice through these fateful years” (quoted in Kavanagh 1988, 94).

After World War II, the museum was renovated, with collections that include archives of personal and official documents, photographs, films and video materials, and oral history recordings; a library, a large art collection, and examples of military vehicles and aircraft, equipment and other artefacts. Since then, new sections have been created which are dedicated to the various aspects connected to the wars in relationship with society, starting from the second half of the 20th century. Such sections, as stated in the website, are meant “to provide for, and to encourage, the study and understanding of the history of modern war and ‘wartime experience’.”

In 1966 the museum underwent a first expansion and in 1989, after a project by Arup Associates, it was further enlarged, with the

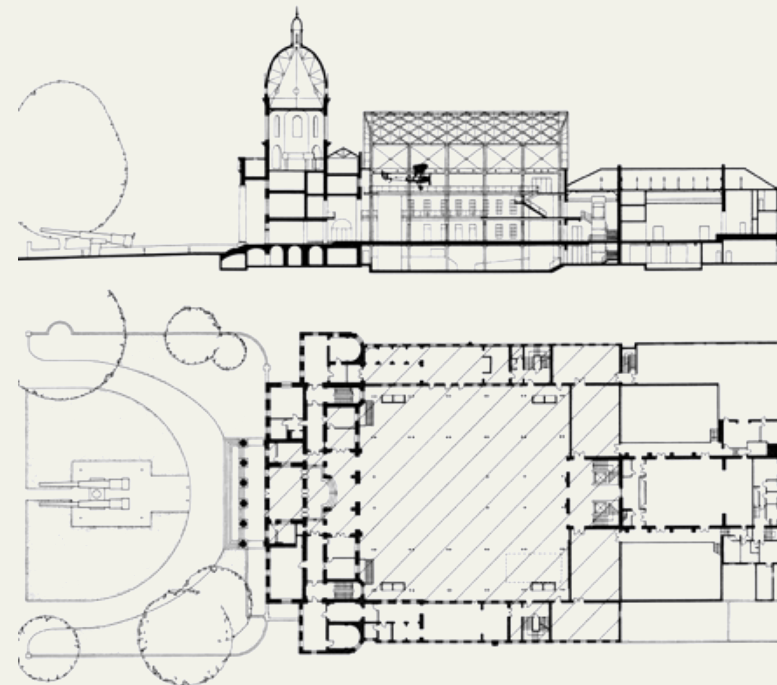
creation of the Large Exhibits Gallery. For this purpose, the central yard of the building was covered with a glass barrel-vaulted structure, where tanks, artillery pieces, vehicles, and aircraft from the First World War to the Falklands War were fitted out.

In 2000 the studio At Large organized “The Holocaust Exhibition,” the first of this kind in Great Britain, and in 2002 Cason Mann organized the “Crimes against Humanity Exhibition,” a gallery centred on a thirty minute film, with a small interactive area for those interested in deeper research.

In 2010 a new renovation programme was launched which will have been finished by 2014 for the centenary of the beginning of the Great War. The redevelopment is intended to provide new gallery spaces (among which the World War I Section) and a new central hall, easier navigation and improved visitor facilities, planned by the studio Foster + Partners.

The spaces and the exposition paths have been rationalized with a long-term strategy according to three concepts (“clarity of circulation,” “chronology,” and “consolidation”). Besides, the outfitting of the objects displayed in the new large six floors high hall recalls the features of the previous arrangement. Indeed, this was based on the eloquence of the most spectacular war machines of the collection, and the current exposition has a scenographic composition, both from an architectonic and a design point of view.

IWM has four more branches located in England: IWM North in Trafford, Greater Manchester; IWM Duxford near Cambridge (with a new exhibition hall designed by Norman Foster); the Churchill War Rooms in Whitehall, London (an underground wartime command centre); and the historic ship HMS Belfast, on the River Thames in London.



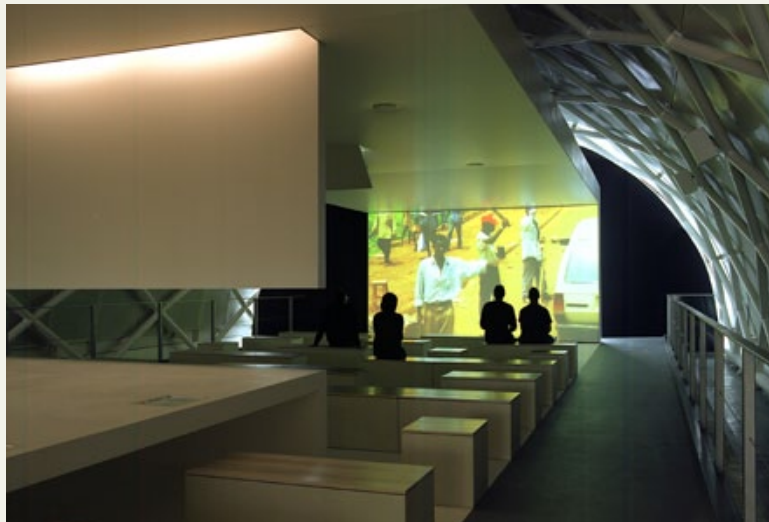
IMG. 7.30 — Imperial War Museum, London, United Kingdom. Exterior view. Photo by Luca Basso Peressut.

IMG. 7.31 — Arup Associates, Expansion of the Imperial War Museum, 1989. Ground floor plan and section. © Arup Associates.



PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.32 — View of the “Large Exhibits Hall” in 2002. Photo by Luca Basso Peressut.

THIS PAGE, IMG. 7.33, 7.34 — Bob Baxter/At Large, “The Holocaust Exhibition,” 2000. Courtesy of At Large.



IMG. 7.35, 7.36, 7.37 — Casson Mann, “Crimes against Humanity Exhibition,” 2002. Courtesy of Casson Mann.

NEXT PAGE, IMG. 7.38, 7.39 — Foster + Partners, Project for the renovation of the Imperial War Museum, London. Renderings of the new hall and of an exhibition gallery. © Foster + Partners.



Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr

Military History Museum of the Bundeswehr, Dresden, Germany

The complex of Dresden Arsenal, one of the most important of the time, was realized in 1873 in the suburb of Albertstadt. At its centre, the building of the Armory, which is inspired by the architecture of Gottfried Semper (the author of Dresden Theatre and Art Gallery), became a museum of weapons in 1897 and in 1912 it was given the name of Saxon Museum of the Army (Sächsische Armeemuseum).

In 1939 Adolf Hitler commanded that the military museums of Berlin, Munich, and Dresden be taken in delivery by the Wehrmacht, with the aim of promoting the “heroic spirit of Germany at war.”

From the end of World War II till 1989 the museum kept working as Army Museum of the DDR. After the reunification the museum was closed. Thanks to an intervention of renovation and reorganization funded by the army of the Federal Republic of Germany (which has to be given the credit of facing the foundation of a military museum in light of the current debate on the representation of war), the museum was reopened in 2011 as Military History Museum of the German Federal Armed Forces.

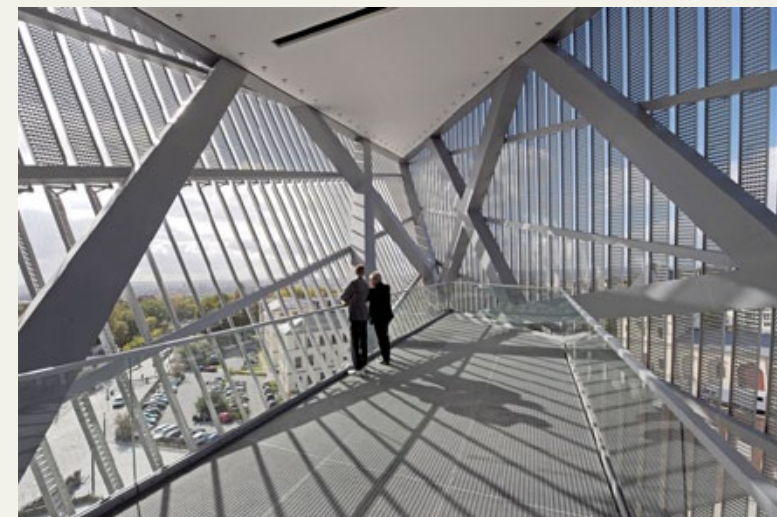
With his architectonic intervention, Daniel Libeskind has meant to highlight the historical rift that the city underwent during the last war, in particular with the tragic bombing of the 13th February 1945, when it was almost completely destroyed. The new triangular body of the building of the museum is embedded in its solid classicality, and its vertex points towards the historical centre of the city, which is where it was most devastated. The visitor can observe the landscape from the observatory at its summit, whose floor is paved with stones from cities destroyed in World War II: Wielu in Poland, Rotterdam and Dresden.

Libeskind said in 2011: “It was not my intention to preserve the museum’s facade and just

add an invisible extension in the back. I wanted to create a bold interruption, a fundamental dislocation, to penetrate the historic arsenal and create a new experience. The architecture will engage the public in the deepest issue of how organized violence and how military history and the fate of the city are intertwined.”

He also added: “The dramatic extension is a symbol of the resurrection of Dresden from its ashes. It is about the juxtaposition of tradition and innovation, of the new and the old. Dresden is a city that has been fundamentally altered; the events of the past are not just a footnote; they are central to the transformation of the city today.”

In the museum, the German military history matches against the history of the culture of violence and the motivations of the armed conflicts. Holzer Kobler and HG Merz have curated the permanent exhibition, which is organized in three chronological paths (1300 to 1914, 1914 to 1945, 1945 up to the present), and eleven theme paths, among which “War and Memory,” “War and Music,” or “War and Theatre.” “War and Games” section shows children’s toys, including a metal tank—whose fate of its owner is unknown—found in the rubble of Dresden, and melted by the heat of the bombing. Through its architectural language, the new permanent exhibition enters into a symbiosis with both the Museum Neoclassical building and the wedge-shaped extension by Daniel Libeskind, which slices through the existing structure’s central wing.



IMG. 7.40 — Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr, Dresden, Germany. Architectural project by Daniel Libeskind, exhibition design by Holzer Kobler e HG Merz, 2011. Exterior view. Photo by Hufton+Crow, courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind.

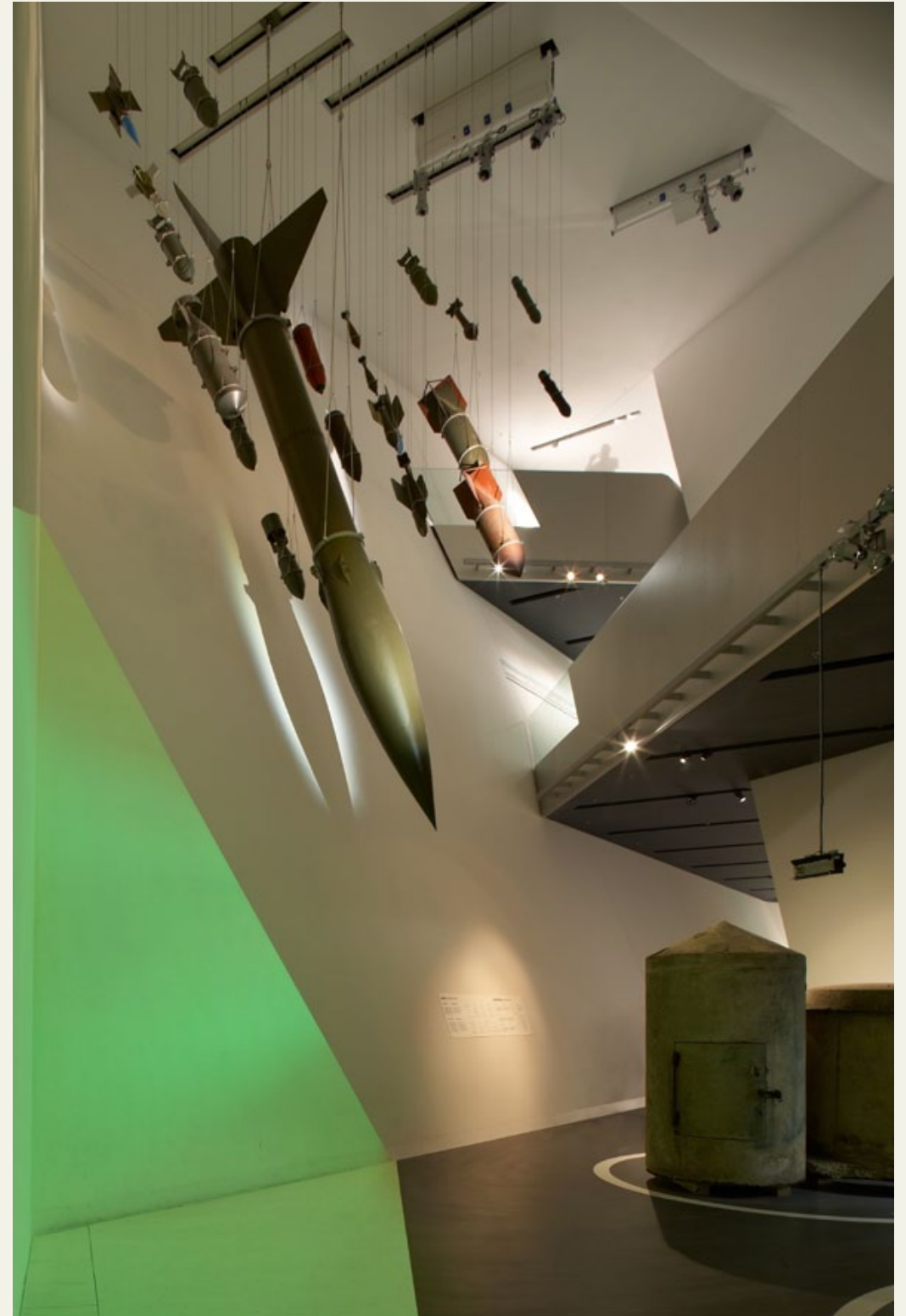
IMG. 7.41 — First floor plan. © Daniel Libeskind.

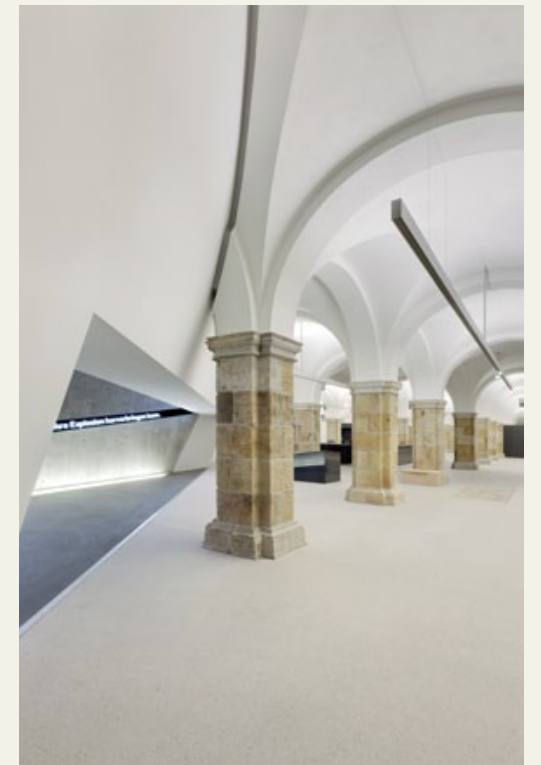
IMG. 7.42 — Observation platform. Courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind.



PAGES 670–672, IMG. 7.43–46 — Views of the thematic sections of the new wing. Photo by Hufton+Crow, courtesy of Studio Daniel Libeskind.

PAGE 673, IMG. 7.47–50 — Views of the wing with the historical section. Photo by Bitter Bredt, courtesy of Holzer Kobler Architekturen.





which make the experiences recalled tangible by using them as mediators of memory. The installation defines the role of the object as witness itself, through a physical rather than a verbal consistency, which is able to restore the connection between specific meanings and universal values.

In the representation of the Holocaust, for example, the exhibition strategies which illustrate violence and genocide exploit different tools. Among these are artifacts and objects; these may be special and eloquent presences (the concentration camps themselves, torture stocks, crematoriums) but also multiple, ordinary and anonymous elements (documents, pictures of the victims, clothes, utensils), which bear witness to the dimension of the tragedy through their number. Their evocative power is explained in the poem by Moishe Shulstein which is on display at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where it complements the installation of a pile of shoes belonging to Jews murdered in concentration camps.

We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses.
We are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers,
From Prague, Paris and Amsterdam,
And because we are only made of fabric and leather
And not of blood and flesh, each one of us avoided the hellfire.

We are aware that the legitimisation given by a museum to the representation of a historical fact is socially and culturally (as well as also politically) relevant. As catalysts of knowledge, museums have the social task of communicating, with their tools and devices, the development of historical research. Moreover, the museum is a place which “engages the body of the visitor” (Wahnich 2011, 58) and where representations correspond to a spatial and figurative set-up; therefore, it is the only place where it is possible to create a more direct and participated confrontation with the memories and emotions of the visitors. Within this context, war museums’ cultural action is essential to keep society’s attention alive towards the moral issues raised by conflicts and violences, in an elaboration process that tackles memory, commemorations and education (Whitmarsh 2001, Williams 2007).

Since the museum “is not simply aimed at adopting emotions built a priori, but rather renders the aesthetic conditions of the visit by operating through thematic and museographic choices” (Wahnich 2011, 58), architecture and exhibition designs must contribute to the creation of this new awareness. The different outcomes are the expression of political and cultural choices of whoever decides to create and manage these museums: nations, regions, communities, and local groups. At the same time, they are the result of the capacity of the people who plan the contents, the narrations, the spaces and forms of this kind of communication (experts in military history and museum studies, architects and exhibition designers). They must be able to interpret the topic with particular sensitivity, especially when they face the problem of representing facts whose drama goes beyond the limits of consolidated museographic languages and techniques.

Imperial War Museum North

Manchester, United Kingdom



The Imperial War Museum North was set up in Trafford, Greater Manchester in 2002, after a project by Daniel Libeskind. It is part of the recovery plan of the old industrial port, a disused area over three kilometres far from Manchester, at only twenty minutes by train from one of the most important European airports. Such a location interests a user base of sixteen million people, the number of people that live no more than two hour drive from Salford Quays.

The building is based on the concept of a globe that has been shattered by the wars. Three of these shards are recomposed in the form that characterizes the museum, an architecture covered with metal panels which symbolizes the wars of the 20th century, fought by men and women on the ground, sky and sea.

As Daniel Libeskind states, “The IWMN is a constellation composed of three interlocking shards of space. The Earth Shard forms the museum space, signifying the open, earthly realm of conflict and war. The Air Shard serves as a dramatic entry into the Museum, with its projected images, observatories and education spaces. The Water Shard forms the platform for viewing the Canal, complete with a restaurant, cafe, deck and performance space.”

The design of the museum exhibitions, which puts together objects and interactive technolo-

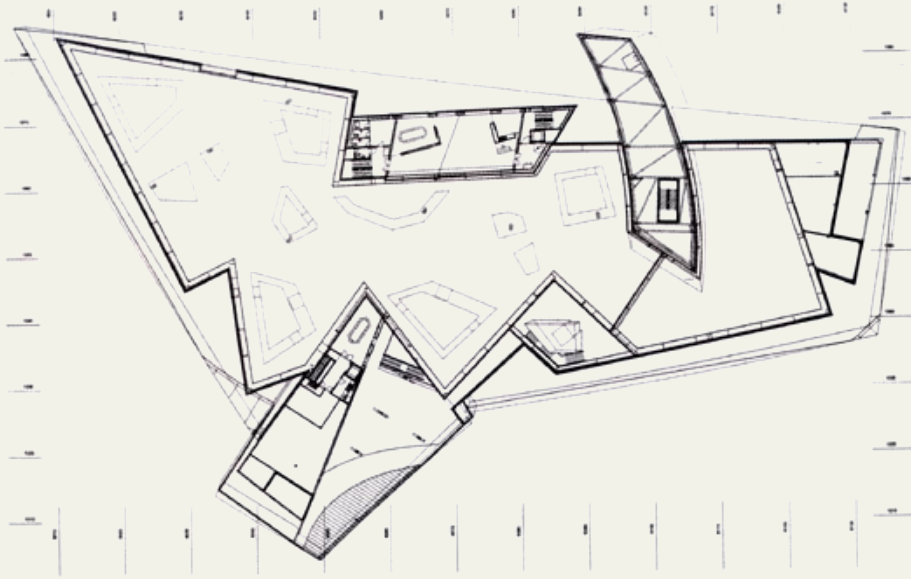
gies, was curated by Real Studios of London (Alistair McCaw and Yvonne Golds).

The Main Gallery of the museum, on the first floor, houses the permanent exhibitions chronologically organized into six sections:

- 1900–1914: A New Century;
- 1914–1918: First World War;
- 1919–1939: Between the Wars;
- 1939–1945: Second World War;
- 1946–1990: Cold War;
- 1990–Present: Into a New Century.

Six theme expositions (“Experience of War”; “Women at War”; “Impressions of War”; “Empire, Commonwealth & War”; “Science, Technology & War”; “Legacy of War”) are located in six closed rooms in the same space, called “silos.”

The walls of the main gallery are used for 15 minutes every hour as screens where to project the “Big Picture,” an audiovisual presentation of great impact, created with 60 synchronised slide projectors. The film uses images from the photographic archive of IWM and deals with topics connected to contemporary wars.



PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.51 — Daniel Libeskind, Shards sketch. © Studio Daniel Libeskind.

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IMG. 7.52 — Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, United Kingdom. Architectural project by Daniel Libeskind, exhibition design by Real Studios, 2002. Main Gallery floor plan. © Studio Daniel Libeskind.

IMG. 7.53 — Exterior view. © IWMN.

NEXT PAGE, IMG. 7.54 — View of the Main Gallery. © Studio Daniel Libeskind.





PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.55, 7.56, 7.57 — Views of the displays in the Main Gallery. Courtesy of Real Studios.

THIS PAGE, IMG. 7.58, 7.59, 7.60 — Views of the Main Gallery with projections of the "Big Picture." Photo by McCoy Wynne, courtesy of IWMN.

Oral, audio and video testimonies, photographic documentation, videotapes and various objects (which, for the first time in history, were able to be collected together in large quantities) are fundamental elements in the exhibition strategy of war museums. At the same time, the features of the locations where these museums operate, characterised by the memory and the historical sedimentation of such evidences (as is usually the case for these institutions), turn architecture into a factor of identification in terms of both context and content, inciting designers to develop a somehow ethical commitment and to attribute to the buildings a special expressive quality, and thus promote architecture as an inseparable part of the overall museum representation.

These considerations may be illustrated by three examples of recent museums.

The bombings in Dresden during the night between the 13th and 14th February 1945 almost completely destroyed the city, but they did not even touch the 19th century Arsenal (the only military building in the city) and its Militärhistorisches Museum. Such a paradox has been highlighted by the “wedge” that Daniel Libeskind has inserted in the solid classic nature of the museum building, directing its vertex towards the historical centre, which is the place that was most damaged: a landscape which visitors can observe from the observatory located on its top.

This architectural element has also been referred to as “bow of a ship,” “iceberg” (with a clear reference to the Titanic), “arrow,” “meteorite,” “ax,” “splinter” (of bomb). It characterizes the new museum and creates “a question mark about the continuity of history and what it means” (Libeskind 2010). This representation of the break in historical continuity is also evident in the museum exhibition design by Holzer Kobler and HG Merz. The spaces of the old building are devoted to the representation—both chronologically and by themes—of German military history, starting from the 14th century. The new wing, instead, is dedicated to the effects of wars in society: politics and use of force, war and pain, war and technologies, protection and destruction, etc.; visitors follow a path that crosses crooked and stretched spaces, which accentuate a sense of psycho-physical discomfort, up to the panoramic terrace paved with stone slabs coming from Dresden and other European bombarded cities (Pieken 2012).

As happens in other museum architectures by Libeskind, any nostalgic and sanitised view of history is put into question, with a research consistence that can also be observed in the other war museum designed by the American architect of Polish descent, namely the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. Here the “shards” of the Earth, which has been metaphorically destroyed by wars, are recomposed in a shape that reminds us of the past (and maybe future) ruins caused by any war. The sense of a catastrophe which emanates from the building is accentuated by an exhibition space where films and pictures, that show the effects of wars in various parts of the world, are screened onto the walls dramatizing the narrative. This space, as a consequence, is filled with images, lights, and dazing sounds.

Within recent museum narration, it is possible to recognise the increasing importance of exhibition settings and multi-medial techniques in raising emotional and empathic impressions, tension and attention towards what war represents in the collective imagination; both “immersive” and polysensorial museography, through the exhibition of the environment (trenches, shelters, bombarded streets, etc.), and “evocative” and minimalist museography (which is characterised by a more allusive rather than explicit approach) share the same objective.

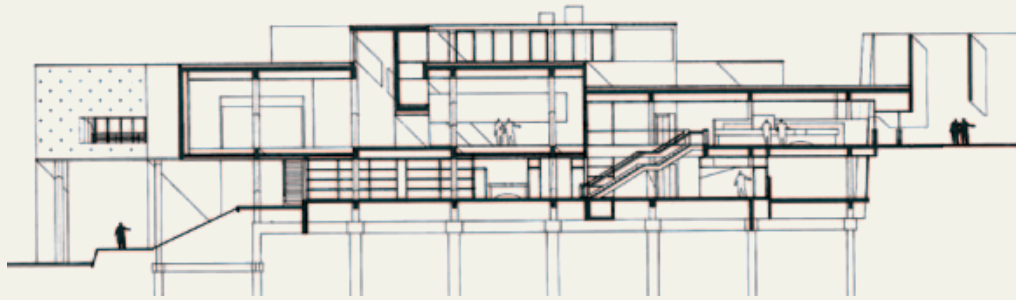
The latter case is exemplified by the museum of the concentration camp of Herzogenbusch, or Kamp Vught, in the Netherlands, set up in 2002 by the architectural firm Claus en Kaan. It is a parallelepipedon with eight rooms, with few views on the surrounding greenery and on a big model of the camp made in concrete, which is located outside. The museum stands out due to a minimalist language that recalls the theme of silence, of the threshold and the boundary between exterior and interior, of the wall, of the fence. The use of bricks underlines the physical and symbolic contextuality in respect to the camp, making the representation more appropriate than ever.

The museum design, curated by Marcel Wouters, narrates the history of the camp and of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, whereas temporary exhibitions tackle ethical issues, such as the good and the evil, discrimination, and prejudices from a contemporary point of view. The design matches the architecture: it is essential but efficient in conveying the message, and it has been conceived with the specific aim of making young people aware of what these places were and of the various roles played by the “perpetrators, the victims and the ‘spectators’” (Wouters 2009, 285), as well as of the reasons behind the crimes committed on the European soil during the years of the war, in the name of a terrible ideology.

Finally, the Historial de Péronne, founded in 1992, “the only French war museum with an explicit European perspective” (Wahnich and Tisseron 2001, 55), for the first time represents war—in this case, World War I—as a dramatic common experience. An experience shared by the soldiers of the three main fighting countries (France, Germany, England), as well as by the populations involved in the battles of the Somme, doomed to the same fate, unmasking the nationalistic and belligerent ideology based on the presentation of “us” versus “the others.” Such humanization of the war is well expressed by Henri Ciriani’s architecture, which is adherent to the military structure of the Castle of Péronne, where the entrance to the museum is located. The difference between the castle and the museum is sharp: the ramparts and the thick walls are in contrast with the lightness of a simple, permeable, peaceful architecture (clearly recalling Le Corbusier and his Museum of Unlimited Growth), which mirrors in the park’s lake that surrounds the castle, with the grace of *pavillon des délices*, as if it aimed at downplaying the gravity of the theme of the war. The features of the building are reflected in an equally sober exhibition design (by Adeline Rispal, Jean-Jacques Raynaud and Louis Tournoux), with its bright and connected exhibition

Historial de la Grande Guerre

Museum of the Great War, Péronne, France



The Historial de la Grande Guerre is located in the sites of the Battle of the Somme, in 1916, and of the Battle of the Picardy, in 1918, where three million soldiers fought over a frontline of 40 kilometres. Its aim is to provide the key to understand these events and encourage a reflection upon the consequences of these battles, and upon the material traces that still exist.

The museum, that opened in 1992, is meant to be a museum of compared cultural history, focusing on human beings: soldiers as well as civilians, prisoners, and occupied or dispersed populations. It adopts an anthropological approach that aims at showing humanity at war, a total war that hits society in its entirety.

The building has been designed by Henri Ciriani. It is lifted up on some columns that make it possible to have wide views of the surrounding park and lake, and it leans against the medieval castle fortifications of Péronne, with which it is in contrast because of its very modern features.

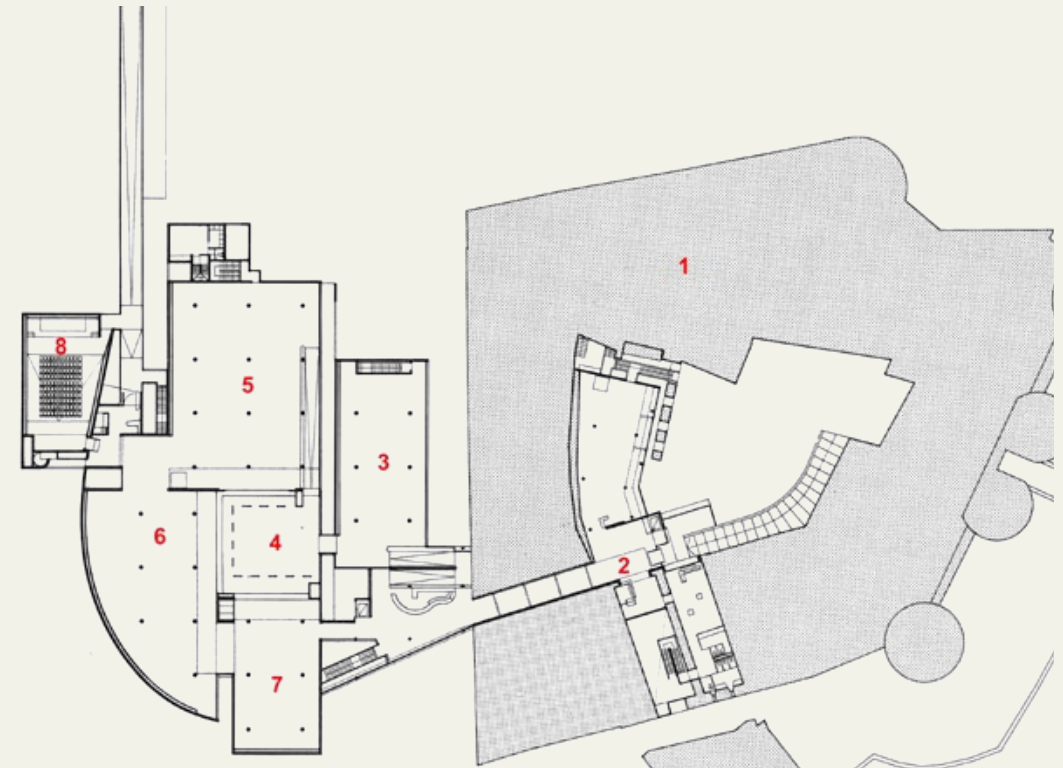
The museum has a collection of over 65,000 objects of military and also daily use. The exhibition is organized in five sections (“Pre War”; “1914–1916”; “1916–1918”; “Post War”; “The Eve of War”); the fifth is situated at the centre of the museum and shows portraits of individu-

als taken just before the war started) and in an Audiovisual Room, in which the film “Somme” describes the Battle of the Somme.

The permanent exhibition has been curated by studio Repérages (Adeline Rispal, Jean-Jacques Raynaud and Louis Tournoux), with the scientific advice of Jay Winter, an American historian specialized in World War I.

The museum aims at narrating the various “truths” of the war, encouraging visitors to directly relate to the three countries at war through a path that can be freely chosen.

Weapons, uniforms and military instruments are displayed at the centre of the rooms, set in shallow pits on the floor which evoke the common sorrow of fighters. Civilians, who were also involved in the war, are represented in vertical display cases, which are divided in three levels, dedicated to Germany, France, and Great Britain, respectively. All the presentations are in three languages, in order to show the experiences of the main countries who took part in World War I. The museum is a starting point for visits to sites and places of the Great War disseminated in the territory of the Western Front.



PAGE 682, IMG. 7.61 — Historial de la Grande Guerre, Péronne, France. Architectural project by Henri Ciriani, exhibition design by Adeline Rispal, Jean-Jacques Raynaud and Louis Tournoux, 1992. Section. © Henri Ciriani.



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IMG. 7.62 — First floor plan: 1. Castle; 2. Entrance to the Historial; 3. Room One "Pre War"; 4. Central Hall "The Eve of War"; 5. Room Two "1914-1916"; 6. Room Three "1916-1918"; 7. Room Four "Post War"; 8. Audiovisual Room "Somme." Photo by Henri Ciriani.

IMG. 7.63 — View of the museum from the lake. Photo by J.-M. Monthiers, courtesy of Henri Ciriani.

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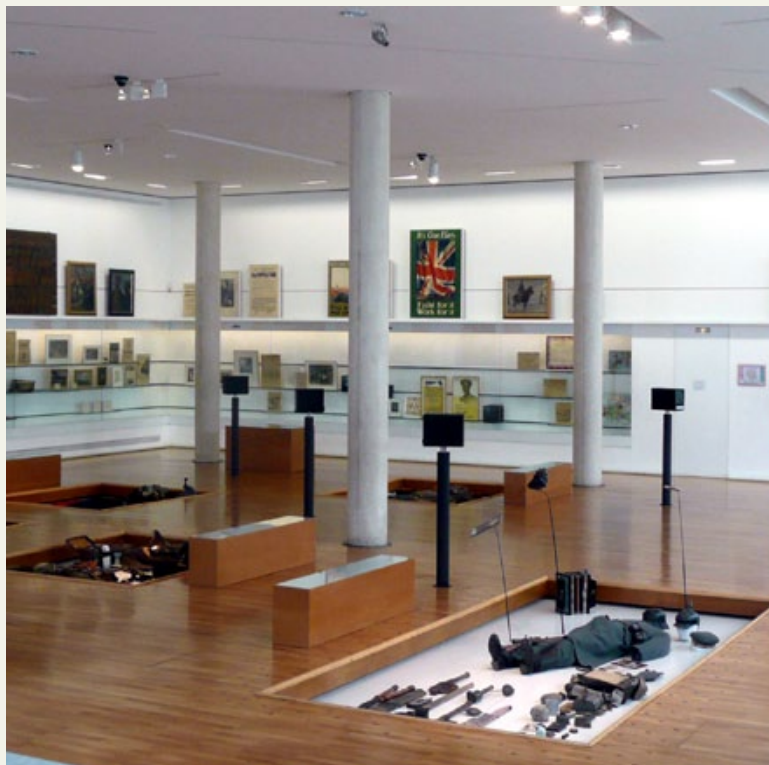
IMG. 7.64 — View of the Central Hall: "The Eve of War." Photo by J.-M. Monthiers, courtesy of Henri Ciriani.

IMG. 7.65 — View of Room Two: "1914-1916." Photo by Yannick Vernet.

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IMG. 7.66 — View of Room One. Photo by J.-M. Monthiers, courtesy of Henri Ciriani.

IMG. 7.67 — View from Room Three towards Room Four. Photo by J.-M. Monthiers, courtesy of Henri Ciriani.



spaces. The relationships among the objects, the architectural space and the exhibition design are based on a double register, which is defined by the intersection of two “narrative planes:” the horizontal plane for the military aspects, with the *fosses*—a sort of open showcases in the floors, where weapons and uniforms of the three fighting forces lie as if they were fallen soldiers at the bottom of a trench—and the vertical plane for the civilians, for the people who were involved in the war without being soldiers, with showcases that contain objects and documents of individual persons and families (Winter 2006).¹¹ These nameless objects are the only survivors of those facts, and with their physical presence they trigger a more complex reference system, combining the cognitive and the emotional registers in the narration of events that caused over a million dead people and the devastation of an entire territory. Individuals, families and groups appear in their tangible physiognomy, as human beings rather than anonymous and invisible components of abstract entities such as nations and homelands. Altogether, the representation of the events is simple and direct, and its implicit and unrhetoical message aims at reconciliation among the various populations, rather than among countries or nations (Brandt 1994, 2004).

The Historial of Péronne obliges us take into consideration the case of *site-based museums*, located on the sites where historic events took place, where “memory works” (Nora 1984, x), and where local memory is practised as a part of a culture related to global memory. From this condition, such museums take symbolic strength and communicative eloquence. These museums are at same time visitor centres, education centres and communication spaces, recalling the material and immaterial memories which characterise the surrounding territory. They work as “pilgrimage stations” on the sites that witnessed military events, where the physical traces produced by the wars become an object of preservation and valorisation, thus creating a conscious geography of places of memory. The topography of war territories expands the museum space, triggering a mapping operation in the visitors’ memory, a physical and cognitive cartography which acts on various levels: from the single object to the multiple “places of memory.” At the same time, the authenticity of monuments, of memorials, of cemeteries and of the remains disseminated in the landscape reinforces the sense of truth which is embodied by the objects exhibited inside the museums, this is, their witnessing value (Boursier 2005, Kjeldbæk 2009), through a spatial strategy which makes the museum part of a landscape that has a multiple expository phenomenology.

The diffused museum becomes performative: the public enters a theatre of memory where the representation is organised by the visitors themselves; it is they who coordinates the “trajectories” which articulate the

¹¹ Jay Winter, who has taken part in the scientific design of the Historial, talks about a “geometry of the memory” which is organized in a “horizontal access to the memory and mourning” and in a “vertical access to hope,” as the dialogue between two representations of violence (Winter 2012a). See also Winter 2006.

In Flanders Fields Museum

Ypres, Belgium

During World War I, the Lakenhalle (Cloth Hall), one of the main medieval monuments of Ypres, was bombed several times and was almost completely destroyed. The campaign of philological reconstruction started in 1933 and it ended in the Sixties. The only original parts of the current building are the lower parts of the perimeter stone walls and the base of the central Belfry.

The building and its history themselves are the representation of the violence of war and its destroying effects. Therefore, the creation of a museum dedicated to World War I in the West Flanders front region—where over 600,000 people died—within its spaces, has a strong symbolic and identity meaning for the town and its recent memory.

The name In Flanders Fields Museum originates from the famous poem by the Canadian physician and Lieutenant Colonel (who wrote it in early May 1915 in his medical aid station near Ypres), whose first two stanzas go:

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

After being closed for some time for refurbishments (which were curated by the Belgian studio noAarchitecten), the museum reopened in June 2012. The new exhibition setting means to provide visitors with an in-depth perception and experience of the presented themes, through multimedia interactive exhibits accompanied by a background music by the British band Tindersticks.

Similarly to the Historial of Péronne, the museum tells the story of the war putting the selected exhibits into a historical context which also concerns the relationship with the town and the surrounding territory (from the Belfry it is possible to observe the surrounding battlefields.).

The museum offers various points of view on general and military history, relating with the different countries involved and the fact that soldiers coming from five continents and over fifty countries and cultures fought in the Flanders. It also means to be a reflection on the present: “Because the nature of war does not change in time, the museum considers presenting this war history as a universal and contemporary message of peace, and therefore an important social mission” (see: <http://www.inflandersfields.be/en/discover>).

The museum is currently setting up an archive of stories of lives of civilians and soldiers who were involved in the Flanders war, with the purpose of completing a selection of biographies of people whose testimony would otherwise go lost. It is an exercise of collective memory aiming at “enabling the visitor to empathise with them as a fellow human being rather than someone whose life is only given meaning through the experience of the war.” (Whitmarsh 2001, 9).



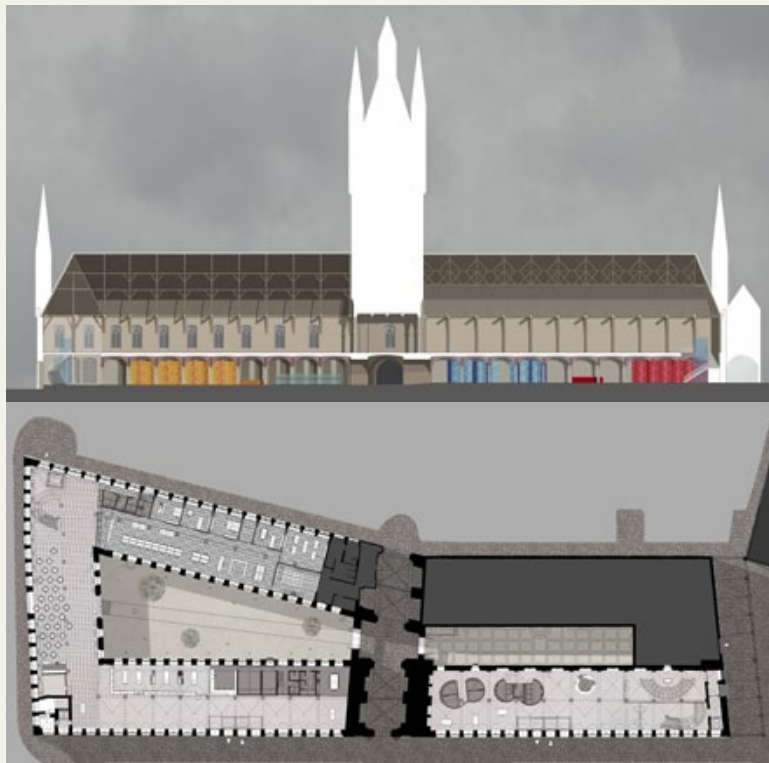
IMG. 7.68 — William Newzam Prior Nicholson (1872–1949), “Canadian Headquarters Staff,” oil on canvas, 1918. The painting represents five generals and one major of World War I posing in front of the cathedral and of the Lakenhalle of Ypres, both hit by bombings. Courtesy of Canadian War Museum / Musée canadien de la guerre, Ottawa.

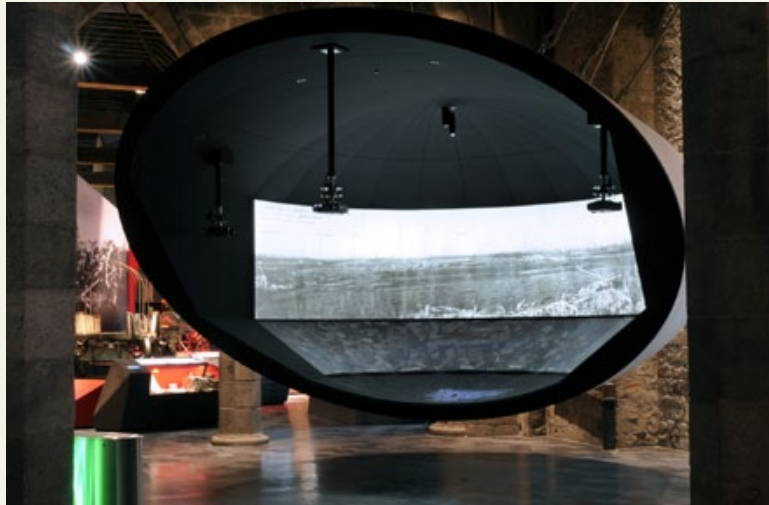
IMG. 7.69 — noAarchitecten, remodelling of the Cloth Hall for the In Flanders Fields Museum, a visitor centre for the Flanders and a knowledge centre for WWI, 2012. Floor plan and section. © noAarchitecten.

NEXT PAGE

IMG. 7.70 — Interior view. Courtesy of noAarchitecten.

IMG. 7.71 — One of the new museum displays. © In Flanders Field Museum.





IMG. 7.72-76 — Views of the new museum displays, 2012. © In Flanders Field Museum.

Musée de la Grande Guerre

Museum of the Great War, Meaux, France

The territory of Meaux was hit by two of the most sanguinary battles of World War I, namely the first and the second battles of the Marne, in 1914 and in 1918, where the German and the French-British armies fought.

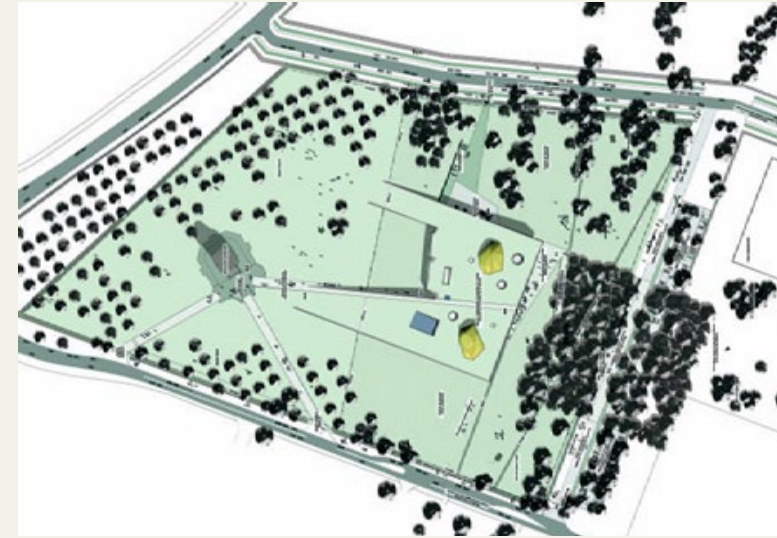
The museum, that opened in 2011, was conceived by architect Christophe Lab (who also designed the permanent exhibition), in the proximity of an American memorial realized in 1932. It is a wide horizontal cantilevered structure, integrated in a 16 hectare site, surrounded by cedar trees. With its shape, the museum expresses the strength of the events that upset the landscape at the time of the war, with a figurative reference to the destruction of a battlefield. The three levels of the museum contain 3,000 square metres of permanent exposition spaces, 4,000 square metres for temporary exhibitions, the auditorium, didactic spaces, facilities to the public, the documentation centre, the offices, and the storage. The roofing is a terrace from which it is possible to observe the surrounding landscape.

The museum displays Jean-Pierre Vernay's collection, which consists of about 50,000 objects from World War I: weapons and artillery, vehicles, medical instrumentations, uniforms and daily life objects, clothes, newspapers, placards, postcards, letters, paintings and sketches. Such collection is representative of the stories of men and women that went through that tragic period, whether they were soldiers or civilians. The exhibition makes wide use of multimedia tools and recreation of environments, and is organized following a main chronological path and a series of theme spaces. Visitors can choose between a short and a complete itinerary. The short one starts in 1870, with the first troubles that contributed to the outburst of World War I (the loss of Alsace-Moselle and the colonial and economic rivalries between France and Germany, the division of Europe into two blocks, the arms race), and goes on until 1939,

just before the beginning of World War II. The sections are: "From 1870 to 1914: birth of the 'spirit of revenge' among the French, and pre-war mentalities"; "From 1914 to 1918: Marne 1914, the trenches, Marne 1918, the beginning of the end, and victory"; "From 1918 to 1939: illusions of victory and the construction of memory." The complete itinerary also includes the theme areas that deal with various specific aspects of the conflict:

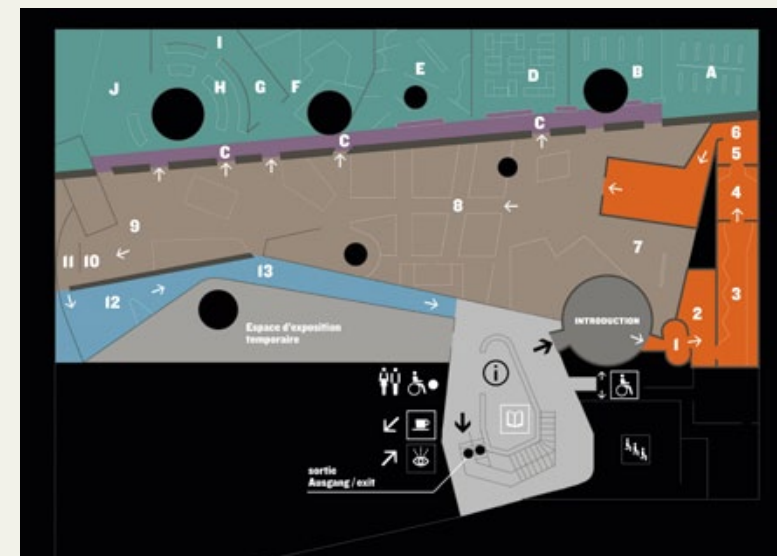
- "A new war": technological developments such as artillery, camouflage, communications and equipment;
- "Total mobilisation": commitment to the war effort on the part of entire populations;
- "Women in wartime": women's place in the conflict and the decisive role they played;
- "Daily life in the trenches": the life endured by millions of men in the trenches;
- "Tactics and strategy": development of strategies and portraits of the men that drafted them;
- "Bodies and suffering": the extreme violence of the war and the scientific advances that resulted from it;
- "Living far from home": everyday lives and sufferings of prisoners of war and of those living in occupied territories;
- "Globalisation": the interplay of alliances and involvement of colonial empires;
- "From over the hills to the trenches": participation in the conflict by soldiers drafted from the French colonies and protectorates;
- "The United States of America": recreation of an American camp and the major part played by the American Expeditionary Force in the final victory.

(see: http://www.museedelagrandeguerre.eu/en/long_itinerary).

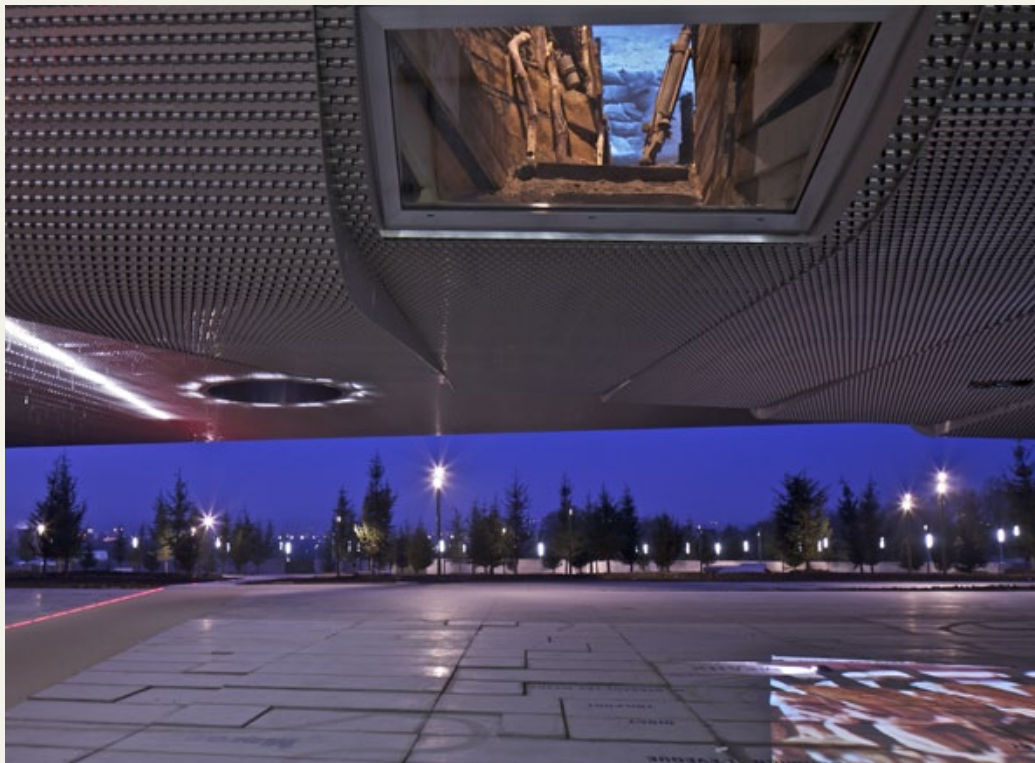


IMG. 7.77 — Musée de la Grande Guerre, Meaux, France. Architecture and exhibition design by Atelier Christophe Lab, 2011. General site plan. © Atelier Lab.

IMG. 7.78 — Exterior view. Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.



IMG. 7.79 — Exhibition floor plan: A. "A new war"; B. "Total mobilization"; C. "Women in wartime"; D. "Daily life in the trenches"; E. "Tactics and strategy"; F. "Bodies and suffering"; G. "Living far from home"; H. "Globalisation"; I. "From over the hills to the trenches"; J. "The United States of America." 1. "Forget... Never!"; 2. "States of mind"; 3. "From school room to barrack room"; 4. "A divided Europe"; 5. "Sarajevo"; 6. "Off the summer"; 7. "Marne 14"; 8. "The trenches"; 9. "Marne 18"; 10. "Towards victory"; 11. "The Armistice"; 12. "Illusions of victory"; 13. "The construction of memory." © Musée de la Grande Guerre, Meaux.



PREVIOUS PAGE
IMG. 7.80 — Covered square with entrance to the museum. Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

IMG. 7.81 — Covered square with window on the exhibition plan. Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

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IMG. 7.82 — Main hall. Section 9: "Marne 18." Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

IMG. 7.83, 7.84 — Section 8: "The trenches." Photo by Philippe Ruault, courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.



IMG. 7.85 — Section H:
“A world war.” Photo by
Philippe Ruault, courtesy of
Atelier Christophe Lab.



IMG. 7.86 — Section F:
“Bodies and suffering: The
hospital.” Photo by Philippe
Ruault, courtesy of Atelier
Christophe Lab.



IMG. 7.87 — Section D:
“Daily life in the trenches.”
Photo by Philippe Ruault,
courtesy of Atelier
Christophe Lab.

NEXT PAGE

IMG. 7.88 — Section A: “A
new war.” Photo by Philippe
Ruault, courtesy of Atelier
Christophe Lab.

IMG. 7.89 — Section J:
“The United States of
America.” Photo by Philippe
Ruault, courtesy of Atelier
Christophe Lab.



Mémorial Cité de l'Histoire pour la Paix

Memorial-Centre for History and Peace, Caen, France



Over three quarters of the town of Caen were razed during the bombings following the Normandy Landings on June 6th, 1944. The Mémorial-Cité de l'Histoire pur la Paix was created by wish of the mayor and politician Jean Marie Girault with the aim of remembering those tragic events. It was inaugurated in 1988, after an architectonic project by Jaques Millet, and the museographical design by Yves Devraïne.

The building is a simple parallelepiped which is open at its centre, where the entrance to the museum is located. It metaphorically expresses the violence of the war events: "Above a large light sixty metre long wall, built with Caen stones, there is a narrow breach, a stroke of a sword delivered on the Atlantic wall in June 1944, but also on the wall of totalitarianism and denial of Human rights. Therefore, the Mémorial's symbolic strength asserts itself straight away: the road towards freedom is often narrow and sometimes roughened by sacrifices." (Quétel 2000, 63)

The museum was expanded in 2002 with the opening of a new wing dedicated to the cultures of peace and to the Cold War. The museum currently covers a period of time that goes from 1918 to 1989, that is, from the Treaty of Versailles to the fall of the Berlin wall.

Outside the museum there is the International

park for the liberation of Europe, dedicated to American, British, and Canadian soldiers who died at war.

The sections of the museum are: "The failure of peace"; "France in the dark years"; "Genocide and mass violence: The extermination of the Jews"; "World war, total war"; "Bombed-out cities"; "The D-Day landings and the battle of Normandy"; "Re-conquest and liberation"; "Evaluation and end of the war"; "Societies facing war"; "Memories and history"; "History of the Cold War"; "Opinion spots, world news through newspaper and magazine illustrations."

The exposition is addressed to the wide public and to schoolchildren (about one third of over 400,000 visitors a year). It is characterized by a richness of themes and the exhibition design makes use of environment re-enactments with music and sounds, the most recent ICT systems, performances and projections, which accompany visitors with a multi-sensorial ecstatic approach. On the coast close to the museum, there is also a building where a film about the landing in Normandy is projected, superimposing on the panoramic views of the battles sites as they are now. The museum and the surrounding territory form a big theme park, that sometimes looks like aiming at entertaining more than reflecting.





PAGE 698, IMG. 7.90 —
Mémorial Cité de l'Histoire
pour la Paix, Caen, France.
Architectural project by
Jacques Millet, exhibition
design by Yves Devraïne,
1988. Exterior view. © Le
Mémorial de Caen / Sigrid
Colomyès.

PREVIOUS PAGE

IMG. 7.91 — International
park for the liberation of
Europe. © Le Mémorial de
Caen / Benoît Grimbert.

IMG. 7.92 — View of the
main hall of the Mémorial.
© Le Mémorial de Caen.

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IMG. 7.93 — “Genocides
and mass violence: The
extermination of the
Jews in Europe” gallery.
© Le Mémorial de Caen /
Stéphane Dévé.

IMG. 7.94 — “World war,
Total war” gallery. ©
Le Mémorial de Caen /
Stéphane Dévé.

IMG. 7.95 — “Societies
facing war” gallery. © Le
Mémorial de Caen / Michael
Quemener.

NEXT PAGE

IMG. 7.96 — “Reconquest
and liberation” gallery.
© Le Mémorial de Caen /
Stéphane Dévé.

IMG. 7.97 — “Berlin at the
heart of the Cold War”
gallery. © Le Mémorial de
Caen.



relationship between the interior and exterior of the museum, or, in the words of Michel de Certeau, the “innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of socio-cultural production,” and thus compose “a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces” (Certeau 1984, xiv, 93). These actions assert the individual’s desire for protagonism in the appropriation of knowledge and its representation spaces.

In the musealisation of the sites where conflicts, pain and extermination have occurred, the authentic character of the historical place makes the theme more sensitive and immediately perceptible, offering a real idea of what happened, and how people used to live (and die) in those painful locations.

The building of the In Flanders Fields Museum at Ypres—the medieval Lakenhalle, the Cloth Hall, which was almost totally destroyed by the artillery during World War I and rebuilt from 1930 to 1967—is itself a representation of the devastating effects of war events. Through a new exhibition setting (2012), the museum aims at encouraging visitors to visit the landscapes of the war around Ypres. As stated by Piet Chielens, the current curator of the museum, “the landscape plays the last testimony to the Great War. We cannot hear any more witnesses, but we can visit the places where it happened. The region tells the story.”

The realization of war museums in the sites of battles also originates from a desire to legitimize and perpetuate local history. In such places, the past and its conflicts become a tool to claim identity and sense of belonging to a history of conflicts, as in the case of museums of the Resistance, of deportations, or of the massacres committed by the Nazi armies on unarmed populations, which are disseminated all over France and Italy.¹² These museums (or memorial-museums, where the aspects concerning commemoration mix up with those related to representation and narration) (Williams 2007, 7–9) tend to spread their message through the commemoration of the victims and of the gestures of the people who fought for freedom, as the expression of the social fabric that is rooted in those places. These institutions create a territorial circuit involving monuments, memorials, remains produced by the brutality of repression, and elevating the discourse by extending it to the wider themes of human rights, freedom and democracy violated by dictatorships.¹³

12 A guide to Italian museums of Resistance edited by the National Association of Partisans, which was recently published, presents a survey investigating 60 institutions in 13 regions, mainly situated in northern and central Italy (Gianuzzi 2012). In France, numbers are similar (as illustrated in the second part of the publication by Boursier 2005). Among the other museums dedicated to Resistance to Nazi-fascism in Europe, it is worth remembering the Verzetsmuseum (Dutch Resistance Museum) in Amsterdam, established in 1984; Frihedsmuseet (Museum of Danish Resistance) in Copenhagen, established in 1957; Norges Hjemmefront Museum (Norwegian Resistance Museum) in Oslo, established in 1966; Musée national de la Résistance (National Resistance Museum of Luxembourg) in Esch-sur-Alzette, established in 1956, and the Nationaal Museum van de Weerstand (The National Museum of the Belgian Resistance) in Anderlecht.

13 “In Europe, the museums dedicated to wars and terror perform national, regional or local features due to the conflicting re-appropriations of history and the discontinuities of the experiences focused on the re-elaboration of the past.” (Assayag 2007, 9)

Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught

Camp Vught National Memorial, Vught, Netherlands

Kamp Vught, at the outskirts of ‘s-Hertogenbosch in Holland, was the only official SS-concentration camp in occupied North-West Europe. Its construction started in May 1942. The camp worked from January 1943 to September 1944. In this period about 31,000 people were interned there: Jews, political prisoners, fighters of the Resistance, Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, common criminals and hostages. 749 of them lost their lives, most of whom were members of the Resistance. The camp was partially demolished at the end of the war and since then it has been used as military barracks and a prison.

Kamp Vught National Memorial was reopened in 2002 after extensive renovations. The prisoners’ barracks, three watch towers and the original fencing, as well as cell 115—where the bunker tragedy took place—have been reconstructed.

The new museum, which was built by Claus en Kaan Architekten, contains exhibition spaces and offices for the foundation and marks the entrance to the camp in the form of a screen. The interior space, designed by Marcel Wouters, consists of an enfilade of rooms without any connecting corridor. The individual exhibition rooms are tailored in length, breadth and height to their particular function.

The permanent exhibition tells the story of the camp and its internments. In the first room the exhibits consist of letters, diaries, photographs, clips, and personal stories of victims and their torturers. The second room focuses on the Nazi criminal system, of which Kamp Vught was part: through a window it is possible to see a large model of the camp outside. In the space for reflection there is a commemorative wall with the names (and, whenever is possible, the biographies) of all the interned men, women, and children that did not survive.

Finally, before leaving the museum, visitors can

leave their comments in a specific space where they can write their personal impressions, draw an image, or write a message. In one room a typical coffee shop in the Netherlands has been recreated, where scenes of daily life take place. Touch-screen tables reproduce newspapers, while some scenes are projected on the screen, in which common people discuss about prejudices, violence, social responsibility, etc.

“The final area of the exhibition resembles a relaxed pub—except you can’t buy any drinks. What purpose does this room serve? It is a social exhibition. An exhibition that leads to a deep, thought provoking experience. Visitors are invited to discuss the elements on display. The visitors’ own way of experiencing the exhibition, partly formed by their individual backgrounds, plays an important part here. Recreated newspapers, with moving images instead of photos, are on the tables next to real ones. Scenes from a pub, in which people hold ordinary conversations, are projected on a nine-metre long wall. While walking through this area of the exhibition you might overhear some people give their opinion on democracy. You can also witness the reaction of the other visitors when a rather unusual person enters the pub. In the background, a colour television set shows newscasts.

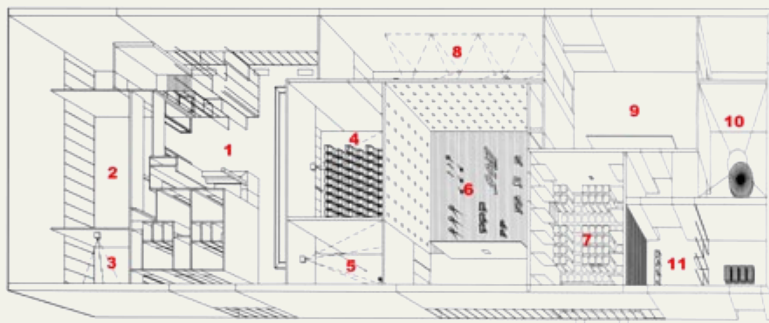
A man and a woman are sitting at a table. The man says: ‘If you really love me, you would...’ A clear example of emotional blackmail. Visitors might question the purpose of this mixture of conversations and newspaper reports. They might engage in a discussion, or it might urge them to think about it. The exhibition does not end in this area, it just leaves visitors with a clear message: always keep thinking and judging for yourself, even if it deviates from collective opinion or the law.” (Wouters 2009, 286–287)



IMG. 7.98 — View of Kamp Vught in 1945. © USHMM, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.



IMG. 7.99 — Museum Nationaal Monument Kamp Vught, Netherlands. Architectural project by Claus en Kaan Architecten, exhibition design by Marcelwoutersontwerpers, 2002. View of the museum from the outside with camp model. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.



IMG. 7.100 — Axonometry. 1. Entrance and foyer; 2. Cafeteria; 3. Education room; 4. Auditorium; 5. First exhibition gallery; 6. Second exhibition gallery: "Prisoners' room"; 7. Third exhibition gallery; 8. Pub setting; 9. Temporary exhibitions; 10. Space for reflection; 11. Reaction wall. © Marcel Wouters.



IMG. 7.101 — Recreated dormitory. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.



IMG. 7.102 — Tunic of an internee. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.

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IMG. 7.103 — "Prisoners' room." Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.

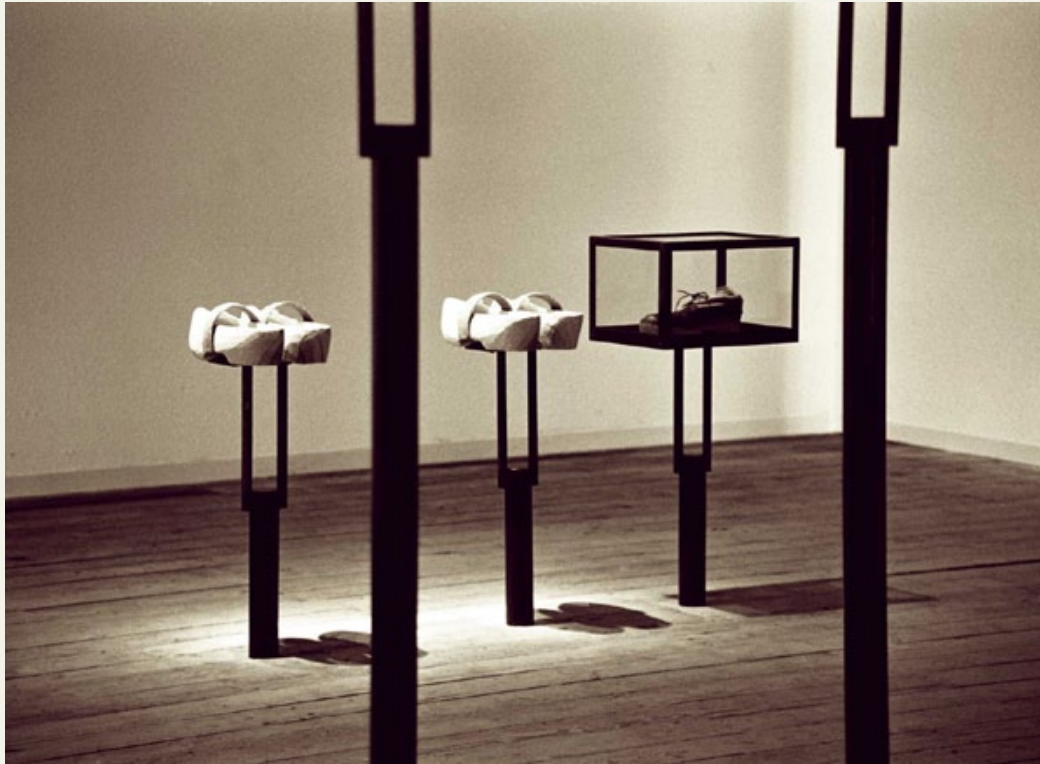
IMG. 7.104 — Café setting. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.

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IMG. 7.105 — Space for reflection. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.

IMG. 7.106 — Reaction wall, space for comments. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.

IMG. 7.107, 7.108 — Exhibits details. Courtesy of Marcel Wouters.



This action, regarding the vehiculation of civic values, recurs frequently in Italian museums of the Resistance, where reference is often made to the 1948 Italian Constitution and its anti-fascist, democratic and pacifist character (this element is also evident in the Statute of the Association which manages the Museum of Resistance in Fosdinovo, whose aim is “to promote everyday testimony of the values of freedom, democracy and social justice, which have inspired the Resistance and which are at the base of the Constitution of the Italian Republic”).¹⁴

The purpose of these site-based museums is to build a network of cognitive relationships, in order to increase the keys to understanding events, causes and effects—thus, to create a “resonance” between contents and places. Consequently, these widely spread connections need to find the interpretation and communication keys which can help people understand the palimpsest through architecture’s symbolic characters, as well as in the museographic features of exhibition spaces.

Within this context, in such sites as the Centre de la Mémoire at Oradour-sur-Glane and the memorial-museum of the Resistance at Vassieux-en-Vercors, the relationship between museum and landscape is particularly highlighted by the shape of the buildings, which specifically were created in relation with the places of memory.

The ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane, a village destroyed by the SS in 1944, have been preserved to testify the massacre that took place there. The Centre de la Mémoire, which was planned by Yves Devraïne and built in 1999, lies next to this sort of archaeological site. It discreetly integrates with the land from which some iron rusty slabs emerge to indicate the entry to the museum. These plates also stand out against the sky on the terraced roof of the museum, which overlooks the remains of the village, representing “the indelible wounds left by all genocides.” (Poulot 2005, 19; see also Fouché 2002)

The memorial-museum of Vassieux-en-Vercors was set up in 1994, and designed by studio Groupe-6. It commemorates the Resistance and the Nazi massacres committed in 1944 in the village and in the Vercors massif in the Alps of the Rhone. The curvy building follows the level lines of the Col de la Chau, where it is located. It hides among the green and the rocks where partisans used to take refuge, dominating the village and the landscape of the “Site National Historique de la Résistance en Vercors,” of which it is part, as a stronghold aimed at preserving memory.

The symbolic and evocative role of architecture in relation to locations is becoming a crucial element of representation; this may be seen in the recent Musée de la Grande Guerre de Meaux. The museum was opened on 11th November 2011, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Armistice Day of Compiègne. It is based on the collection of Jean-Pierre Verney, an expert of World War I. It includes about 50,000 objects that testify the

¹⁴ See: <http://www.museodellaresistenza.it/chisiamo.asp>, accessed February 2013.

Two Museums of Resistance in France

Centre de la Mémoire (Memorial Centre), Oradour-sur-Glane

The village of Oradour-sur-Glane is located 22 kilometres North-West of Limoges. It is known for the massacre of 642 men, women, and children committed by one of the units of the 2nd Division SS Das Reich on the 10th of June, 1944. The village has been declared historical monument in 1946 and has been maintained as a ruin, whereas the new village has developed in the surroundings.

The Centre de la Mémoire was opened in 1999. It was created by a team directed by Yves Devraïne (the museographer of the Mémorial of Caen), composed by architects Jean-Louis Marty and Antonio Carrilero. They decided to realize a “non-architecture”: the building of the museum is located in the stretch of a natural valley between the ruins of the village and the new residential area of Oradour. Its glass facade reflects the surrounding country; on the top there is an observation platform marked by high weathering steels blades that indicate the entrance to the museum and symbolize the tragic events of 1944.

The exposition path is organized in five theme areas: 1. “From 1933 to 1944”; 2. “Before the 10th of June, 1944: executions and victims”; 3. “10th of June 1944: restoring the drama”; 4. “The national recognition and reconstruction”; 5. “A universal message.” The last one is an invitation for visitors to individually and collectively reflect before leaving the museum to start the visit to the “martyr village.”

As Aldo Accardi observes, “The aim of an operation of musealization such as the one carried out at Oradour-sur-Glane lies in the idea of conservation and transmission of the witnesses’ memory, endeavouring to come as close as possible to the ‘authentic’ memory. However, it is clear that the ruins of Oradour have an ‘objec-

tive’ emotional impact; the Centre de Mémoire (seen as a gateway to knowledge of the ruins themselves) proposes an ‘interpretation’ of the events that took place, the veracity of which can only be confirmed by documents (which are objective by definition)” (Accardi 2013, 191–192).

Mémorial de la Résistance en Vercors (Vercors Resistance Memorial), Vassieux en Vercors

Vercors is a territory with a strong local identity and it was an important place for the French Resistance during World War II. In 1944, the village of Vassieux-en-Vercors was the scene of a massacre committed by the German troops during the battles that took place between the Partisans and the Nazis in that year.

The Mémorial was opened on the 21st of July, 1994, for the 50th anniversary of those events. The museum designers (Groupe-6) have stated: “Our task in designing the Memorial was to create a structure which would evoke both the martyrdom of the village of Vassieux in 1944 and the memory of the Vercors Resistance—and indeed all resistance movements. The Memorial clings to the mountainside, dominating the village and offering a panoramic view of the plateau. A memorial trail follows the contours of the different levels of the site, ending on the immense overhang above the plateau. Although the memorial is low to the ground, it captures the daylight through the long skylights which define its structure, with high far-reaching beams which guide visitors on their journey and link the empty spaces. The raw concrete blends into the rocks, the planted terraces retrace the undulations of the skylights and ‘look-outs’ pivot in the wind.” The Memorial of the Resistance is the central point of the so-called Chemins de la Liberté which lead to the discovery of ten more sites of the memory connected to World War II in the surrounding territory.

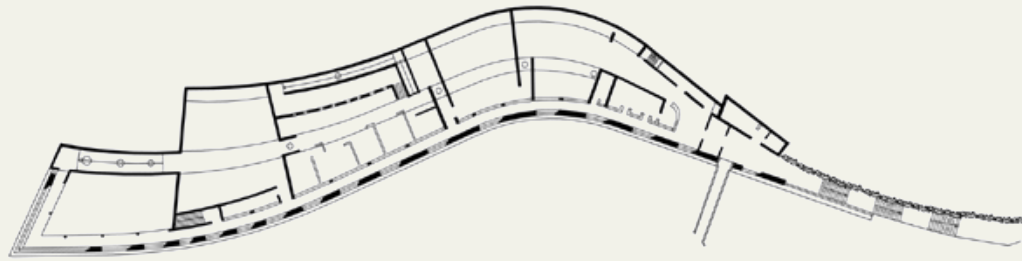


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IMG. 7.109 — View of the ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane, France. Photo by TwoWings, Creative Commons.

IMG. 7.110 — Centre de la Mémoire Oradour-sur-Glane, France. Architecture and exhibition design by Yves Devraine, Jean-Louis Marty, and Antonio Carrilero, 1999. Entrance to the museum. In the background, the ruins of the village of Oradour. Photo by Alf van Beem, Creative Commons.

THIS PAGE, IMG. 7.111, 7.112, 7.113 — Permanent exhibition. © Centre de la Mémoire d'Oradour-sur-Glane.

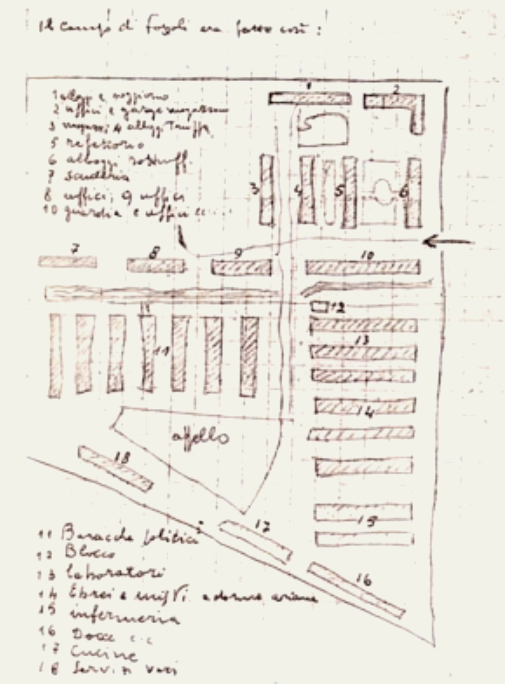


IMG. 7.114 — Mémorial de la Résistance en Vercors, Vassieux-en-Vercors, France. Architectural project by Groupe-6, 1994. Floor plan. © Groupe-6.

IMG. 7.115 — View of Vercors plateau from the panoramic viewpoint of the museum. © Mémorial de la Résistance en Vercors.

IMG. 7.116 — Exterior view. © Mémorial de la Résistance en Vercors.

Four Museums of Resistance in Italy



IMG. 7.117 — Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, sketch map of Fossoli internment camp, Carpi, Italy, 1944. Courtesy of Archivio Musei Civici di Carpi.

Museo Monumento al Deportato (Memorial Museum to the Political and Racial Deportee), Carpi

The Fossoli Camp, located six km away from Carpi, was a transit camp (Polizei- und Durchgangslager). From 1943 to 1945 it has been used by the SS to gather and deport approximately 5,000 political and racial prisoners, who passed through it while waiting to be internalised in such concentration and extermination camps as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, Buchenwald and Flossenbürg. One of these prisoners, architect Lodovico Barbiano Belgiojoso, several years later designed the Memorial Museum to the Political and Racial Deportee in Carpi, a

museum focused on the history of deportation and of Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Inaugurated in 1973, it is located in the ground floor of the Palazzo dei Pio, an ancient castle situated at the core of the historic centre of Carpi. The museum is composed by 13 exhibition rooms, whose walls are characterised by several graffiti reproducing the works of great artists such as Longoni, Picasso, Guttuso, Cagli and Léger, and by the engravings reporting the phrases extracted from the book *Lettere dei condannati a morte della Resistenza europea*.

Some showcases display a selection of objects which used to belong to the prisoners—coats, clogs, aluminium cans, bracelets indicating the identification numbers, photographs. The exhibition path is concluded by the Names hall, where the walls and the vaulted ceiling were etched with the names of over 14,000 Italian deportees who died in the Nazi concentration camps. The entrance of the museum is situated in a courtyard characterised by 16 high steles made in reinforced concrete, engraved with the names of the places where the exterminations took place during World War II.

As explained by the architect, “one of the main concerns accompanying the elaboration of the project regarded the aim to offer the visitors a long-lasting ‘performance,’ intended to transmit an historical phenomenon and, in a sense, its ‘educative’ assets. It is indeed well-known that, in the course of time, the most negative and reprehensible events in human history are under-evaluated and barely forgotten.” (Belgiojoso 1997, 38-39)

Museo Audiovisivo della Resistenza (Audiovisual Museum of Resistance), Fossolinovo

During World War II, the Lunigiana was passed through by the Gothic Line that separated the territories occupied by the Nazi-Fas-

cists from those that had already been freed by the Allied Forces. It was the scene of numerous battles between the local Partisan Brigades and the regular units of the Wehrmacht and of the Militia of the Italian Social Republic. Moreover, the territory was marked by numerous and terrible massacres that hit the civilian population.

The Audiovisual Museum of the Resistance at Fosdinovo is located inside a small building of a former mountain settlement. Its multimedia permanent exhibition, curated by Studio Azzurro in 2000, focuses on the testimonies of 18 survivors to those events, among whom partisans, farmers, priests, and workmen. Six interactive screens are set on a central table, and each of them deals with one theme: “The Calendar,” “The Farmers’ book,” “The Women’s Book,” “The Partisans’ and the Deportees’ Photo Albums,” “The Documents of the Massacres.” On the side, the interviews to the witnesses are projected. At the back of the room, the maps of the provinces of Massa Carrara and La Spezia are projected onto a screen, and it is possible to locate the places where the battles took place and the Partisans’ operating areas.

Museo Storico della Resistenza (Historical Museum of Resistance), Sant’Anna di Stazzema

The village of Sant’Anna, a hamlet in the municipality of Stazzema (Lucca), was the scene of a massacre committed by the German soldiers of the 16. SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division “Reichsführer SS,” on the 12th of August, 1944 and continued in other places until the end of the month.

The museum provides its visitors with an overview of the events that took place in the period of time between the years 1943 and 1945. It is dedicated to the massacre of 560 civilians and it was opened in 1991 inside the old building of the primary school of the village. The new permanent exhibition, designed by Pietro Carlo Pellegrini in 2005, defines a “path of pain,” which is materialized by the long, split enfilade that recalls a film sequence and ends in the “Room of the massacre,” which is totally painted in red.

The initial project had also included a glass casing around the existing building. The image of a large piece of blood-soaked clothing should have been paced on the casing, with the inscription “blood and hope” both in German and in Italian.

The museum is part of the national Park of Peace which extends over the hill territory that surrounds the hamlet of Sant’Anna (see also pp. 95-103).

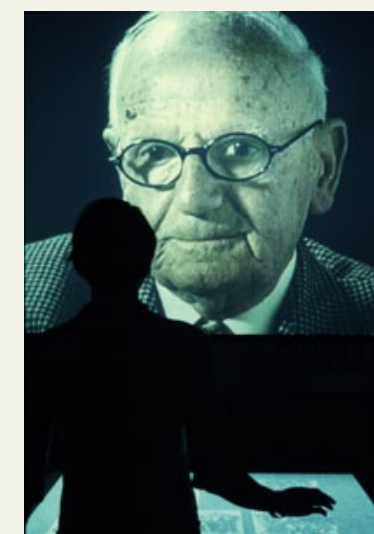
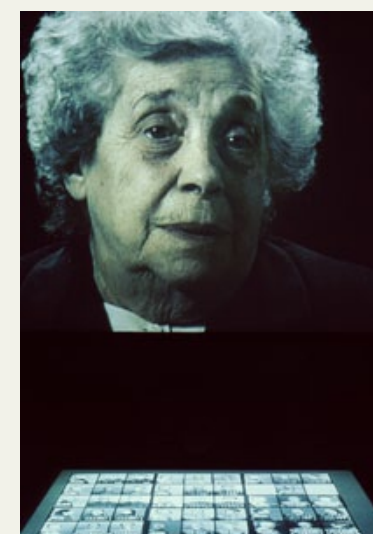
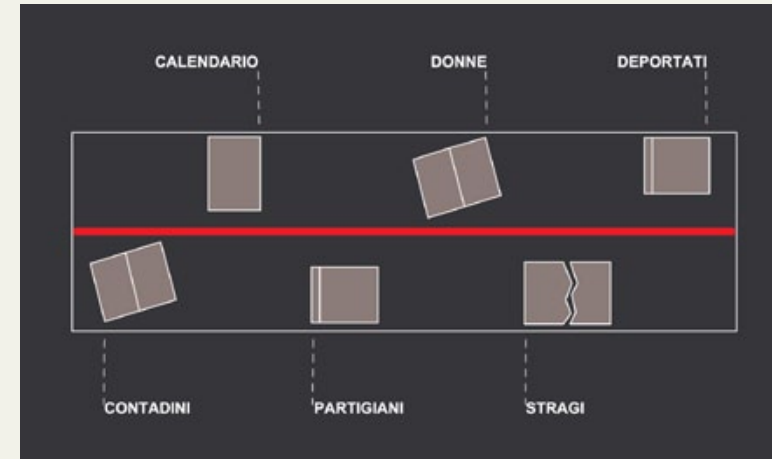
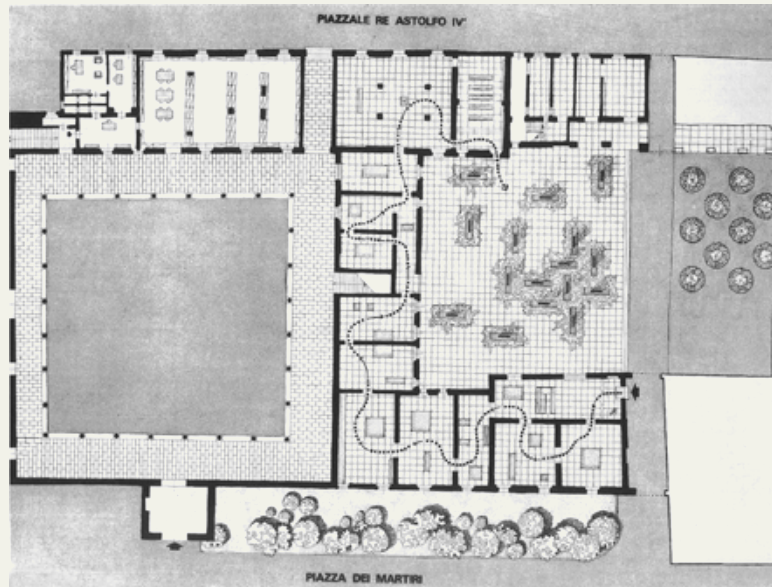
Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà (Diffused Museum of the Resistance, Deportation, War, Rights, and Freedom), Turin

The Diffused Museum of the Resistance, Deportation, War, Rights, and Freedom was opened in 2003 inside the eighteenth century Palace of the “Military Quarters.” It is the result of the convergence of two projects. The first one was about the realization in Turin of a museum dedicated to the themes of World War II and its consequences; the second one meant to identify the necessary instruments to permanently document crimes against humanity. Concerning the first project, it was decided to create a “diffused museum” which would turn the places of memory of the territory of the city and its district into elements of a museum path.

The permanent exhibition of the museum, which was curated by Studio Ennezerotre, is an interactive multimedia path that leads the visitor to a virtual journey through testimonies, images, films and sounds. Such a journey covers the ten-year period of time that starts with the approval of the Racial Laws in 1938 to the reconquest of rights, sanctioned by the Republican Constitution in 1948. The visiting path evokes the experiences of the war, of the NaziFascist occupation, of the Resistance, and of the difficult return to democracy. The path does not necessarily follow a chronological order, but rather suggests exploring a territory and the memory of its places.



PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.118 — Museo Monumento al Deportato, Carpi, Italy. Design by Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso – BBPR, 1973. View of the “Cortile delle stele” (Steles courtyard). Courtesy of Fondazione Fossoli.

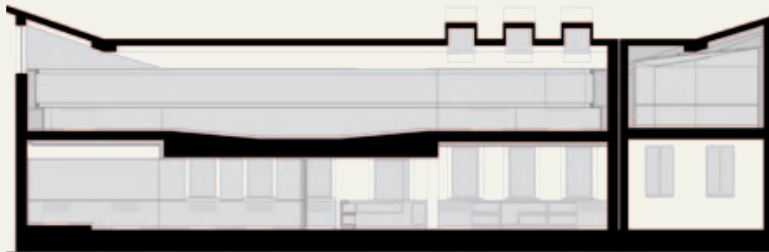


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 IMG. 7.119 — Floor plan of the museum. Exhibition design by Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso – BBPR, 1973. Source: Ducci, Teo. 1997. “In memoria della deportazione: Opere di architetti italiani,” 40. Milan: Mazzotta.

IMG. 7.120 — View of the “Sala dei Nomini” (Room of the Names). Courtesy of Archivio Musei Civici di Carpi.

IMG. 7.121 — Grafitti by Alberto Longoni in Room 1. Courtesy of Archivio Musei Civici di Carpi.

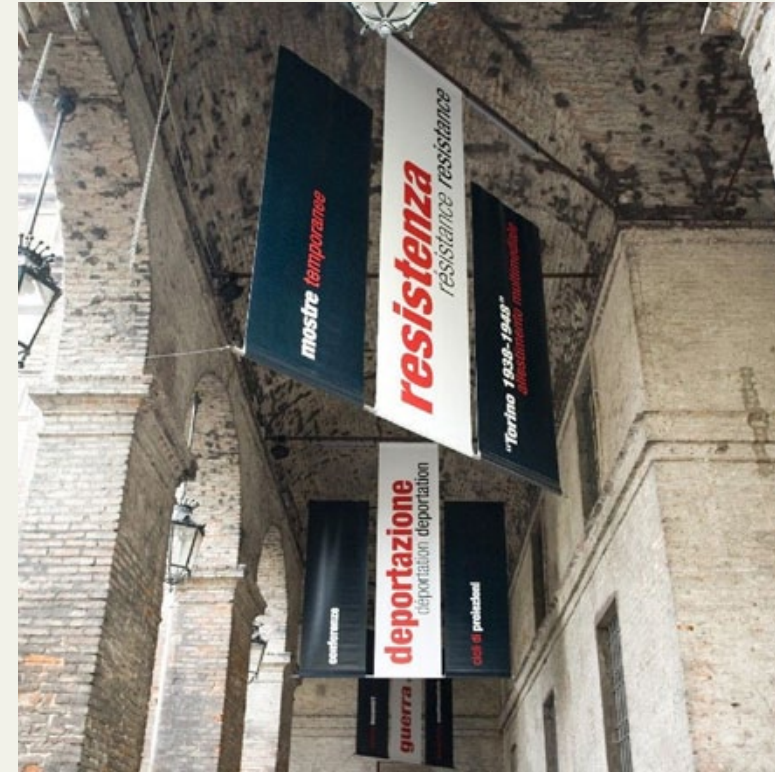
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 IMG. 7.122–125 — Audiovisual Museum of the Resistance, Fosdinovo, Italy. Exhibition design by Studio Azzurro, 2000. Floor plan and interior views with the interactive displays. Courtesy of Studio Azzurro.



IMG. 7.126 — Historical Museum of the Resistance of S. Anna di Stazzema, Italy. Renovation and exhibition design by Pietro Carlo Pellegrini, 2005. Design proposal for the the new facade, unrealized. © Pier Carlo Pellegrini architetto.

IMG. 7.127 — Longitudinal section of the museum. © Pier Carlo Pellegrini architetto.

IMG. 7.128 — Interior view. Photo by Michela Bassanelli.



IMG. 7.129 — Diffused Museum of Resistance, Deportation, War, Rights, and Freedom, Turin, Italy. View of the entrance. © Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, Torino.

IMG. 7.130 — Map of the permanent exhibition "Torino 1938–1948: From Racial Laws to Constitution." Exhibition design by Studio Ennezerotre, 2005. © Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, Torino.

soldiers' daily lives in the trenches and the evolution of war techniques and battle management between 1914—the first Marne battle, when battles were still fought in the style of the 19th century—and 1918—the second Marne battle, when new weapons technologies had started to be used, and would later be increasingly employed during World War II.

The building of the museum was designed by Christophe Lab: it is a thick, wide horizontal slab which emerges from the hill, like an extruded fragment in the landscape, a tectonic fault standing above a covered square and the entrance to the museum. It conveys the image of the battlefields that endured the destroying forces of the war, and of the scars left by bombs and trenches. Inside the museum, multimedia tools are widely used to recreate the setting of a trench and a battlefield. A gallery is dedicated to the exhibition of “body and pain”; installations include tanks, cannons and trucks, as well as planes hanging from the ceiling of the big central hall. A special room is dedicated to the display of firearms and objects of daily life in the trenches, presented through the traditional accrochage of solid panoplies, exhibited both on the walls and in showcases.

This installation has had its fair share of criticism, especially in terms of what the exhibition does *not* display: “The visitor comes out of the Musée de Meaux without knowing what the 1917 insurrections were, with no knowledge of the decomposition of the German army in 1918, or the tensions within the Austro-Hungarian army at the end of the war, etc. As far as the Russian revolution is concerned, it is presented in less space than the showcases which display the arms. Similarly regarding the consequences of battle, pain and death represent only a small part of the exhibition. Weapons are much better presented than the damage they cause.” (Offenstadt 2012)

The instructive and scenographic tone of the exhibition is indicative of the purpose of the museum, which aims at attracting a wide public circuit, even in relation with the close Disneyland Paris, with which it has established a partnership. After all, in France the recent interventions of re-designing or building of museums devoted to World War I are part of a wide programme of celebrations of the centenary of its start,¹⁵ with the declared aim of increasing war tourism in the regions which witnessed it (Chrisafis 2011).

Indeed, the relationship between war museums (and sites) and war tourism is the core of a highly debated issue concerning the modalities of representation of the topics and the spectacularisation of the exhibitions, which go along with the increasing liking of sensationalism and trivialization.

The basically exciting nature of war, the fetishism which continues to follow the material culture of war, the sentimentalism and the romantic idea of military history and its manifestations, and the fascination of the battle as a theatre of action, nurture the increasing success of local, national and international tourism related to this type of museums and location, fostering what has been defined by Serge Barcellini as “the touristic side

of the politics of memory” (Barcellini 2009, 4). In this dimension, which is virtually trivial, the controversies and questions which should be at the core of the representation of conflicts appear almost veiled, as if they were clouded by an *auratic fascination* which de-historicises military events and connects them to a noble idea of historical facts which are seen as inescapable “destiny,” almost an epic and admirable way for humans to behave: “The thin boundary distinguishing the interest in history and the passion for weapons and related military devices is always present in this specific culture of memory.” (Brandt 2004, 49; see also Rekdal 2013)

Nowadays, the touristic use of the past and of cultural heritage currently looks like a medal with two sides: on the one hand, it spreads history knowledge to a wider and diverse audience, reinterpreting the traces which can be found in the conflict landscapes; on the other hand, it aims at creating a touristic cultural economy able to replace the traditional industries which are slowly disappearing. However, it is not yet clear whether it is possible to pursue both these purposes in case of controversial and sensitive topics—such as the case of topics related to conflicts—while respecting a common memory of pain and sufferance.

→ CONCLUSIONS

If the use of the past is always contemporary, as stated by the historians, the interpretation of facts in the field of the “archaeology of the present” raises particularly important questions, since their stratifications are difficult to elaborate by using the analytic categories related to cultural heritages which belong to distant eras.

The traditional interpretation inevitably associated heritage with harmonious and consensual readings of the past which, when “the foundation of ideologies and nations was written on paper and engraved in stone” (Molyneux 1994, 1), was considered evolutionary, incontrovertible and unifying. The concepts of *dissonant heritage*, proposed by Gregory Ashworth and John Tunbridge (1995), or *difficult heritage* (Macdonald 2009), problematise the interpretation, reconstruction and representation of a century characterised by wars and violence, thus proposing an alternative reading.

When not considered as a mere military fact, but rather as a component of the political, economical and cultural history of the nations, or as an expression of the will to compete and prevail which characterises human beings, war is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It conveys different points of view, sometimes incompatible and often controversial, which have to be interpreted and represented in their articulation according to an idea of history which may be wide-range and include possible re-foundings. Within contemporary societies, whose components have a particular cultural structure, the processes of selection and reorganisation of historical data are at stake in the construction of a shared history, albeit with a critical eye, related to the most difficult and painful events. This issue is particularly important in the united Europe, where

15 See the website “Mission Centenaire 14–18” (<http://centenaire.org/fr>, accessed February 2013).

Between East and West

New Conflict Museums

Deutsch-Deutsches Museum (German-German Museum), Mödlareuth, Germany

More than twenty museums are located along the course of the former border between East and West Germany, documenting its story and in some places preserving original elements of the border fortifications. The small village of Mödlareuth, between Bavaria and Thuringia, preserves the longest stretch (700 metres) of the former border wall, along with two observation towers, border columns and warning signs, floodlights and other relics of the division of the village, that started in 1952 with the construction of a wooden palisade, later replaced by a reinforced concrete wall surmounted by barbed wire. After the unification of the two Germanys and the abolition of the confines in 1989, a local association decided to prevent the complete demolition of the wall, transform what was left in a memorial and establish a museum, with the intent to narrate the story of the border and the division of Germany—not only through the wall and its barbed wire, but also political, economic, social and historical aspects of the everyday life of a village that had been divided in two parts for 37 years. Mödlareuth is an open-air museum, annually visited by a large number of persons from all over the world.

Terrorhaza (House of Terror), Budapest, Hungary

Focused on the history of Hungary, from the beginning of the Nazi occupation until the fall of Communism, the museum was strongly backed by and set up under the center-right government of Viktor Orbán. Founded and run by the Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society, the museum opened in February 2002 in the building that was used first by

the Fascists of the Arrow Cross from 1939 to 1945 as a headquarters, and then by the Communist state security police until 1989. The reconstruction plans were designed by architects János Sándor and Kálmán Újszászy. The exterior structure (marked by the decorative entablature designed by Attila F. Kovács) provides a frame for the museum, symbolically highlighting the presence of the museum in the Andrassy Avenue.

Entering the museum through a doorway embroidered with the insignia of the Nazi Cross and the Communist Red Star, one sees a courtyard in which stands a Russian tank and whose walls are covered with pictures of those imprisoned, tortured, or executed in the building, then ascends in an elevator that leads to the highest floor where the visit begins.

The exhibits are gloomy and distressing, with music that pounds all around, exhibition rooms have subdued lighting, and minimal space that evokes claustrophobia. The museum has raised many controversies for its ideological way of displaying what happened during Nazi and Communist eras (both defined as “terror regimes”). As Lene Otto has claimed, the main criticism “is that the museum portrays Hungary too much as the victim of foreigner occupiers and does not sufficiently recognise the contribution Hungarian themselves made to the regimes in question.” (Otto 2009, 346)

Okupatsioonide museum (Museum of Occupations), Tallinn, Estonia

The museum, that opened in 2003 in a new building designed by the architects Indrek Peil, Siiri Vallner, Tomomi Hayashi, and Toomas Kuslap, focuses on the period between 1940 and 1991, that brought two major military occupations of Estonia: the Soviet occupation from 1940 to 1991, and the German occupation during World War II. The Museum, located in

a green bastion belt encircling the Old Town of Tallinn, is run by the Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation whose aim is to document the “catastrophes and cataclysms and to find detailed proof about the past based on facts and analysis [and] to help determine an identity, to determine and consolidate a national consciousness and to teach our small nation the value of its independent statehood.” (see: <http://www.okupatsioon.ee/en/who-we-are>)

As in the case of Terrorhaza, historical events are considered equivalent in their negative effects in terms of deprivation of national identity. A position that the exhibition setting at the entrance, which places side by side the Nazi Swastika and the Communist Red Star, explicitly declares to the visitor.

The concept of the building, according to designers, is “one space in one surface. No walls. Various ceiling and floor heights guide visitors through the museum smoothly. The museum is not an object but movement. (...) The entry to the museum is through small patio-memorial, which partly opens to the street. Memorial is a luminous environment; the trees inside it enable the building to integrate different lights, wind, rain, and the rhythm of days. Swaying shadows of the birch-trees are bringing life into memorial space together with seasonal changes.”

Muzeum II Wojny Światowej (Second World War Museum), Gdańsk, Poland

The museum, whose opening is scheduled for the end of 2014, is located in the Westerplatte Peninsula in the historical city of Gdańsk, which until the German invasion in 1939, had been declared “Free City” under the protection of the League of Nations, and whose occupation by German troops on 1st September 1939 is generally considered as the beginning of World War II. The aim of the museum is to present World War II and Poland’s tragic history in 1939–45 against a broad European background. The museum focuses on the stories of individuals, societies and nations, the everyday lives of civilians and soldiers, the resistance to the occupying forces, the diplomacy and great-power politics.

The museum building, planned by Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat (winner of the competition held in 2010), has an area of about 23,000 square meters, more than 7,000 of which are dedicated to the permanent exhibition, designed by the Belgian firm Tempora, and organised in three sections:

- “The Road to War,” devoted to the origins of the conflict, with a broad overview of Germany’s and the Soviet Union’s aggression against Poland in September 1939.
- “The Horrors of War,” that will show both German crimes against the Polish intelligentsia and social elites and Soviet misconduct, such as the murder of Polish officers and policemen in 1940. The Holocaust will feature prominently here through the lives of victims as well as profiles of assassins.
- “The War’s Long Shadow,” concerning the fall of the Third Reich, the liberation of Europe and the simultaneous subordination of a large area of it to the Soviet Union. (see: http://www.muzeum1939.pl/en/exhibitions/permanent_exhibition).

The building, with its sculptural design and forms that allude metaphorically to the image of a large military structure, emerges as a new icon in the landscape of the historical city.

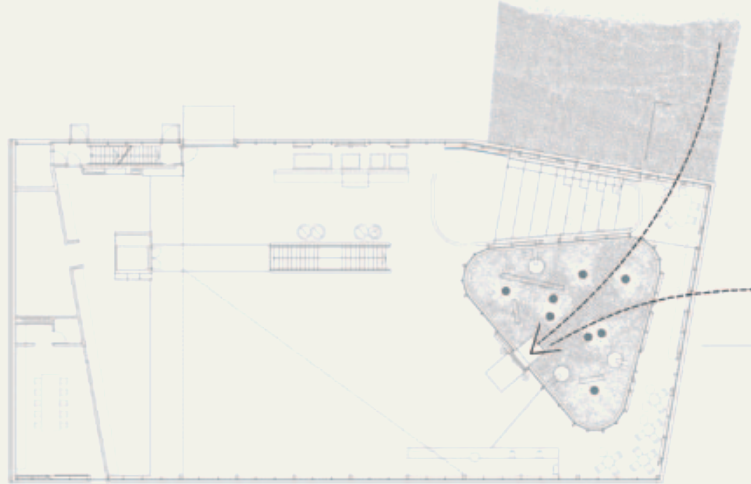
The museum’s spatial division into three areas symbolizes the relationships between the wartime past (in the underground levels), the present (in the open space around the building) and the future (in the tower which includes a viewing platform open to the landscape).

As the architects has stated: “we have agreed to leave most of the site as an open public space, so we moved some part of the exhibition underground. Entering the subterranean levels is to be a mood setting process. (...) The underground part of the museum is a path through the hell of war, a time travel experience.”



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IMG. 7.131 — Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth, Mödlareuth, Germany. The Tannbach stream became the line of demarcation between East and West Mödlareuth in 1948. © Mediathek des Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth.



IMG. 7.132 — The border crossing in Mödlareuth was opened on 9 December 1989, one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall. © Mediathek des Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth.

IMG. 7.133 — View of the wall. © Mediathek des Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth.



IMG. 7.134 — Accessible open-air space with border installations. © Mediathek des Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth.

IMG. 7.135 — Special exhibition room in the museum. © Mediathek des Deutsch-Deutsches Museum Mödlareuth.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.136, 7.137 — Terrorhaza, Budapest, Hungary. Views of the exterior and the walls of the courtyard. Photos by Luca Basso Peressut.

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IMG. 7.138 — Okupatsioonide museum, Tallinn, Estonia. Project by Indrek Peil, Siiri Vallner, Tomomi Hayashi, and Toomas Kuslap, 2003. Floor plan and section. © by the architects.



IMG. 7.139 — Exterior view. Courtesy of the architects.

IMG. 7.140 — View of the patio-memorial. Courtesy of the architects.

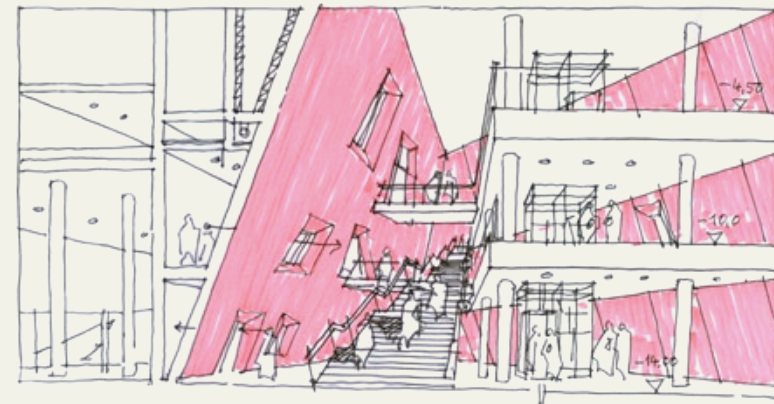
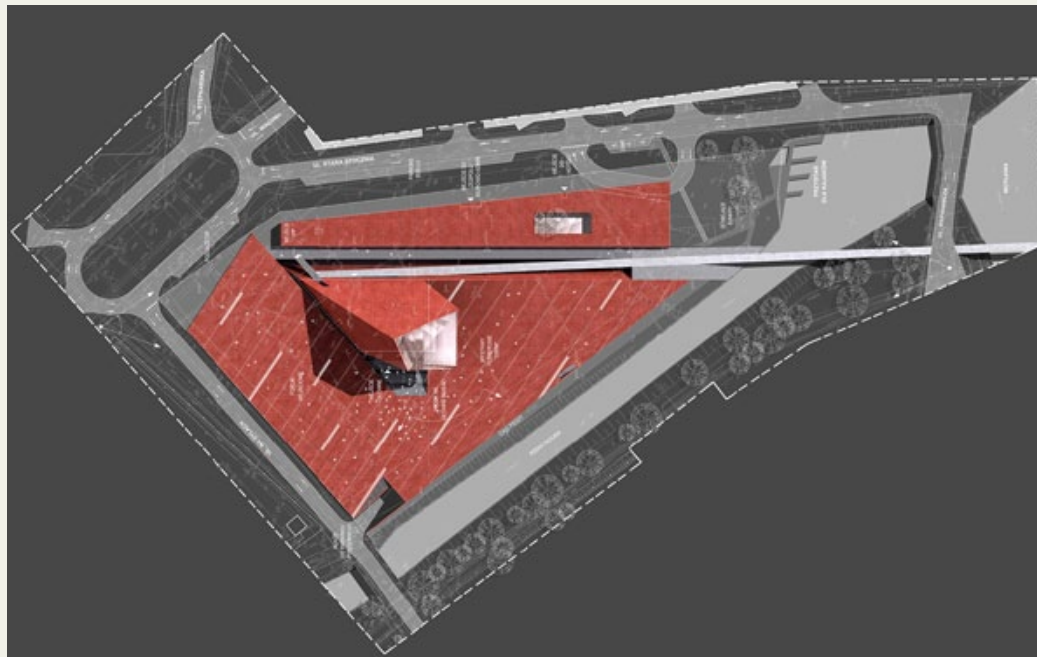
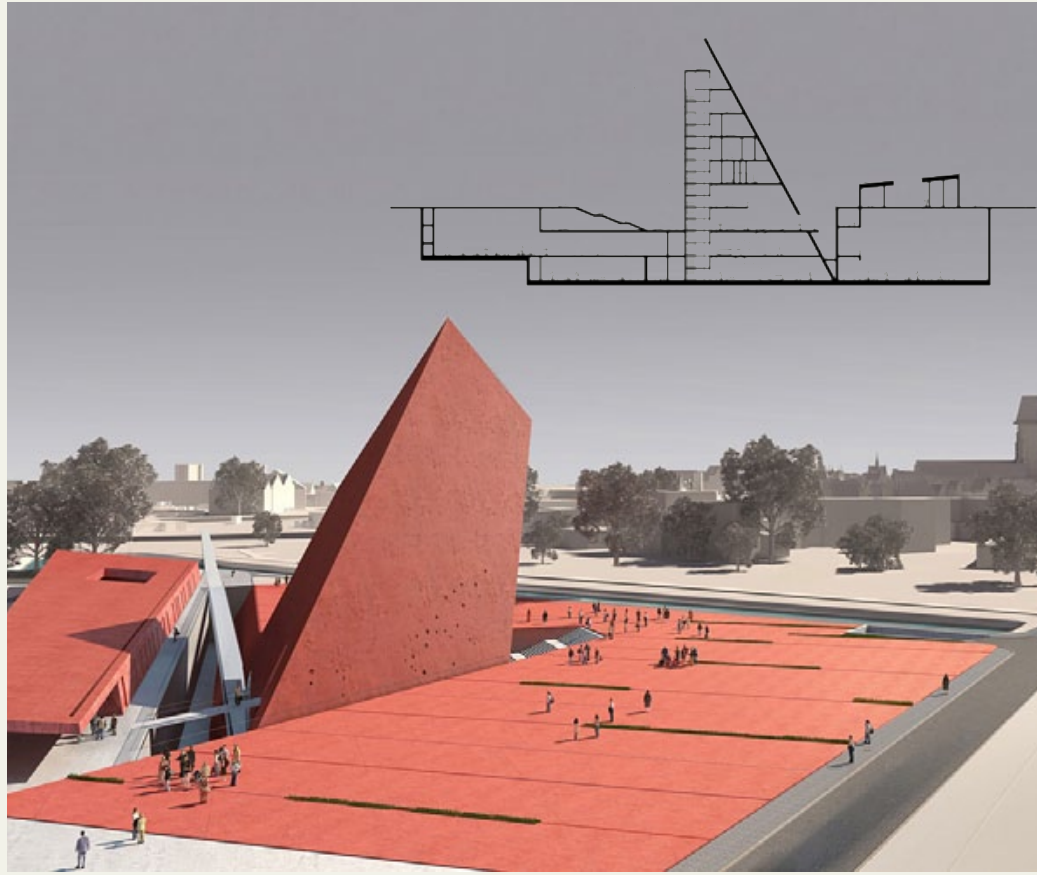


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IMG. 7.141 — Interior view. Courtesy of the architects.

IMG. 7.142 — Soviet and Nazi exhibit in the museum. Photo by ZeekLTK, Creative Commons.





PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 7.143, 7.144 — Muzeum II Wojny Światowej, Gdańsk, Poland. Project by Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat (2010–2014). Section, perspective view and overall plan. © Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat.

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IMG. 7.145 — View of the tower. © Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat.

IMG. 7.146 — Sketch of the interior of the underground levels. © Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat.

IMG. 7.147 — Interior view. © Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat.

“the reshaping of the continent as a polity and as an ideology have made it urgent to reconfigure national discourses, circulate new national values, and develop new histories and images to reflect the changed realities.” (Ostow 2008, 3)

In the museums, the representation of such delicate themes as those related to wars and violence must respond to the need to respect different points of view, avoiding simplifications and deformations. This mission should be assumed by all cultural institutions possessing a critical and scientifically based questioning spirit, even though this does not always happen.

Overcoming the “divided memories” that have dramatically marked the populations of the European continent is an essential requirement to build the political and cultural identity of Europe. This can only be achieved through a complete narrative of the recent past and an institutionalization of a shared memory.

As Chiara Bottici observes, “if Europeans look at their past, how do they recognize themselves? They can only recognize themselves as former enemies. The image of European wars, and in particular of World War II, is extremely strong in the perception of the past by European citizens. Europeans’ perception of the past cannot simply reproduce national triumphalistic models of collective education. The dimensions of the catastrophe of World War II are such that the common European memory cannot be built upon the idea of triumph, but it must start from the raising of awareness of the catastrophe.” (Bottici 2010, 339)

With their tools and representation devices, museums dedicated to the history of European wars must take part in the raising of such awareness through a “policy and practice of memory” that, with no sacralisations or vulgarisations, must involve all cultural institutions, including those devoted to the education of the younger generations.¹⁶ This happens because, as the last human witnesses are passing away, memories dim and change, events are increasingly intertwined only with their historical representations, and it becomes more and more important to preserve memories which will otherwise be lost.

The cultural, social and political aims of museums make it necessary to continuously question the meaning of the heritage left by conflicts of the 20th century and its consequences for contemporary reality. This implies continuous negotiation between past and present, which correspond to the development of historical studies, as well as to the transformation of the claims of the social body. These issues, referring to both individual and collective memory, focus on the past, and operate as a continuous and endless interrogation stimulating the dialectics between different positions; this debate contributes to the development of a common awareness, possibly complemented by research into forms of reconciliation.¹⁷

¹⁶ “Memories are not static, rather they develop and change with each new generation; museums and the other forms of representation must respond to and nourish this process.” (Walsh 2001, 98)

¹⁷ “The relationship between musealisation and reconciliation recalls the anthropological dimension of historical emotion and its memory, attempting to overcome difficulties by representing the violence suffered and denial of the same. Thus pain, grief, oblivion and commemoration appear among the most

There are several questions we need to ask: What could the role be of collections and museographic installations in the development of multiple identities and cultures which have been distanced from the traditional paradigms of cultural nationalism? Is it possible to say that a museography of war and of conflict exists? “Does war belong in museums?” (Muchitsch 2013). How is it possible to give shape and representation to the concepts that belong to the 20th century wars, such as “trauma” and “void”?¹⁸

These themes represent the core of the difficult and controversial narrations which involve (old and new) museums aimed at representing the history of the last century, from the fall of the 19th century empires, to the rise of nationalisms, the international conflicts of the two world wars, the events which followed the fall of communist regimes and the creation of new nationalisms and regionalisms in the Balkan and Baltic areas.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the dismantling of the Wall between the two Germanys in 1989, the countries once belonging to the Eastern Bloc—some of which are today part of the European Community—, have begun to come to terms with their recent history. A history relating to the war and the military occupation during World War II and, later, to the long period when they were ruled by communist parties more or less close to the Soviet Union. A painful and controversial history, difficult to narrate in the various museums dedicated to these events that were founded over the past two decades in Eastern Europe (sometimes memorial-museums realized in places in which the events happened). The themes that emerge in most of their accounts concern not only the condemnation of Nazism, but also the rejection of the years of communist government, often equated to the period of the German occupation around the terms “terror” and “genocide.” They also pertain to the affirmation of a new nationalism based on a re-writing of the history of the last century, considered as a period of humiliation and annihilation of the historical identities of these countries.

All this is at the same time a great challenge and an opportunity since “by dealing with traumas or difficult and painful facts, museums allow the possibility of different versions of history, as they are often identified with collective memory more than with historical consciousness or the totality of truth.” (Rivera-Orraca 2009, 35-36)

In this context, the role of war museums is crucial. Indeed, they bridge the gap between the generation of people who lived during the wars or perceived them through direct testimonies, and the generation of people who perceive them as distant historical events. Moreover, war museums must convey the transnational value of those events; as a matter of fact, the soldiers from three different continents (America, Africa, Australia), who fought alongside Europeans, took part in a common history that transcends any geographical border.

recent and complex concerns of a demanding, articulated and inclusive museology, together with the representation of identities and intercultural mediation.” (Poulot 2005, 38-39)

¹⁸ “The theme of culture and trauma, the void, and the experience of architecture can be talked about in conceptual terms as well as expressed in concrete reality.” (Libeskind 2003, 43; see also Maxwell 2000)



IMG. 7.148 — Albin Egger-Lienz (1868-1926), "Den Namenlose" ("For the Nameless"), tempera, 1916. Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Wien.

During World War I Albin Egger-Lienz was required to carry out his military service in Austria, his home country, as a military artist, whose task was to paint battle scenes.

At that time, war painters were supposed to document the troops' daily life, portraying the soldiers' fighting activities and heroic deeds. This was not the case of Egger-Lienz, whose paintings do not glorify sacrifices or patriotism, but show his feelings against the war through large metaphors. "For the nameless" represents a troop of anonymous soldiers who are almost grovelling as they move to attack in a sort of tragic death dance.

Because of the dynamics of cultural multiplicity, migrations and mobility, these museums are today collective archives of histories and cultures which belong to a past in need of continuous revisitations. Such revisitations depend on the different perspectives on the European political, social and cultural changes which occurred after 1989, and which saw the outbreak of further wars in the Balkan area, as well as the participation of several European countries in peacekeeping activities around the world. These initiatives raise the delicate question of the thin line which differentiates military action from peaceful intervention (Wahnich 2007).

A relentless pursuit of awareness about the wars that were fought among people who now live together in the same territories can help us better understand the importance (and fragility) of peace and freedom, and of the establishment of the European Union based on mutual respect and on the rejection of the war as a solution to controversies.¹⁹ The role of museums in the pursuit of a common identity and citizenship has to be based also on the representation of the tragic events of the 20th century, their nature and their consequences—though such representation might be subject to continuous revisitations and multiple interpretations and narrations.

The question “how can war be represented in museums?” has to be presented to visitors in such a way so as to make them active and performing subjects of this representation. It is not only a matter of displaying objects, but rather of being at the service of a story or a theoretical purpose, in a transverse critical context of knowledge and with a wide engagement for their elaboration.

Architecture and museography, which are fundamental agents in the construction of the spaces and the forms of representation, have to contribute with their qualities to this pursuit of truth, whose purpose is to “turn memory into public and political actions against what is left of totalitarian or racist spirits.” (Déotte 2001, 27)

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19 It is worth mentioning the debate surrounding the role that the tragedy of the two World Wars, and especially the second, played in the formation of the united Europe (“Europe born out of the war”) as well as the importance of the Holocaust, which is currently celebrated during the “International Holocaust Remembrance Day” on January 27th. In Italy, the “Day of Memory” has been symbolically instituted on the day when the gates of the concentration camp in Auschwitz were down.

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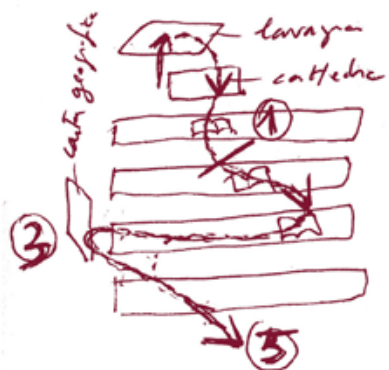
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Temporary Exhibitions

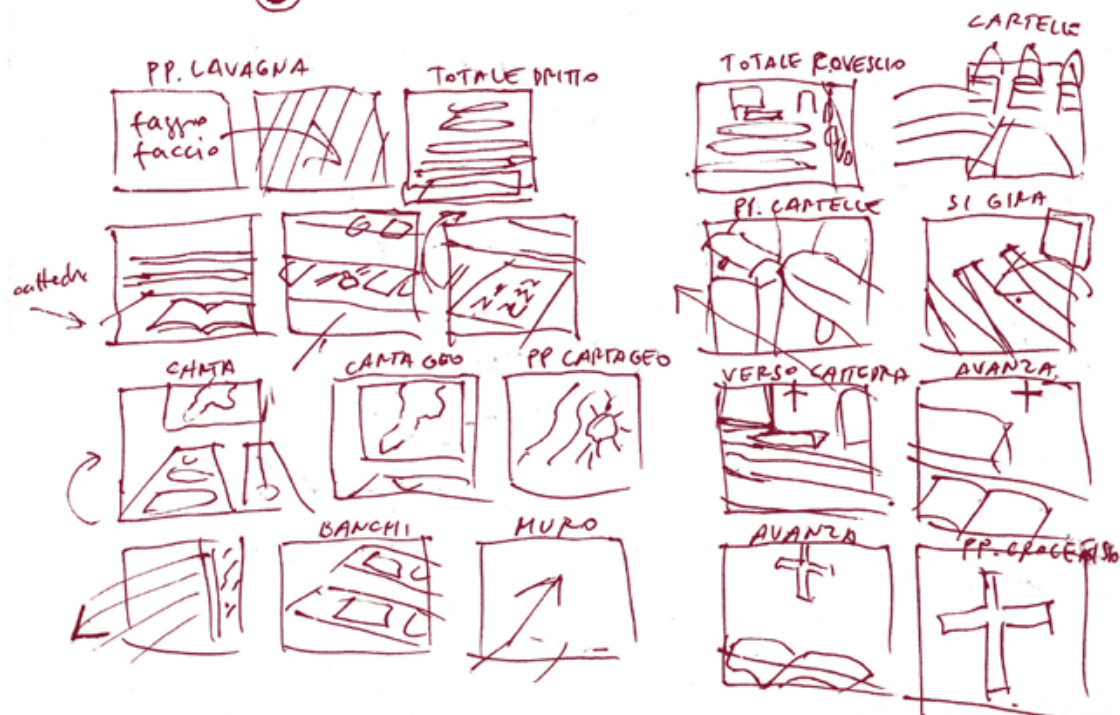


AULA FINE '800

PIANO SEQUENZA
MAESTRA e BAMBINI
(in coro)
in Fenestra in 1-3-5



PIANO SEQUENZA
VOCI GENITORI
in Fenestra
in 2-4



Forms of Collecting / Forms of Hearing

→ MARCO BORSOTTI

→ EXHIBITION AS A PRIVILEGED PLACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION

Exhibition design as medium for the convergence of disciplines

In the staging of a temporary exhibition it is the many forms of communication that render content and above all the sense of the cultural event understandable. It is therefore possible to say that the staging should provide an ideal platform for the blending of different fields of knowledge.

The staging project can become, in effect, an active catalyst for the promotion of concepts (ideas, facts, stories, historical subjects, social and artistic, etc.) and objects (exhibits, artifacts, documents, works, etc.) which make up the content of an exhibition.

Through design it becomes possible to make choices of an instrumental (that is techniques and technologies which enable the act of showing) and narrative nature (how, when and the location of the content themes “put on display”).

So it is necessary to become fully aware of the concept of staging as a field where we can compare and bring together the different strategies and mutual interactions of different disciplines.

These strategies are designed to realize, often by taking experimental paths, a finished form—understandable—portable—and accessible—for all modes of thought and therefore transmit the message that the exhibition wants to relay to its audience.

In this sense, the design phase contributes to and profoundly effects this process, evolving from a limited practical job to a integral device for building a comprehensible means of communication, able to help in determining the ultimate nature of the event.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG.8.01
— “Fare gli italiani,” ORG
Officine Grandi Riparazioni,
Turin, Italy, 2011–2012.
Exhibition design by Studio
Azzurro. “The school”: first
blackboard storyboard.
© Studio Azzurro.

Contemporary exhibitionary practices cannot be conceived merely as means for the display and dissemination of already existing, preformulated knowledges (...) contemporary exhibitionary practice is—or should be—also an experimental practice (...) exhibition, too, is a site for the generation rather than reproduction of knowledge and experience. (Basu and Macdonald 2007, 2)

Exhibition as a dynamic meeting place between design and the humanities

The design, the scientific-cultural plan and the physical-spatial configuration of a temporary exhibition are increasingly interconnected parts of the same process, where humanistic studies and design disciplines find a medium in which to meet and interact.

It is here, in fact, that they can find a space to confront each other in a positive way, searching for the choices that are most useful to the formal and functional needs of the artifacts, the spaces, the relationships and the services involved and/or thought necessary to realising the true idea of the exhibition, giving at the same time full due to all of the information levels that the exhibitions aims to reach.

An active interdisciplinary approach is thus necessary, and it must start from the stage when processing the expressive and significant content of the event is being decided upon (we call it a phase of “semantic and linguistic meta-construction” or, more simply, “complex scenario”).

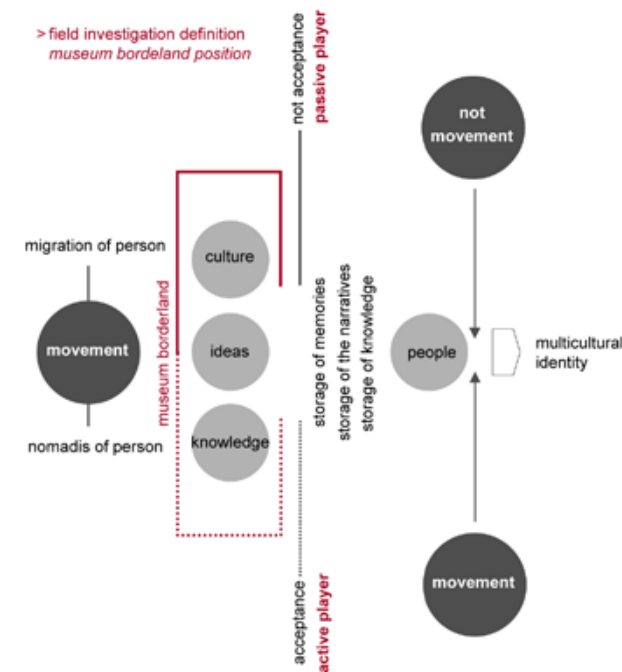
Staging cannot, therefore, be understood, as a simple final stage of an exhibition concept (the famous “absent” neutrality of a white cube) but, rather as an element in the logical construction of the exhibition. We can regard it as a coordinated system which examines all the social complexity and rich cultural contents that, inevitably, every exhibitions encounters.

The complexity of an exhibition, in fact, has grown along with the spread of this practice and is now seen as a perfect tool for the dissemination of culture, and at the same time, a powerful business tool, able to re-enhance the appeal of the sponsoring institution (museum, gallery, association, etc.) to the public.

Exhibition design “shapes variable landscapes characterised by the simultaneous presence of diverse elements, where each separate lemma has its own distinctive identity, but, just like in a story, the full meaning of the parts is determined by how they relate to the whole.” (Migliore and Servetto 2007, 23)

The concept of temporary exhibition staging as a flexible and “variable” instrument places it at the extreme edge of the social and cultural position of the museum as institution.

If on the one hand the museum as institution, protecting, representing and promoting culture, ideas and knowledge, can only be (but not be fully aware of) on the fringe of human intellectual progress, sometimes being decisive, sometimes being active and at other times passive, and sometimes more open to the understanding and integration of the “other” and different viewpoints and at other times less so. On



IMG. 8.02 — Field investigation definition. Museum borderline position. Diagram by Marco Borsotti.

the other hand it is through the establishment of temporary events that the occasion for a deepening of and a revision of understanding may come about and that thus a multi-cultural and pluri-identity view can be more easily reached.

It is particularly interesting to note that exhibition design, as a place of overlap and blending of “different” disciplines (apparently in conflict and often mutually threatening), is itself, by its very nature, not only a sensitive portrayer of every possible “diversity,” but even a sort of container for new approaches and thus a veritable motor for research.

Exhibition design has to offer different perspectives and different thematic approaches, and should provide them through a reasoned and coordinated work of synthesis. The different points of view and thematic approaches are, implicitly, a projection of this propensity to be able to connect and represent, similarly, the many variations on the theme of “diversity” are implicit in any socio-cultural narrative.

Exhibition as a place of convergence of cultures

This act of designing and realizing a staging becomes an opportunity for an operative convergence of cultures, just as every identity system is (or at least, should be) itself a medium for the convergence of cultures. It actually makes this designing discipline a privileged space for the development of possible different representations of national and transnational expression.

More than anything it represents an opportunity for their continuous reconfiguration, moving thought (as has happened with increasing frequency in recent years) towards a post-colonial sensibility, a progressively more attentive sensibility towards the new and complex multi-ethnic realities that nowadays make up our societies and their relationships (or absence of relationships).

The concept of “disciplinary diversity,” which activates and nourishes the relationship between humanistic studies and exhibition design, both on the epistemological plain of conceptual work and on the practical level of project execution, allows one to actively involve all pluralities of cultural expression.

This “privileged” position allows them to potentially mediate between the representation of the different social values of the actors found in the theme of discussion chosen for the exhibition and the interpretation of the different types of identity (social, economical, political, religious, etc.) that they carry with themselves.

The project is a critical founding moment in a process that questions the identification of their communication devices, evolving into the role of instrument for the better understanding of the complexity, often contradictory, of the different concepts of existing social and cultural identity and of their inclusion in a broader analytical landscape, which is configured by the tools used in staging an exhibition.

The exhibition is an ideal medium of experimentation (...) for address current crisis of representation (...) to explore contradictory outcomes. (Wiebel and Latour 2007, 94)

→ LOOKING FOR INVISIBLE STORIES

Laboratory of forms of expression

By using the tools of the staging project, then, we can explore, test and develop different forms of expression. This flexibility generates new insights about the idea of identity and its representation.

The temporary exhibition stands as a privileged tool for experimentation: it's a medium for hypothesis testing and for the implementation of linguistic and semantic structure conformations that convey the sense of these conjectures. A process that has pushed staging more and more towards a narrative approach, where the entire configuration of the exhibition follows a strong tendency to “story-telling.”

From this perspective, the discipline of the display is like writing a three dimensional novel, organized in—and through—a sequence of events that, starting from the objective and symbolic nature of what is been displayed, rebuilds around this coexisting complexity fragments of narrative, both the linguistic relationships and the evident time connections (dictated by the historical or by the critical-analytical knowledge and by the current taxonomic practices) as well as the hidden connections and references, felt in the

assonance or dissonance of forms, noticed in the combinations of materials and colors, revealed in the intangible games of light and shadow. The project assimilates these presences and aims to give them an understandable structure, acting as a tool able to provide us with a different point of view in the act of seeing. (...) Beyond the idea of setting up such an expressive formal neutral field, related to the extemporaneity dimension, it looks like a complex assembly work of a space-time event: the work of a staging director. (Borsotti 2009, 39)

Every space-object-interlocutor sequence is structured by the desire to start a dialogue immediately: a narrative construction and the active visual involvement of the visitor.

There are many ways to build those inclinations which may also not reach expectations, however, they are essential elements of “field research.” They express different conceptual visions, they build unexpected relationships between apparently unrelated phenomena, using traditional techniques according to the destabilization canons or using advanced technologies to create immersive and performative situations. Each temporary exhibition becomes a laboratory of means of communication.

No other creative discipline has recourse to such multi-faceted, integrative range of instruments for designing space as scenography. Scenography instrumentalises the tools of the theatre, film and the fine arts to create unmistakable spatial dramaturgies. (Atelier Brückner 2011, 167)

Building alternative narrative structures: visibility and invisibility

The, so called, “laboratory” space allows one to follow different paths of identity affirmation, defining new storytelling and listening approaches for the historical and social stratifications of our times.

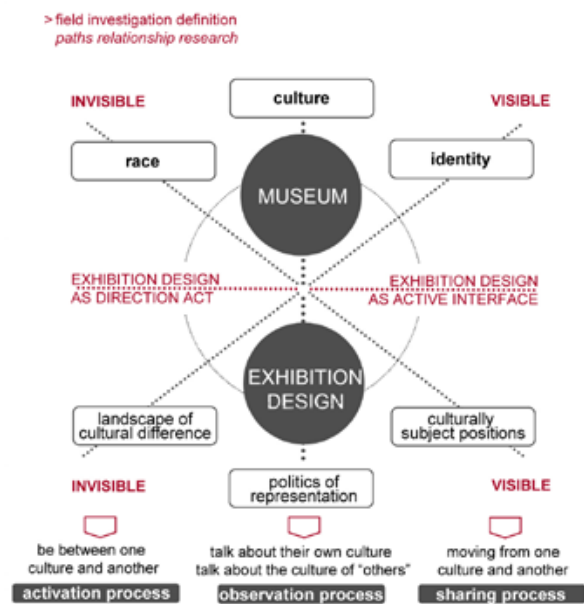
In the implementation of the display system, in its conformation as an active communicative and design artifact we can use different strategies for focusing on what is visible (facts, reality as we see it through the filter of our habits, the “logical” order of things) and, more importantly, what is not visible (hidden data, the infinite “parallel” realities that structure every society, the “alternative logic” order of things).

Politics of representation (...) signs of culturally preconstituted subject positions (...) economy of visibility (and simultaneous invisibility) (...) race discourse and its logics of display create rules of inclusion and exclusion... (González 2008, 3–6)

The project of staging an exhibition is a flexible tool, due to its temporariness and thus gives us room for experimentation, because, by its nature, it can accept error: it can speculate and test, without having to crystallize the results into a permanent, and thus assertive, configuration.

It is a “political” tool which revises its subjects, both in the direction of their critical redefinition, as well as being itself as a destabilizing and

IMG. 8.03 — Field investigation definition. Relationship research paths. Diagram by Marco Borsotti.



“reprehensible” device. The occasion of a temporary exhibition must be approached as an opportunity for the implementation of a process for an original and thoughtful review of ideas and content.

Exhibit.

Exhibit, that's to disturb harmony.

Exhibit, that's to trouble the visitor in his intellectual comfort.

Exhibit, that's to arouse emotions, anger, desire to know more.

Exhibit, that's to construct a specific discourse for the museum, made up of objects, texts and iconography.

Exhibit, that's to put the objects in the service of a theoretical subject, of a discourse or of a story and not the contrary.

Exhibit, that's to suggest the essential through critical distance, bearing a mark of humor, irony and derision.

Exhibit, that's to fight against the accepted ideas, the stereotypes and stupidity.

Exhibit, that's to intensively live a collective experience.

(Hainard and Gonseth 2003)

Broadening of cultural horizons

Unlike the “frozen” time of permanent installations, which must have a reasonably easily understood and long-lasting communicative language, temporary exhibitions, starting from these same means of communication, receive rapid critical responses, revealing and reviewing the exhibition mechanisms and expanding the cultural horizons.

Temporary exhibitions focus on more complex and layered relational systems and often use the most direct and up-to-date means of communication, both in terms of “jargon” and of technological equipment.

A temporary exhibition can extend its investigation, due to the flexibility of its limited “shelf-life” (and is therefore sustainable both in terms of public response and budget), focusing on specific issues, but it can, in parallel, address plural and more comprehensive narratives compared to the museum because it can absorb complex and multiple “scripts,” managed through the use of mixed display techniques and assisted by “other” promotional tools (from catalogues, to consortium initiatives, to performances, to outreach, to the media, etc.).

Therefore the role as privileged place of experimentation becomes stronger. A place where it is possible, and indeed desirable, to test the innovative configurations of display methods that can (and often do) then become digested and absorbed into the museum system, becoming the inspiration for a review and upgrading of museum aims and practices.

There are two fundamental tasks, among others, performed by temporary exhibitions, fundamental to the profile of museums that develop and/or host the exhibitions. First of all they offer the possibility of implementing methodologies and alternative practices (sometimes even controversial) to define their content canons, by testing different strategies of ideological and practical reorganization—you can refer to what is written by J. E. Stein about the destabilizing actions of “re-construction” made by Fred Wilson. “His purpose was to raise our awareness of institutionalized racism, making visible the subtle and insidious ways these attitudes affect the decisions museums make about what to collect and how to display it.” (Stein 1993)

They also allow the exploration of overlapping and “border” areas when compared to the natural position of the institutional museum programme, opening up to intersections that highlight new scientific and cultural questions, renewing the ability of the museum to act as a place for research, as well as having programmes more in tune with contemporary demands and thus making the museum more commercially attractive.

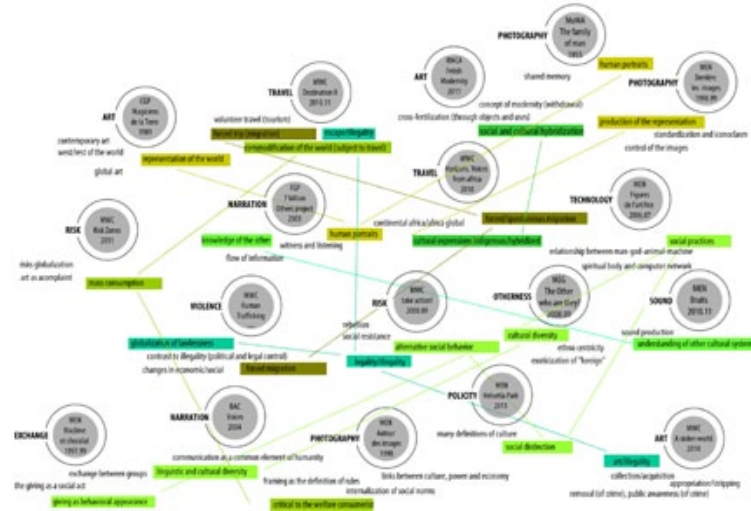
→ EMERGENCE OF NEW THEMES OF IDENTITY. SOME CASE STUDIES

Broadening of the concept of “identity”

The new cultural horizons which the access to museums have made possible, in the terms that were previously illustrated, by the temporary exhibitions, shadow the presence of the identification systems of the social realities that make up today's Europe, creating multiple reflections on the meaning of the museum itself.

Actually, temporary exhibitions act as a sort of “viral architecture,” alongside the established display practices of the host museums (who are often the authors and/or inspiration) to expand the breadth of appeal of these museums (not just in terms of visitor count—however fundamental a parameter that is—but more in terms of sensitivity to the “other” voices) and the tendency to become sensitive antennae of social change, so re-invigorating the museum's role as a place of inter-exchange.

IMG. 8.05 — Detections of invariant recurrences. Recurrent themes by constant key words. Diagram by Marco Borsotti.



Unexpected and unsettling themes emerge that reveal “other” ways of reading the relationships between peoples, institutions, social practices, and placing itself as a premise of new mental structures of analysis and understanding of contemporary phenomena.

With this “backlight” reading the intercultural and supra-national phenomena are emphasized, phenomena that represent key issues for a better understanding of the multifaceted social structure of our world.

What’s really important is the essence, how to reach the right string that will let the overtones of the content resonate. (Kossmann and De Jong 2010, 47)

Some of the new narrative profiles that emerged were:

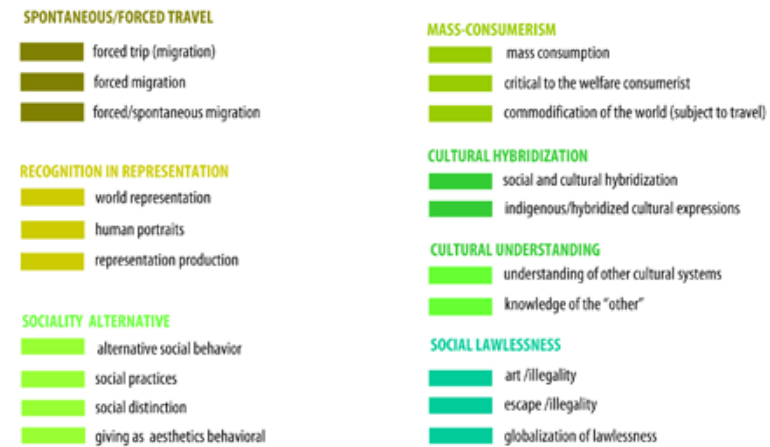
- Recognition in representation (world representation and human portraits)
- Sociality alternative (alternative social behaviour, social practices and distinction)
- Cultural understanding (knowledge of the other)
- Cultural hybridization (indigenous/hybridized cultural expressions)
- Spontaneous/forced travel (forced/spontaneous migration)
- Mass-consumerism (mass consumption and critical to the consumerist welfare)
- Social lawlessness (globalization of lawlessness)

→ SOME FINAL THOUGHTS: FIRST HINTS FOR NEW LINES OF RESEARCH

Implementing experimental intensity. Opportunities and tools

A first working idea about new opportunities and tools for the European museums of the new millennium, deduced from the case studies analysis, concerns the benefits obtained from the exhibition design experiences

IMG. 8.06 — Recurring key words: New narrative fields. Diagram by Marco Borsotti.



conducted by various institutions belonging to different national and European contexts. The synergies created by the convergence of different developmental approaches applied to the same themes led to conceptual openings and particularly fruitful experiments in communication.

The implementation of a temporary cultural events schedule, placed in national and supranational coordinated circuits, allows for a more intense exchange of common and specific critical matrices, adding to them new perspectives.

The interaction between different museums, made with different and flexible networking formulae and aimed at developing research projects, have already produced some particularly interesting results, allowing not only the exchange of working material and itinerant exhibition opportunities, but more than anything an opportunity for a critical revision of the research and analysis practices of the working groups themselves.

Given these experiences, we can say that temporary cultural events are the first matrix and it is thanks to this matrix that these cultural aggregations assist in overcoming territorially consolidated positions and are, therefore, a concrete act in the building new identity relationships.

Those events allow museum systems to endeavour to overcome the limits already defined by Clifford:

The objective world is given, not produced, and thus historical relations of power in the work of acquisition are occulted. The making of meaning in museum classification and display is mystified as adequate *representation*. The time and order of the collection erase the concrete social labour of its making. (Clifford 2010, 254)

Temporary exhibitions can break free from the rigidity of the permanent or institutionalized collection to produce “the concrete social work that is its purpose” and apply it to narrating subject, revealing past, present and future relationships towards the evolution of human society.

Exhibition set-up. Predicting the future?

Here is something to think about that derives from the meaning of “future” perspective.

A great effort is needed to support the work of documentation of the situations and strategies of the past and also the present and hypothesising about possible future configurations, where obviously the intent is not to be prophetic but to stimulate the opening up of new configurations of possible European social scenarios with the aim of developing critical discussion.

“Being contemporary means focusing on what, in the present, outlines something of the future.” (Augé 2012, 56)

To encourage the establishment of museums as sensitive machines that use their temporary exhibitions as supra-territorial antennae that attempt to capture and decode messages that the contemporary throws out, presenting them as subjects for discussion about the near future.

We must turn to the future without yourselves projecting our illusions, create hypotheses to test validity, learn to move gradually and cautiously the frontiers of the unknown: this is what science teaches us, this is what every educational programme should promote and which should inspire any political reflection (Ibid., 106).

The author dedicates this essay to the memory of Paolo Rosa (1949–2013).

Text Translated by John Elkington

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Exhibiting History

From Stone to the Immaterial: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Being Italian

→ STUDIO AZZURRO, PAOLO ROSA

Paolo Rosa (1949–2013) from 1982 carried out its activities within the Studio Azzurro (with Fabio Cirifino, Leonardo Sangiorgi; www.studioazzurro.com), giving rise to an artistic research that explores the poetic and expressive capabilities of the new cultures, particularly addressed in the field of video environments. For years, an interest in the issues of interactivity and multimedia making “sensitive environments,” shows, movies and multimedia museums, for which he received numerous awards. He wrote several essays, the last of whom “Museums Storytelling,” Silvana, 2011 and “The Art Beside Himself,” Feltrinelli 2011 focuses on training and education. Among the most recent works: the film “The Mnemonista”; “Making Italians,” an exhibition on 150 years of history of Italy, Turin 2011; series of installations “Carriers of Stories,” “The Museum of the Mind Lab,” Rome, 2008; “Sensitive City,” Shanghai World Expo 2010. Teached Multimedia Design at the Academy of Brera in Milan.

The exhibition begins with an infinite procession of stone busts and closes amongst the incessant fluttering of ethereal weightless entities.

Everyone can give to these two metaphors their own meanings and heart-felt interpretations but for those of us who came up with these ideas they hold a special place in all this magnificent, exhausting, and extraordinary

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 8.07
— “Fare gli italiani,” OGR Officine Grandi Riparazioni, Turin, Italy, 2011–2012. Exhibition design by Studio Azzurro. View of the thematic area “Towards the future.” Photo by Marco Borsotti.

experience of putting on show the history of our country. These two ideas also carry a particular chronological significance in that they were the first ideas that we had and the last to be planned and realized. Above all they represent the essence of how we agreed to face up to this great challenge: the 64 busts of the founding fathers of Italy are reflected again and again in a hall of mirrors and dissolve into an enormous multitude of figures that become the people. We see a plural Italy that contradicts the usual rhetoric of the solitary Italian genius, a stereotype that rarely finds confirmation in the present day. Indeed strength through sticking together is lauded, a people united by the wonderful idea of giving a soul to this beautiful country.

The same concept, in a version that passes from the solidity of stone to the immateriality with which we face modernity, expresses itself in the trajectories of the flying figures in the final scene. Characters that inhabit a brand new environment, figures that fluctuate between allusions to innovative and momentous concepts, that take flight in the wish to express their own talent, to seize a place from which we can move ahead to face fresh challenges. Between these two visions of group dynamics we could well place the emblematic icon *Quarto Stato* by Pelizza da Volpedo. It isn't featured but as you progress through the exhibition you feel the same sentiments that it expresses but rendered in a more diffuse and demure fashion. There are many references to groups: photos of farming families, of students from every age, of workers in overalls and the faithful in religious processions, of soldiers posing in trenches and ending in a multitude of screens with the "signorine buonsera" who have hosted so many of our evenings in front of the TV. In the end these are all small communities that have played their parts in Italy's progress. Also the objects possess this plural identity: the more than one hundred desks that cover various epochs of schooling: the numerous tractors, the hundreds of suitcases used by emigrants or the six hundred postal bags that form the cultural trench which first made possible the mixing of dialects and feelings. Sadly the endless police files on mafia murders are also part of our history. These files sit on enormous shelves as a testimony to the tragedy of this repetition, a repetition which we adopted as one of the principal stylistic signatures of the exhibition. We should also mention the huge number of stories and brief narratives that we inserted throughout the exhibition. Eye-witness accounts, reports, documents, letters, supported by aging scratched and yellow images, told in different dialects and coming from diverse faces, these reveal the hundreds and thousands of common place events that make up history, underlining that even the little worlds of individuals, of sentiments, of emotions, can influence or even determine the most important events.

We have a narrative made up of many voices, never forgetting that of the public. What gave me the most pleasure from this experience was when the young people and volunteers, who acted as attendants for the show, said to me that "often people seek us out to tell us that they had lived through this piece of history or they had that object or that they remember that situation, they do it as if to say that they feel part of this nation

sentiment, not with nostalgia but with a desire to participate, it's as if—a young woman told me—you want to show and preserve an emotion that you've been given and feel deep inside yourself." Emotion is another signature of the show, but, differently from the above, it can't be planned for because emotion comes from an alchemy of various components. You achieve emotion via a condition of balance and imbalance, harmony and the disharmony, words and action, all typical of art and its language. You find that if you manage to create the right atmosphere, a creative environment that helps to gather in all the passions of your co-workers: commentators, historians, colleagues, consultant, speakers, technicians, designers, costume makers, musicians and all the others who take part in the adventure, the general public included. It's there in that fertile environment, that you find the invisible magic of emotion. The artist, as Jacques Deridda said at a congress which we attended years ago, must be simultaneously "hyper-responsible and irresponsible." It's a declaration that seems particularly apt for starting to explain how we put "on show" these one hundred and fifty years of Italian history. It well summarizes the attitude that we tried to keep to the fore in such a demanding exhibition, that required, due to its institutional role and the sensitive nature of the material covered, the utmost care and responsibility. But at the same time it was necessary to permit the freedom of expression that art must have to retain is ability to invent and cause irreverent surprise. Putting on an exhibition isn't like writing an essay, the involvement of the general public has to be extreme and total. In the best cases the solutions come from story-telling through plot and language rather than spectacular artifices, decorations or illustrations. With this idea, happily shared by especially thoughtful committee members and curators, we proceeded right to the end of the project, drawing from the ten years of experience we have gained with Studio Azzurro where we have created a series of narrative museums and themed exhibitions. This experience is profoundly interwoven with our artistic journey and research.

The show "Fare gli italiani" was founded on two basic premises: that given by the academic curators at the beginning for the coupling of inclusion/exclusion to identity. The themes that have principally aided integration and on the contrary those have hindered it. The other fundamental factor was the extraordinary dimension of the Officine Grandi Riparazioni, an enormous complex of industrial archeology from the early twentieth century, chosen by the promoters to house this show. The ideas of action, work and reparation resonate in both premises.

During one of the first site inspections, seeing the empty space and silence of the OGR, it was impossible not to imagine incessant human activity, the frenetic coming and going, the motion of locomotives and railway carriages of every type, the metallic sounds and the flash of arc light. This space, in its frozen dream of abandonment, was able to immediately show us the deep traces of its past vigour. No one could remain indifferent to it.

It was therefore unavoidable to imagine an interactive exhibition rather than one of observation. A show as work shop rather than theatre. In

addition the present economic conditions made a pompous celebration inappropriate, it seemed right, both from a historical and technical viewpoint, to take a troubled, pensive approach but at the same time to play with experimental ideas, almost to suggest new possibilities, that reviewing the past helps us dream of the near future. These impressions determined an open, visual, broad environment, keeping vertical division to a minimum in order to maximize the majestic dimension of the space. All the elements, in particular the thematic islands distinguished from each other by their different heights, had to come together to generate an open situation like the countryside in which everything can be perceived simultaneously from every platform like a viewing post, you can admire the space in all its complexity that reflects the diversity of Italy and the extreme richness of its history. In this way one of the principal characteristics of the exhibition is revealed: an open scenic dimension where the thematic areas stand out like neighbourhoods and where time flows like a river to accompany the visitor in the progress of history and the succession of events. In this landscape you follow ramps and walkways, you discover secret and unexpected corners, you pass through the reverberations from the projector screens and you come across the solid forms of large objects: cars, airplanes, canons, parachutes, ruins and ceremonial carriages.

In this way another theme is introduced. *The progression of means of communication* which have changed with the times, from sculptures to paintings, from theatre to photography, to the cinema, to animation, to television and new technologies, right up to social media and blogs. It isn't simply a confrontation with modernity, with ceaseless innovation, it's more a testament to how the culture of means of communication, including the arts, is essential to the history of our country. Italy is lucky in his heritage which must be protected as a living and unique treasure but we must also face up to contemporary realities and the scientific future. In the show you can take photos which are then animated, you can get up on stage to play a part in a scene, tune a radio, pass through 3D images. It's a blending of the ancient and the modern through electronic devices.

The artist's vision and new technical means are central to this exhibition they are part of the history of Studio Azzurro. Our approach, for this show, was not to focus on the art of display but rather on art in its whole. We imagined the show as a fresco, as a story that is developed on a multitude of sensory levels and through different means of communication, we conceived the project as a film that develops not only in time but also in space, we utilised not only virtual images but also real scenarios. To make all this possible, we said to ourselves, we need more than spatial design, we also need a script.

The sense of participation is a constant that accompanies the visitor throughout the exhibition, it is the last of the fundamental points to which we have anchored the project. New technologies, if used in the right way, offer extraordinary opportunities in encouraging the involvement of the public. This can be confirmed, in this show saturated in multimedia, by placing yourself in front of a randomly chosen interac-

tive installation or reactive environment, or by using the personal cards that allow you to fix, as in a photograph, various moments along your journey and collect them in a logbook. The information can then be recovered in the interactive room at the end of the exhibition or even at home. Through these links the experience can be relived, printed out, commented on, studied in depth and compared with other sources. The idea is that the exhibition extends beyond its physical limits. Beyond the 12,000 square meters of exhibition space, the thirteen islands, which with their walkways and objects develop historical themes, the 250 meters of transparent chronologies and the more than seven hours of filmed material. The idea is that the show continues beyond the visit and carries out its goal of forming community.

Text Translated by John Elkington



7b0 – The 7 billion Others Project

Interview with Galitt Kenan

→ INTERVIEWED

Galitt Kenan was born in Israel. After studying European and international law (University Paris XI) and business (ESSEC/Stanford University), she worked as a consultant in finance for 6 years at Arthur Andersen. In 2003, she headed the NGO “Hommes de Parole,” setting up the project “Imams and Rabbis for Peace” about intercultural dialogue. In 2007 she founded “Tolerance Watch.” Since 2008, she is the project manager of the “7 billion Others” project at the GoodPlanet Foundation. She is also a trustee in different foundations and associations.

7b0, as its name suggests, is focused on the concept of “other.” Ethnicity, culture and society, compared to the other great themes of life become signs of similarity, of common identity. What have your years of experience taught you about the concept of identity?

Identity is defined by how you define yourself and your relationship to Others. Identity is usually defined by your culture, education, religion, beliefs, values, and your social environment.

From the “7 billion Others” project I have learned that, in spite of the multiple ways of defining identity, there are shared parallelisms. In addition, the filming protocol of the “7 billion Others” aims to share these indicators to reveal one universal humanity.

I have learned that it is possible to share deep universal beliefs with

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 8.08 — “7 billion Others Project,” Submarine Base, Bordeaux, France, 2010. Screening areas for thematic films. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation—7 billion Others.

Others who, at first, appear so different in terms of, for example, geography, culture, social organisation and religion. It is actually very surprising (and rather wonderful) to realize that we can really meet and be similar to someone who is far from yourself for so many reasons. And the contrary is also true. Your neighbour can have totally different personal beliefs despite sharing a similar identity.

By learning from Others, by hearing what they have to say, I feel closer to them. Even though we know it, and try to avoid the tendency, our fears often come from ignorance, imagination and myths about our differences. With this project, I believe, and hope, that the fears and apprehensions we have about identities which are so different from ours, are dissipated and a calmer, more understanding co-habitation becomes possible.

7b0 focuses on man as an individual (the face that speaks to us during the interview) and man as a planetary collective (the mosaic of faces). How can we reconcile these two realities, which are seemingly at odds with each other—the individual and the community?

A community is made up of individuals. In “7 billion Others”, we strive to show, through the interviews, each and everyone as an individual, but who becomes part of the planetary collective as soon as the testimonies are shown and interpolated with other testimonies. One testimony from one part of the globe responds to another testimony from another part of the globe. A film would represent the planetary/community collective; the interviews that make up the film represent several individuals. Each individual is a singularity, yet part of a community that share the Earth; its humanity is universal and has to live together.

The mosaic which is the emblem of the project accurately represents this idea; each individual is unique and has his/her own identity, and yet this humanity is shared with other individuals as part of a planetary community.

Each one of us, with our individuality, is part of a community—a human community, obviously. But we also belong to something more global. We need to learn to live in harmony together in order to be able to live in harmony with Nature on our planet. There is no Plan B.

How does 7b0 address the concepts of identity, multiculturalism and migration?

Multiculturalism is at the heart of the “7 billion Others” project. Multiculturalism is in evidence in all eighty-four countries we went, on all continents. But in each country we went to, we tried to interview a diversity of people so that all communities, all facets of the population could be represented.

Migration is also a very important aspect of the project. Indeed, it is one of the 40 fundamental themes. Migration is tackled directly in three different movies: “Leaving one’s country,” “Being at Home,” “Melilla”—using the name of one of the most important refugee camps in Spain (<http://www.7billionothers.org/thematic-voices>).

Migration is also a theme in most of the movies we produce. People are talking about it, obviously, when they share what their parents transmitted to them (“Transmission”). Evidently, it is one of the themes in the movie “Climate voices,” which concerns climate change—actual climatic migrants, experts... they all talk about migration.

7b0 is a supra-national project that goes beyond the idea of national and continental borders to a global dimension. Who do you imagine to be its target audience, and how will it involve?

As we said, the project is the result of 5 years of shooting, in 84 countries. People answer in more than 60 languages or dialects. So even if the authors of the project are French, if the project is part of the GoodPlanet Foundation (a French Fondation) and supported from the beginning by a French bank (BNP Paribas)—yes, the project is essentially global.

There is no target audience. “7 billion Others” delivers such a universal message that anyone who is willing to open up and watch the films, can be a target audience. Whatever your culture, identity or background you can find whatever you are looking for. I guess the only requirement would be that the person is able to read the subtitles as all the films are subtitled and in their original version.

This project is a project that has no ends: we want to keep on gathering testimonies from people from all over the world and about complementary themes (as we did about climate change, poverty, health) or in countries we have never been before. The same goes with the diffusion of the project. We want to share this beautiful project and its message with people from all over the world (internet, tv, website... and obviously exhibitions).

7b0 develops partnerships with other institutions? Which ones? And in what form? What is the sensitivity of public institutions and the world of society and politics to your project?

Indeed, “7 billion Others” has developed a lot of strategic partnerships. Some partnerships concern the project globally, some the filming projects, and some the exhibitions projects. First of all, I have to say that the “7 billion Others” project wouldn’t be what it is today without the support of BNP Paribas, the main sponsor of the project since 2004.

The project also benefits from partnerships with NGOs. Medecins du Monde, for example, have been partners of the projects since the beginning. They help us in the field, especially in countries at war. Institutional partnerships are also important. For instance, the European Union supported some new filming about development issues.

The United Nations are historical partners of the project. We have the support of the Secretary General, but we also work with many UN agencies: UNEP, IPCC, UN-Habitat, ISDR, WMO, not to mention partnerships with companies that have been with us since the beginning (Air France, Sanyo/Panasonic...). Yes, we can say that we are really lucky—a great sponsor, many partnerships... This can be explained by the fact that the “7 billion Others” values are universal, positive and important.

And maybe, the fact that these partnerships have been maintained for 10 years can also be explained by the fact that the “7 billion Others” team try to work by applying the values of the project. The exhibitions also benefit from a great network of partnerships—the museums themselves, the companies, the cities... It is the synergy between all of them that explains the success of the exhibitions (more than 50% increase in attendance in all venues...).

The real heart of the 7bO project is the website, where the immense material collected is stored, and which acts as an antenna to communicate with audiences around the world. In addition to this communication tool, your exhibitions tour extensively. What are the reasons for this choice?

The interviews which have been filmed around the world were always planned to be distributed through diverse media in order to reach different target audiences—the website, DVDs, TV, books and the exhibitions. Exhibitions allow the public to have space and time to go and meet these Others. The quality of the screening of the exhibitions provides perfect conditions for the visitors to watch the films and meet these Others. In addition, during the exhibitions, we create special events such as debates, in order to create real encounters between the visitors and different actors such as NGOs, the directors, the production team etc. All these media are complementary to each other and the project has always been thought of in terms of different media and the exhibitions were definitely one of the main vehicles for the project.

Your exhibitions are structured according to very clear combinable elements of which the interviews are the most important part. How did you come to develop this system? How did you design the variations necessary to “customize” the individual events with respect to the different contexts.

Respect for the testimonies given to us by the 6,000 people we interviewed, who trusted us, not to censure or distort their words, is very important to us. It is also important, therefore, that, in the exhibitions, the heart of the project is the movies, the testimonies themselves. Each exhibition is customized and “tailor made.” Each time, we adapt ourselves to the space and choose the best option to highlight the films.

A film can be shown in a million different ways. The only requirements we have is that they are shown in quality conditions, in terms of light, sound and intimacy. In order to really watch and be touched by the testimonies, each screening space needs to be intimate, dark and sound-proof.

The exhibition has been developed in different kinds of layouts, from yurts to containers, from antic alcoves to custom-built screening rooms. On each occasion, the “7 billion Others” team study the space available and design a layout which would be the best option to highlight the films and provide quality screenings. But in each country, we try to adapt to the local audience. For example, we subtitle or dub the movie “Mosaic” depending on the local habits.

Even though the thematic movies are the heart of the project, other installations are key elements of the exhibitions. We always try to organize one or many places where the audience can sit down, have a break (there are usually more than 10 hours of video in each exhibition), share with the other visitors (help for this is provided by the mediators, ...). We also always organize debates, and meetings with local NGOs and so on...

Last but not least, in order for the exhibition to be interactive, we always provide access to our website so that visitors can leave their own testimony, answering the questionnaire either in writing or via webcam. In most exhibitions, shooting and editing booths are installed.

Reporters are there so the visitors can be interviewed in the same conditions as the shootings all over the world. An exhibition is also composed of two symbolic video installations: “Mosaic,” which is usually installed in a more open, monumental space; “Messages” which is shown on different screens. We always try to propose artistic installations, different each time, which highlight the content of the project.

What are the most interesting examples of innovative construction practices you have used in your project, and what makes them so?

In order to be able to develop the project and to show all the content and all the media, with maximum flexibility, the company Difflp developed software specifically for the project which allows as many subtitles on the movie as we need, wherever we want on the screen, to highlight, or not, all the personal data about the person shown (where the person comes from, their age, ...). This flexibility is not only a wonderful innovation in terms of construction and development, but also participates in the diffusion of the project. I can answer you by listing the innovations used in some layouts, for example, in Brussels, when using the screen as a window to project the faces on the outside. But this is not our main target, even if we use innovative technologies and concepts. Much more important to my eyes, and the most innovative construction I can think of, is the way the project itself has been conceived of and edited.

“Solidarity innovation” and “participative innovation” are the key words which we hear all over the world nowadays. But when we began, 10 years ago, this was not the case. A digital social community was set up (translating the movies, the website, moderating the website), and many projects were initiated all over the world on this idea, the basis of the “7 billion Others” project (projects, for example, that we are happy to highlight on our website).

Interview by Marco Borsotti



“Fetish Modernity,” Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium

Interview with Anna Seiderer

→ INTERVIEWED

Anna Seiderer is a PhD in philosophy. Her study questions the concept of transmission at work on postcolonial museums in Bénin. Her field researches were supported by the African School of Heritage (EPA) and the African center of high studies (CAHE). She is today research assistant in the royal Museum of central Africa (RMCA) and coordinates the European project Ethnography Museums & World Cultures which goal is to re-define the mission and place of ethnography museums in our contemporary context. She curated the exhibition “Fetish Modernity” and directed the publication of the catalogue with the project leader Anne-Marie Bouttiaux.”

Within the RIME research programme, which have been the most relevant aspects of the collaboration with other institutions?

The Ethnography Museums and World Cultures most satisfying aspect is the evolution of our different positions during the five years of the project. If we still have some quite different ways of thinking and dealing with the colonial heritage, we managed to exchange our experiences and to discuss about it. On this way we built up an international network through which exchange knowledge, experience and perspectives.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 8.09
— “Fetish Modernity,”
Royal Museum for Central
Africa, Tervuren, Belgium,
2011. View of the thematic
area “Desire for Modernity,”
diverting. Photo by Jo Van
de Vyver©, courtesy of
Musée Royal de l’Afrique
Centrale.

Concerning the collaboration with ethnographic museums from different European countries, how did this experience develop? Which were the main differences of perspective, and which stimuli have you obtained from them?

Even if ethnography museums shares the same kind of collections built between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, they have different national policies that determine the institutional and theoretical positions. We can observe that some museums are still attached to there historical categories while others are about to redefine them through new practices. The different ways *postcolonial theories* are implemented in the museums practices today gives an interesting perspective of the diverse realities of these museums today.

In your opinion, which is the position of the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale within the panorama of European ethnographic museums?

I don't know if it is interesting to build up a classification of the European ethnography museums in order to attribute them a placement. They all have there own specificity, and the one of the RMCA is that it is an important testimony of Belgian colonial history. While some museum tries to come out of there history by renaming or rebuilding the institution in a "neutral" place, Tervuren tries to reframe it through the renovation project some colleagues are working on. But, at this point, it seems impossible to have a definitive opinion on its result.

In your opinion how do European ethnography museums approach issues of identity, multiculturalism and migration in European societies?

We can say that they were dealing with Identity questions in a static way, and, as it is well known today, they reinforced a national identity through the contrast of an exotic image of the "Others." It is about to change since ethnography museums tries to come out of this dichotomist position and deal with contemporaneous questions like multiculturalism and migration. The question of identity is reframed through contemporaneous social, cultural, economical and political aspects.

Fetish Modernity seems 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. What is your viewpoint about this aspect?

The exhibition "Fetish Modernity" is the result of collaboration between several ethnography museums. The exhibition addresses the West's feeling of superiority toward the rest of the world, as if it alone enjoys the privilege of modernity. This posture results from Western society's identification with the modern discourse according to which it observes, classifies and judges the world. It is a binary discourse that opposes belief to science, "civilized" societies to "primitive" societies, or even the industrial and technological world to the rural or 'traditional' world. In this perspective, we can say that "Fetish Modernity" criticizes an interpretation of the world that proves itself incapable of grasping its complexity and dynamics. This critic is developed through a contemporary anthropological perspective where objects are analysed in there socio-cultural environment.

In this perspective, the exhibition addresses the process of creation and practices in which all societies have always been engaged. If non-western societies used to be presented as static exotic icons in colonial Museums, today, these institutions want to show the dynamic process that material culture express. Collections aren't presented as pure testimonies of the past but as hybrids that crystallize or express the desire for modernity which all human societies are animated by.

Is it correct to say that the dual concept of combination and inclusion is the basis of the scientific program of Fetish Modernity?

I would say that the basis of the scientific program of the exhibition "Fetish Modernity" is referring to the book of Bruno Latour, *We Have never Been Modern*, in which he distinguish the modern discourse that proceed on a dualistic way from practices generated by this binary system, that Philippe Descola call "naturalism." So the analysis is more on the limits of modern discourse which is unable to conceptualize the dynamic process of the practices its is trying to reflect. We developed this perspective through different themes. The first one, "Cliché factory," contextualize the institution presenting the exhibition and shows the role played by ethnography museums in the representation and diffusion of an exotic "Other." The second moment called, "Made in," presents objects produced by and for trade that developed over several epochs and in various parts of the world. It says that many modernities exist; they are processes of creation that developed outside the European economic and political context. The exhibition space invalidates the opposition between a centre and a supposedly "non-modern" periphery and emphasizes mechanisms of hybridization provoked by commercial exchanges. The third moment "Modernity: between discourse and practice," tackles the theoretical basis of the exhibition—how daily practices resist ideological manipulation through the theme of religion and of essentialist ethnology. The installation makes it possible to see simultaneously what takes place on the stage, where the representation orchestrated by the discourse plays out, and what is produced backstage, where the elements' diversity, which on-stage is stripped away by the spectacle, remains apparent. Thus it becomes possible to observe purification processes implemented by a discourse attempting to guarantee its coherence and vision of the world. The fourth moment, "Desire for modernity," questions the dynamic process of hybridized practices. The hypothesis formulated by the curators is that this dynamic process is generated by desire for modernity that renewal artistic production and social practices. Local integration of a foreign object can heighten its efficiency that were divided in four subgroups—*stylizing representing, reinventing, diverting*—, they are manifestations of the diversity of creations motivated by these impulses. The fifth moment, "Gluttonous modernity," questions the desire for modernity from the point of view of globalization and the capitalist economy. What happens when the desire for modernity is taken over by capitalist logic? The first result is an expansionist politics that legitimizes humanist discourse: this is the history of colonization and its imposed modernity. Next, modernity is expressed

through the exploitation of natural resources: conquered territories have been the breadbasket of Western societies since the nineteenth century. The exportation of merchandise to rich countries guarantees the satisfaction of the desire for capitalist modernity (hair, organs, ores, oil, etc.). Finally, this desire is characterized by the negation of its own humanist discourse: political and economic practices contradict the universal declaration of human rights, ignored as human beings, held back at the borders.

The last moment, “Chic & Cheap shops,” presents the desire to “consume” the “Other” that emerges from the contrived character of the shops: whether through the medium of touristy artefacts or that of masterpieces from distant lands. Both have in common to sale the “Other” as a merchandise. The shops confront the Western public with its own contradictions: many are those who cross borders without being harassed and who possess purchasing power allowing them to satisfy an addiction to exoticism but would refuse to share a national space with this “Other,” in their own country.

The setting up of the exhibition has been developed in cooperation with a specialized studio (Kascen). What kind of brief did you provide and how did you interact with them?

We opened a call for offer that was published on the Monitor. The candidate received technical information concerning the display they would have to imagine in the six hosting venues, an object list and the storyline presenting the several themes I just mentioned. The choice of the graphic designer was done by vote between all the partners involved in the exhibition.

In your opinion, how does the exhibition setting supports and valorises the programme's objectives?

Kascen wanted to translate the notion of hybrid modernity in the exhibition space and on the same time, they had to find a technical solution that would enable them to rebuild the installation in six different places. The choice of the material as well as of the design should respond to the purpose. That's why they constructed metal boxes which should have been modular and flexible. But, as we could observe in the different venues, their proposal was completely crushed by the architecture of the museum in Tervuren while it was much more efficient in the museum of Vienna. This led to the conclusion that the context of an exhibition plays a decisive role on the graphic design which interprets a theoretical purpose.

Which is the role you attribute to temporary exhibitions in relation to the programs of the museum, as well as to the meaning of permanent collections?

Numerous of scholars involved in museological questions denounce permanent collections which are necessary condemned to be updated. I would share this critic for the reason I just mentioned and for the status of a permanent exhibition that might become a reference. In my opinion, each exhibition is a proposal through which enlighten the public in a different perspective. It should stimulate the critical faculties of the public and not institutionalize a knowledge.

Which are the most interesting examples of experimental exhibition practices that you have used in your exhibitions? Which are their innovative features?

Today many museums reinforce their collaboration with contemporary artists and “diasporas.” The video Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, Ken Ndiaye and I produced on the question of modernity might be the most innovative aspect of this exhibition. It constitutes a document where the presented themes of the exhibition are discussed from different cultural and historical horizons. The public can observe replace the purpose of the exhibition in a larger social context.

Interview by Marco Borsotti



MEN–Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel

Interview with Marc-Olivier Gonseth

→ INTERVIEWED

Ethnologist and museologist, Marc-Olivier Gonseth has been the director of the Musée d’ethnographie de Neuchâtel since March 2006.

Introduced to museography while studying ethnology, he was involved in particular in one of the latest works of Jean Gabus (“Musique et Sociétés,” 1978), in the transition exhibition curated by the Institut d’ethnologie of the Université de Neuchâtel (“Etre nomade aujourd’hui,” 1979), in the first projects conceived by Hainard Jacques (1983–1991) and in the creation of Alimentarium (Vevey, Switzerland, 1983–1985), Stella Matutina (Ile de La Réunion, 1990 to 1991) and the Musée de la Main (Lausanne, 1995–1997).

Appointed assistant museum curator in 1992, he codirected with Jacques Hainard about fifteen exhibitions, within the ambitious international project “La différence” (1995) and the museum manifesto “Le musée cannibale” (2001–2002). Since his designation, he has conceived and realized about ten shows with a totally renewed team and launched a major project related to collections management and the refurbishment of the building.

In your opinion what is the placement of MEN in the European panorama ethnographic museums?

I perceive us as particularly unusual. One reason for this special status is probably the fact that we have challenged the accepted definition of “ethnographic object,” in the same way as others have questioned the idea of

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 8.10
— “Figures de l’artefice,”
Neuchâtel Museum of
Ethnography, Neuchâtel,
Switzerland, 2006–2007.
View of “The Garden
Laboratory.” Courtesy of
Musée d’Ethnographie de
Neuchâtel.

Figurine The Fly
USA
Coll. Maison d’Ailleurs
La figurine est inspirée du film The Fly (La mouche
noire, 1958) de Kurt Neumann, œuvre originale
de David Cronenberg réalisée un remake. Elle repré-
sente une version plus récente de la mutation, après avoir
été réalisée dans laquelle

“work of art.” We all know that what lies at the heart of these definitions are essentially questions of order. Consequently, instead of stating that only exotic or folkloric items (of a certain age, a certain value or a certain pedigree) are worthy of the label “ethnographic,” we consider this to be true of all objects as long as they make sense within our scenography. Hence the inclusion of contemporary, industrial and seemingly banal objects in both our exhibitions and, even more strikingly, our collections.

Other elements include our refusal to differentiate our approaches to “elsewhere” and to the “here and now”; our clear commitment to creating communication between worlds, including the anthropological approach; our knowledge of elsewhere, which functions also as a valuable tool to question what seems obvious in our immediate environment; and our knowledge of the here and now, allowing us to legitimise practices which are seemingly distant from our ways of doing and thinking. In parallel to this, we have a transversal relationship with knowledge, which links scientific disciplines with artistic approaches.

Another feature is probably our way of working. In the work dedicated to the centennial of our museum, and as a way of describing our microcosm, I proposed the expression “expo-graphic workshop.” I initially considered the more prestigious term “laboratory” but finally opted for “workshop” as it contains the dimensions of bricolage, familiarity and dialogue which are appropriate to our way of gradually constructing a critical discourse. The adjective “expo-graphic” also demonstrates our willingness to experiment with new directions and continue to reflect on the medium of “exhibition.”

MEN is a museum institution that belongs to a European nation that maintains its own autonomy from the EU community vision. As this condition positively or negatively affects on the nature and programs MEN?

Many colleagues from different parts of the world have expressed their surprise at the freedom we enjoy. This is probably partly due to Swiss federalism and the considerable regional autonomy it implies. A town like Neuchâtel, which despite its small size hosts three different museums, has been able to develop and empower the innovative, even rebellious, spirit of the various curators who have managed these institutions without seeking to channel or direct their creative energy. We have also developed and maintained close relationships with many European colleagues and their institutions without our respective nationalities ever being a problem.

We are however disadvantaged when it comes to access to major European projects and subsidies. And despite our deep commitment to small autonomous work cells, being detached from Europe is not something we boast about—quite the opposite, in fact. I would say therefore that we try to make the most of our seemingly marginal situation.

How do MEN approach issues of identity, multiculturalism and migration in Switzerland and European society?

In terms of identity, culture and migration, we continue tirelessly to develop a constructivist point of view which is still sorely lacking in Swit-

zerland, where the issues are too often developed and discussed on the basis of superficial stereotypes. Consequently, in each exhibition we attempt to propose a deconstruction of one or other of the categories related to notions of identity and heritage, always paying special attention to the phenomena of shelving and the stigmatisation of one sector of our population by another.

We also manage to question our foreign visitors on ostensibly local issues. The “Helvetia Park” exhibition struck a chord with a French colleague I would like to quote here:

The expertise of MEN is for most students a discovery which I always look forward to. For those from regions with a strong identity (Alsace, Brittany, Provence...) the exhibition certainly represented a surprising discovery of another Switzerland, but also an opportunity to reflect on their own identity. Personally, I found a great deal of common ground with Alsace (...). In my opinion, the subject of the exhibition is undoubtedly universal, or at least very European. As a curator I am obviously sensitive to the increasing importance of market forces. So I particularly enjoyed the humour and finesse of the money game presented to the visitor—the fact that it still makes me smile says something. (Benoit Sparrow, 1.2.2010)

In exhibitions MEN organize seems to be very important the framing of the narrative of national identity theme and its historical contexts and political and economic issues within the concept of social identity, multiculturalism and migration. How do you work around this idea?

The concept of national identity is even less relevant in Switzerland (where cantonal and municipal autonomy is practically a state religion) than in other neighbouring countries, making cultural specificities and regional claims almost as sensitive and pervasive. This state of affairs (openness to internal diversity) should therefore lead us to cosmopolitanism and the internationalisation of perspectives (openness to external diversity) rather than to national reductionism (turning in on ourselves).

I would add that, although the multicultural perspective fits perfectly with Switzerland, the multilingual confederation having benefited so much from both emigration and immigration, we must still guard against the recurrent nationalist and xenophobic drift espoused by a minority of our population. Our exhibitions are therefore a privileged place where a different relationship with the world may be affirmed, different from that which turns in on itself, and from the “ethnicisation” of perspectives.

MEN is one of the few museums that express an “ideological program” on the theme of the exhibition. (Exhibit, Hainard J. and Gonseth M-O., 2004). I would like to deepen the motivation and content of this. Why did you write this text? What is the role of the exhibition project for MEN?

The manifesto you refer to was conceived and written in 1995 by Jacques Hainard and myself in order for the MEN to adopt a position when inaugurating the exhibition “La différence” with our partners from the Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble and the Musée de la Civilisation in Québec.

Each institution's mission was to introduce itself at the entrance to the exhibition with an object, a text and some photographs. As the exercise we were doing was closely linked to the expression of our respective positions (our differences) in terms of expography, we exaggerated that aspect and proposed a synthesis which resembled a manifesto. I later incorporated this text into the presentation of the MEN's approach on our website, and have retained it to this day in order to show my commitment to a trajectory which has been growing and developing in Neuchâtel for over thirty years and whose relevance has not been disproved in all this time, and in all the exhibitions produced. On 21st October 2011, this manifesto led to a contentious debate in the *Le Journal des Arts* (Paris) proving that it had not aged at all and still allowed us to identify at least two separate and highly antagonist schools in the field of museology (see the initial attack as well as my response published a month later in the same publication, and reprinted in January 2012 by the Swiss press—quoted here).

Which role do you attribute to temporary exhibitions respect to museum programs and permanent collections meaning?

Temporary exhibitions are the new blood of museums. They allow us to address new and committed themes, to form multidisciplinary teams and carry out extensive research in a specific area. As their opening dates are fixed, they avoid any possible stalling of processes which are too long-winded. And as they return on a regular basis, this allows for adjustment and more in-depth study. Due to the themes they address, they allow the development of parallel cultural activities which give a particular colour to our approach. And last but not least, they provide guidelines for revisiting and enriching the collections. I consider them to be the nerve centre of the life of our museum.

To me, this attachment implies a certain distrust of projects called “permanent,” whose duration actually varies quite considerably in practice. I neither like the term nor the limitations it implies or the associations that go with it. I admit, however, that some projects need more time than others to be put together and presented. So, I prefer to talk about projects which are more or less long-term, rather than contrasting temporary projects with permanent ones. The same applies to the museum space, which I think needs to evolve constantly and therefore should not be assigned too rigidly to a permanent section and a temporary section.

As far as the collections are concerned, it is up to each institution to reduce the “ghetto effect” which they all too often create, either by promoting museum loans, through effective on-line implementation or by facilitating visits by researchers, or even the public where possible. In this sense, the concept of a visit-able deposit, on a more or less large scale, has a positive future ahead of it.

In your exhibition seems to be very important the idea of interaction between the visitor and display system. A close relationship which is often built with an original and creative use of immersive technologies, especially of a mechanical nature rather than through the use of electronics. What is it based this decision?

I have long resisted mechanical or electronic interaction with our visitors, convinced that real interaction with them must necessarily be both emotional and cerebral. In this way, facilities which are completely frozen can, in my opinion, engage in intense dialogue with visitors as long as they are both sensitised to questioning, and requested as interpreters. It seems to me in this context that new technologies are only an advantage in settings where their use has been carefully thought through and sufficiently examined by a critical eye. There is in fact no reason why a screen should be more relevant than an image skilfully placed in a space where visitors can immerse themselves. My view then is that interactive electronic and mechanical processes are merely supplementary ways to involve participants and attract the public, within a scenario where the process in question must be totally secondary. For this reason, we use them only when they actually do represent the best way to achieve the objectives identified by our script and scenography. Indeed, our current project (“Hors-champs”) uses them in a reflexive way.

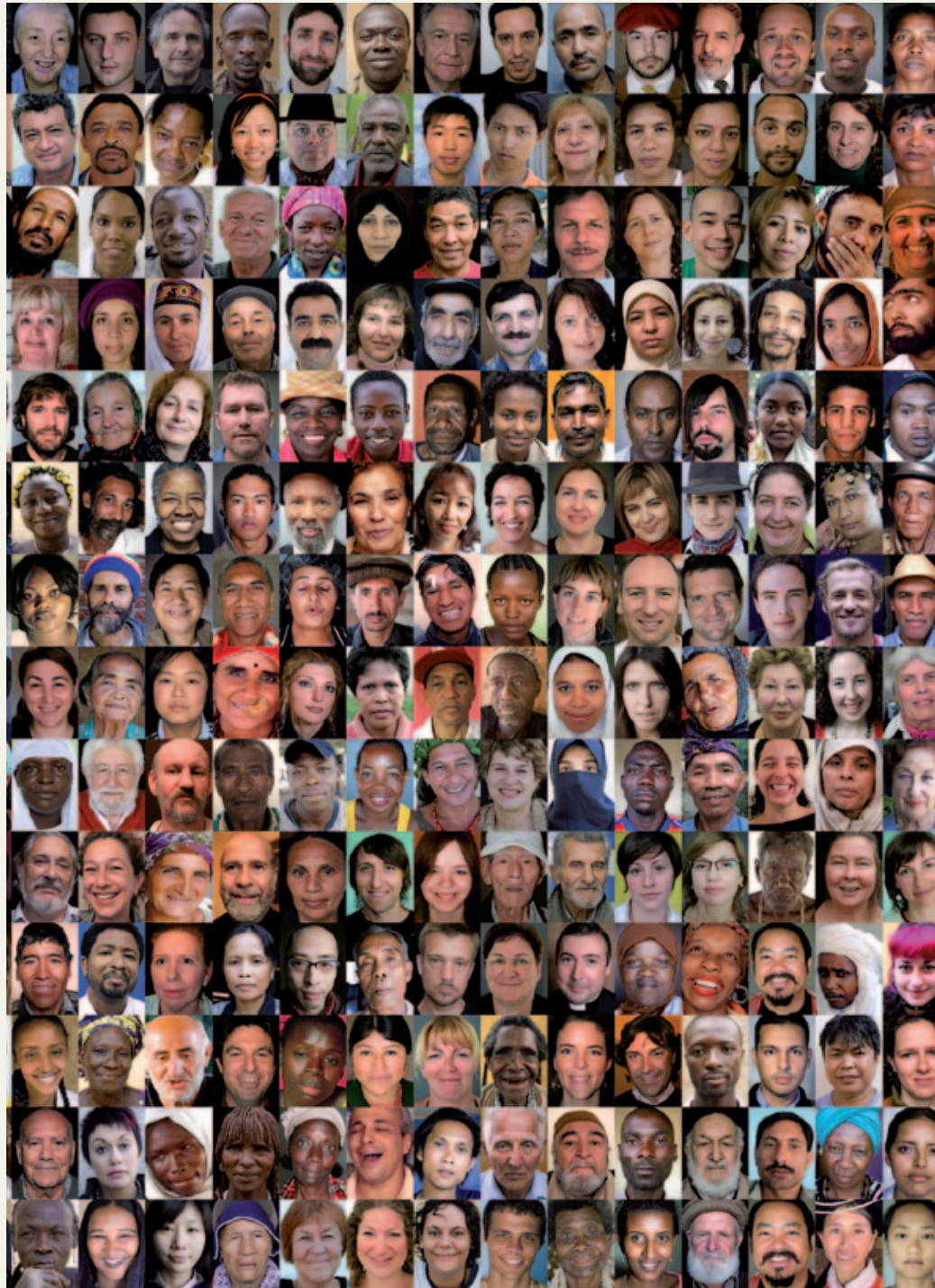
Which are the most interesting examples of innovative exhibition practice that you have used in MEN exhibitions and what makes it innovative?

We proceeded in stages, gradually uncovering the power of the exhibition and the wealth of its discourse. A fundamental stage was “Objets prétextes, objets manipulés” (1984), which determined both our intellectual partnership in terms of the exhibition and our moral contract with our collections. Another stage was “Le trou” (1990) and allowed us to break free of a word-for-word relationship with the social reality. Along the same line, I could quote many examples of projects in which we innovated, either because of amazing partnerships—“La différence” (1995), “La grande illusion” (2000–2001), “What are you doing after the apocalypse?” (2011)—, ingenious devices—“Le musée cannibal” (2002), “X: Spéculations sur l’imaginaire et l’interdit” (2003), “Figures de l’artifice” (2006), “Helvetia Park” (2009)—or theoretical propositions which gripped the visitors—“Si: Regards sur le sens commun” (1993), “Marx 2000” (1994), “Remise en boîtes” (2005), “Bruits” (2010), “Hors-champs” (2012). But the two main ingredients that make our approaches innovative are a close, monitored and demanding interaction between design team and production team, and a sustained and continual attention to the formal aspects of representation within the context of the medium in which we operate: the exhibition.

Interview by Marco Borsotti

Text Translated by Tim Quinn

Case Studies



IMG. 8.11 — “7 billion Others,” Grand Palais, Paris, France, 2009. Exhibition by GoodPlanet Foundation. “Mosaic of faces”. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation—7 billion Others.

“7 billion Others”

Traveling exhibition. Opening Grand Palais, Paris, France (10th January 2009–12th February 2009)

The GoodPlanet Foundation was founded by Yann Arthus-Bertrand with the aim of making the public aware of the environment and the development of concrete solutions for a more responsible lifestyle, which accords greater respect towards the planet and its inhabitants.

In 2003, following “Earth from Above,” Yann Arthus-Bertrand launched the “6 billion Others” project together with Sibylle d’Orgeval and Baptiste Rouget-Luchaire. The project directors, Sibylle d’Orgeval and Baptiste Rouget-Luchaire, the reporters and the production team who carried out the interviews, have been motivated throughout this adventure by one clear, simple desire—to present a sensitive, representative and respectful portrait of the individuals who have been interviewed, to allow each to share his/her experiences, wishes, dreams, fears and philosophy of life, and to make these testimonies available to the greatest number of people (from “7 billion Others”—Presentation of The Project Documents, October 2012). Six thousand interviews were filmed in eighty-four countries by fifteen reporters who have travelled the world to meet the “Others.” They have met all kinds of people from every corner of the world and each answered the same questions concerning their fears, dreams, hardships and hopes.

In 2011, the project name became “7 billion Others” as there are now seven billion inhabitants of the planet. “7 billion Others” is a video art project. By interviewing thousands of people all over the world and asking them the same 45 questions, the aim of the project is to present a portrait of humankind today. Filming is carried out regularly to enrich the project with new testimonies as well as the interactive website that allows each visitor to leave his own testimony. These video testimonies are accessible both via the www.7billionothers.org website and at international exhibitions.

The project is neither created nor hosted by an institution with its own exhibition space, but rather develops through the production of video documentation which is delivered to the network. In order to maximize the impact of the evidence gathered, the project has organized many exhibitions in different parts of the world, as well as in prestigious locations. The project has also been on display at festivals in a variety of countries (France, Belgium, USA, the Netherlands and Italy, among others) and at special events (including the Night of European Museums and the Sustainable Development Week).

The eighty-four countries in which interviews took place are: Afghanistan, South Africa, Algeria, Germany, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Korea, Cuba, Denmark, Dubai, Egypt, Ecuador, Spain, The United States, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kirghistan, Kosovo, Laos, The Lebanon, Madagascar, The Maldives, Mali, Morocco, Mexico, Micronesia, Montenegro, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, The Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, The Democratic Republic of Congo, The Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Tanzania, Chad, Chechnya, The Palestinian Territories, Thailand, Tibet, Tunisia, Turkey, The Ukraine, Yemen.

→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The theme of intercultural dialogue, the story of one’s identity is the very essence of “7 billion Others.” Indeed, the name expresses the core of the project. All those interviewed talk about the important themes that characterize their lives, not

IMG. 8.12 — Screening areas for thematic films, Grand Palais Paris, France, 2009. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation–7 billion Others.



IMG. 8.13 — The “Questions” antechamber, Submarine Base, Bordeaux, France, 2010. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation–7 billion Others.



IMG. 8.14 — The “Questions” antechamber San Telmo Museum, San Sebastián, Spain, 2011. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation–7 billion Others.



IMG. 8.15 — Screening areas for thematic films, San Telmo Museum, San Sebastián, Spain, 2011. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation–7 billion Others.



IMG. 8.16 — Screening areas for thematic films, Alliance Française, Rangoon, Myanmar, 2010. Courtesy of GoodPlanet Foundation–7 billion Others.

only in general terms, but also in relation to their own experiences (parents, places, customs, memories, episodes) as well as their hopes and desires (their vision of the future). The logical synthesis of the process is: 1. Getting to know the cultures of others; 2. Hearing what they have to say; 3. Learning from them; 4. Sharing testimonies.

The concept is simple: going out to meet the seven billion inhabitants of the planet, listening to what they have to say and sharing it with others (from “7 billion Others”—Presentation of The Project Documents, October 2012).

The project adopts simple multimedia techniques (shooting video and audio) and does not use any other technological elements in the construction of the narrative. The editing of the stories, collected methodically according to identical standards for each subject, transmits the primary message of the project—an absolute unity determined by our shared condition of being inhabitants of the same place (the planet itself) and united by the common feelings which give meaning to our perception of life.

The type of shooting, the sequence of questions and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee are therefore constant. The result is a continuous portrait where the voice and experience of the individual fill the entire narrative space. The filming procedures encourage both intimacy and authenticity (from “7 billion Others”—Presentation of The Project Documents, October 2012). Between fifty and three hundred interviews were carried out in each country, with the aim of including the greatest possible diversity of characters, while remaining representative of the entire population. The Project’s choices encompass the various social classes, age groups, professions, religious affiliations and ethnic groups. The urban and rural locations selected represent some of the most emblematic places of conflict, across all continents. Looking into the camera, the person being interviewed speaks directly to the viewer, in his or her own language. The interviewer does not appear, either in the picture or in the soundtrack.

“7 billion Others” is presented as a planetary choral portrait. In this sense, it is probably the largest

archive of thoughts and feelings in the world, a world described with an all-inclusive, egalitarian and multidirectional purpose. It is important to note that the project is “plural” in its overall vision, but at the same time very “personal,” in that it is based on a comparison between two individuals—the speaker and the listener. This is a relationship where, initially, the speaker has a narrative presence (active witness) and the listener, a neutral presence. However, the listener becomes progressively involved in a direct comparison of their respective experiences (involved witness). The geographical and social breadth achieved appears to overcome the concept of opposition or inclusion of opinions, and seems rather to promote the notion of collection and protection of each possible human identity within this huge instrument of collective memory.

“7 billion Others” is comprised of 6,000 men and women who speak about their lives, their desires, their joys, their setbacks, their laughter and their tears. Each speaks to all. (The interview questions relate to: love; after death; happiness; anger; god; differences; testing times; feeling/being at home; making love last; family; women/war; love stories; messages; nature; forgiving; fear; crying; first memories; progress; leaving one’s country; childhood dreams; dreams and renouncement; meaning of life; climate voices; transmission; a better life than one’s parents; tensions; etc.) All those who listen will both consider themselves so different and yet so similar, so far yet so close to all the “others,” while the virtual direct contact with the interviewee (the only person appearing on video) creates intimacy. The viewer notices the facial expressions as much as the words. Through these words the viewers can identify with people from very different backgrounds; they can “accept” these testimonies much more easily.

The heart of the project, which is to show everything that unites us, connects us and differentiates us, lies in the films which include the topics discussed over thousands of hours of interviews. These testimonies are also presented in exhibitions around the world and in other media, such as books, DVDs and TV. “7 billion Others” is also an exhibition comprising the thematic films screened into spaces specially designed for this

purpose. The video art installation “mosaic” is a symbolic element usually presented within an impressive art set up. The various installations of the “7 billion Others” exhibition can be modified to suit the location. The Mosaic of Faces is a film of variable length, between 20 and 52 minutes. Some faces are enlarged, begin talking and share their translated experiences with visitors. Specific spaces house one or more films on various themes. These areas can differ widely from one exhibition to another (from the Yurts in Paris, Rennes, Marseille and São Paulo to the thatched huts in Rangoon or containers in Bordeaux. Evensmall ancient alcoves have been used in the archaeological location of Mercati di Traiano in Rome).

A special, optional, installation is available at the entrance to the exhibition—the Questions antechamber—which is set up very differently depending upon the exhibition, and introduces visitors to the project and accompanies them into the screening areas. During the exhibition, it is also possible to install recording and editing studios where visitors become part of the project themselves and testify to their own experiences by answering the forty-five interview questions.

The various screening areas should be designed to resemble a kind of “agora” in order to recreate the meeting places found in each village on earth. Here, it is possible to take a break and chat with the other visitors, an activity encouraged by the presence of a team of moderators. (The team creates a dialogue with the spectators, by initiating or continuing a discussion with anyone who is interested. The mediators invite visitors to meet each other, and so the encounter with “others” may be experienced outside of the screening areas.)

Marco Borsotti

→ THE EXHIBITION

Everything began with a helicopter breakdown in Mali. While I was waiting for the pilot, I spent a whole day talking with one of the villagers. He spoke to me about his daily life, his hopes and fears. His sole ambition was to feed his children. I suddenly found myself plunged into the most elemental of concerns. He looked me straight in the eye, uncomplaining, ask-

ing for nothing, expressing no resentment or ill will. Later, I dreamt of understanding their words, of feeling what linked us. Because, from up there, the Earth looks like an immense area to be shared. But as soon as I landed, problems emerged. I found myself confronted by inflexible bureaucracy and barriers laid down by men, symbols of the difficulty we have in living together.

We live in amazing times. Everything moves at a crazy pace. I’m sixty-five years old, and when I think about how my parents lived, it seems scarcely believable. Today, we have at our disposal extraordinary tools for communication. We can see everything, know everything. The quantity of information in circulation has never been greater. All of that is very positive. The irony is that at the same time we still know very little about our neighbours.

Now, however, the only possible response is to make a move towards the other person, to understand them. For in struggles to come, whether it is the struggle against poverty or climate change, we cannot act on our own. The times in which one could think only of oneself or of one’s own small community are over. From now on, we cannot ignore what it is that links us and the responsibilities that this implies.

There are more than seven billion of us on Earth, and there will be no sustainable development if we cannot manage to live together. That is why “7 billion Others” is so important to me. I believe in it because it concerns all of us and because it encourages us to take action. I hope that each one of us will want to reach out and make these encounters, to listen to other people and to contribute to the life of “7 billion Others” by adding our own experiences and expressing our desire to live together.

Yann Arthus-Bertrand

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IMG. 8.17 — “Fare gli Italiani,” OGR Officine Grandi Riparazioni, Turin, Italy, 2011–2012. Exhibition design by Studio Azzurro. “Migration” thematic island. Courtesy of Studio Azzurro.

“Fare gli Italiani 1861–2011”

OGR – Officine Grandi Riparazioni delle Ferrovie dello Stato, Turin, Italy
(17th March 2011–4th November 2011 and 17th March 2012–4th November 2012)

→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The exhibition is designed to be hosted at the State Railways “Officine Grandi Riparazioni.” The OGR is an abandoned former industrial complex covering a very large area. Built between 1885 and 1895, the OGR was chosen as the site of the main exhibition on the unification of Italy National, partly because there is significant testimony on the beginnings of the Turin industrial development shortly before national unification. Turin, as a matter of fact, after having been the capital of Savoy, became the capital of Italy between 1861 and 1865.

“Officine Grandi Riparazioni” was designed to be at the forefront of locomotive and railroad car reconditioning and repair and this occurred in the historical context of the development of the infrastructure of the young Italian nation. “Officine Grandi Riparazioni” is located along the railway line from Turin to Milan, covering an area of 190,000 square metres, with impressive buildings with aisles up to 200 metres in length. It is located in an urban area called “great services,” which will also include the New Prisons, the Municipal Slaughterhouse and the so-called “Casotti daziari.”

In this area a portion of the “Officine Grandi Riparazioni” survived which is now occupied by the new site of the Polytechnic of Turin and the main body of the Officine, with the pavilions of Assembly, Turnery and Fucine, which were abandoned in the early 1970s. “Field H,” the northern building, consisting of two parallel parts with a single nave in each and a covered area of approximately 20,000 square metres was granted on free loan as an exhibition space to the city of Turin in 2007. It is not, therefore, an exhibition area or consolidated museum space, but a recovery action of a large area that was returned to the city for the timely occasion of the exhibition Fare gli Italiani, and is now being proposed as a multi-purpose space for cultural activities.

“Fare gli Italiani” is without doubt, a celebratory exhibition in which the idea of belonging to a nation is combined with the celebration of its 150 years of existence. The core of the exhibition, however, has its own focus in an effort to describe what it means to be Italian, through a chronological journey which helps visitors navigate between the content and visual cues set up at the exhibition to cross large areas, called “islands” which describe the birth and the process of the evolution of national identity, according to the two themes “inclusion/exclusion,” which aim to identify how these issues have helped or hindered the process of national integration.

The exhibition takes advantage of a communication tools known as *mise en scène* which uses physical set reconstructions which aim to stimulate the visual and spatial senses related to the most outstanding features of the themes (wooden benches for the school, sandbags trenches or large parachutes for the World Wars, etc.) in conjunction with the construction of virtual scenes which constitute the core of the entire narrative system.

According to the definition of Studio Azzurro, this is a show-laboratory, rather than an illustrative exhibition. The thematic islands are: “The City,” “The Countryside,” “The School,” “The Church,” “Migration,” “WWI and WWII,” “Political Participation,” “Factories,” “The Mafia,” “Transport” and “Mass Media.” In addition, there are also sections about the main characters of the Risorgimento or Resurgence (The Realization of the Idea of National Unity), Painters and Patriots (The Contribution to Risorgimento Art in the Fulfilment of the Idea of Identity, edition 2011), The Strength of Unity (From Pre-Unification Italy to the Present by Statistical and Quantitative Data, edition 2012) and

The Face of the Country (The Symbolic Iconography of Italy).

The curators state that the intention of the exhibition is to provide a history of Italy defined by a progressive integration of space, reality and sense of belonging which was initially defined by separatism and conflict. “Fare gli Italiani” is an exhibition of observation and listening, enriched by episodes using theatrical props and performances: a narrative heavily dependent on set design and drama where multimedia technologies amplify the sense emotions of the visit and, at the same time, provide a wide variety of information. In this sense, the choral vision leaves no room for specific individual items, but instead manages to problematize important historical moments highlighting the mutual relations and values (which may even be negative) related to the theme of national identity.

Celebration is inevitable, but is rebalanced by a clear drive to discuss a possible common identity—being Italian—which is the result of a wide range of influences and phenomena that still define the diversity of the country and of its inhabitants. If some historical phenomena are highlighted as the foundation of the construction of a more compact and unified society (for example, the two World Wars which “forced” Italians of all regional backgrounds, political affiliations, religions and social classes, to live side by side), others such as the influence of the Catholic Church (institution of great importance and inspiration, but also “other” organized boundaries within the Italian State) or the dark presence of mafia organizations (criminal, territorial elements, hostile to the administrative functions of the Italian State), highlight disparities and ideological, social and economic differences, which are an integral part of the narrative of Italian identity.

According to Paolo Rosa, “The historical moment suggests that this is not the time for rhetorical celebrations and what seemed right, both for the historiographical and scenic hypotheses, assumed a problematic attitude which was thoughtful yet capable of experimentation, as if to suggest a possible scenario which,

through reinterpreting the past, could inspire us to imagine the near future.” (Studio Azzurro 2011, 7–15)

The overall view of the exhibition has an open scenic dimension which allows the simultaneous capture of different thematic areas (and therefore also different historical periods), giving an equal visibility to the chronological progression of the individual “islands.” This is the implicit premise about the review of the progress of “historical” time and a statement of the need of interpretations that have the same length, instead of being episodic. In addition to the overlapping visual interpretation of the historical narrative (reinforced by crossing paths at different heights), the exhibition focuses on multiplicity as participation in choral history. National identity is not told by the individual who helped to shape it but by groups, even if they can be considered to be heterogeneous, and that history has brought people together creating an opportunity to establish a sense of belonging (in the exhibition, the group portrait prevails over the individual picture).

It should be emphasized that the island which shows migratory events is entitled “Migration,” equating and then removing any distinction between emigration and immigration. A choice which aims to point out that the phenomenon of the movement of large masses of people is an essential part of the identity of the Italian heritage, as can be seen by the fact that Italy has experienced all possible variations in migration: influx from abroad, within the country from the south to the north, and contemporary intellectuals—the so-called “brain drain”—and economic variations from less developed geographical areas.

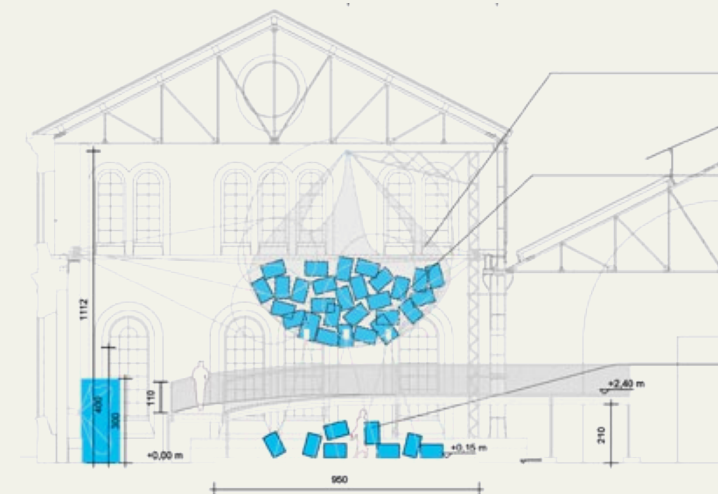
Marco Borsotti

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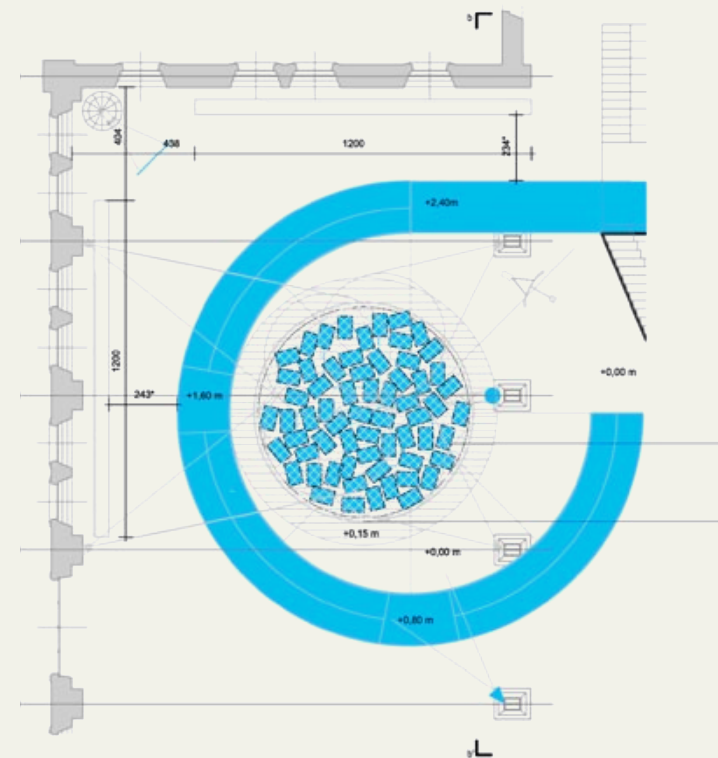
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IMG. 8.23 — “Migration” thematic island, section by Studio Azzurro. © Studio Azzurro.



IMG. 8.24 — “Migration” thematic island, plan by Studio Azzurro. © Studio Azzurro.



IMG. 8.25 — “Fetish Modernity,” Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, 2011. View of “Desire for Modernity” thematic area. Photo by Jo Van de Vyver©, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.

“Fetish Modernity”

Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium
(8th April 2011–4th September 2011)

“The Museum must aspire to be a world centre of research and knowledge dissemination on past and present societies and natural environments of Africa and, in particular, Central Africa, to foster—among the public at large and the scientific community—understanding of and interest in this area and, through partnerships, to contribute substantially to its sustainable development. Thus the core endeavours of this Africa-oriented institution consist of acquiring and managing collections, conducting scientific research, implementing the results of this research, disseminating knowledge, and mounting selected exhibitions of its collections...” (Gryseels).

RMCA—Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale—is an ethnographic national museum. Since it was founded, its task has been to preserve and manage its collections, conduct scientific research and disseminate knowledge to the general public through museological, educational and scientific activities. In its contemporary role, the RMCA plays an active role in the sustainable development of Africa and aspires to be a centre for collaboration and reflection on today’s Africa and the challenges it faces.

The museum’s history begins before the official date of its foundation. Its premises are located in the historic colonial choices of King Leopold II who intended to support the industrial development of his country and strengthen its international political role by acquiring new territories in Africa.

Henry Morton Stanley is then charged to explore Central Africa on behalf of Belgium, a mission that will culminate in the creation of the Congo Free State, as recognised at the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference. King Leopold II understands the need for a suitable museum institution as a symbol in the Belgian Congo

representing Belgium’s mission of “development and civilisation.” The original intentions of Leopold II were to add a colonial wing to the Natural History Museum in Brussels; after he opted for an exhibition at his royal summer estate in Tervuren.

In 1897, on the occasion of the Brussels International Exhibition, he had a Colonial Palace constructed in Tervuren where there were exhibited import and export products, ethnographic objects and stuffed animals from The Congo, as well as several Congolese villages which were also erected in the park.

In 1898 the “Congo Museum” was established as a permanent and scientific institution. In a short time the Colonial Palace ran out of space because of the expansion of the natural science collections, so in 1901, Leopold II set out to build a new museum in Tervuren, opting for the French neoclassical palace style of Frenchman Charles Girault, who designed Le Petit Palais in Paris. The first stone was laid in 1904.

King Leopold II died in 1909 and the Congo Free State became the Belgian Congo. In the same year the Belgian government suspended all construction in Tervuren and the Museum was officially inaugurated by King Albert I in the following year with the new name of Museum of the Belgian Congo.

In 1960, after Congo’s independence, the museum was renamed the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

By mid-2013 the RMCA will close for a three-year renovation period (reopening May 2016). The public call tender for renovation was awarded in 2007 by the temporary partnership Stéphane Beel Architects (TV SBA: Stéphane Beel Architects, Origin Architecture and Engineering, Niek Kortekaas, Michel Devisgne, Arup, RCR Studiebureau and Daidalos Peutz).

IMG. 8.26 — View of the “Chic and cheap shop.” Photo by Jo Van de Vyver®, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



IMG. 8.27 — “Fetish Modernity.” Final project, concept design by KASCEN. © KASCEN.



IMG. 8.28 — “Desire for Modernity”: diverting. Photo by Jo Van de Vyver®, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



IMG. 8.29 — “Desire for Modernity.” Photo by Jo Van de Vyver®, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.

IMG. 8.30 — View of “Made in.” Photo by Jo Van de Vyver©, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



IMG. 8.31 — “Fetish Modernity,” concept design by KASCEN. © KASCEN.



→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

“Fetish Modernity” seeks to give form to a different idea which is more contemporary and multicultural, of “us,” understood as a set of multiple “others”: it is defined by a new way of looking at the ethnographic sense of objects and at the psychological and socio-cultural attitudes linked to them.

“Fetish Modernity” establishes categories of destabilizing thought which have their conceptual core in the theme of combination and inclusion. This action is realised assuming a different definition of modernity: if the West imposes its own vision of modernity closely linked to industrial and technological development, as well as possessing it as a monopoly, the focus of the exhibition will reveal an idea of modernity understood as a dynamic creative force, crossing all societies in all time periods. The intention is to disarticulate a pillar of dominant western thinking to demonstrate how it can, however, be defined within a broader and cross-cutting vision, which also involves a geographical and social “Other.” In this way, the “Others” come into a game that is no longer exclusive, and indeed they rewrite the rules to reveal “us” the elusively economic-consumerist dominant nature of the current idea of modernity and opposes the idea of attitude: quoting Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, “a process permanently at work in any human society” (Bouttiaux and Seiderer 2011, 17). It then becomes possible to consider the sustainability of the apparent oxymoron, “modernity and fetish,” which reveals terms that are actually complementary.

The exhibition project considers a modernity that would function as a fetish in which new objects are constantly made throughout the world and the focus has always been to demonstrate that in this different point of view hybrid objects are shown which suggest a desire for ubiquitous modernity. They are artefacts and art works which aspire to include inspiration from the most diverse prompts and from the repertoire of images typically related to the idea of Western modernity and assimilate it into the local tradition, creating new objects:

updated versions of local production that have in themselves the power of spontaneous actualisation. An action that instead of replacing the objects of local traditional, everyday life with other more modern, imported “from outside” ones, prefers to merge them into a conceptual and formal syncretism containing different stimuli. A round trip process which also sees some western productions merge with the inspiration of the formal and symbolic traditions of “others.”

“Fetish Modernity” takes an innovative cross-cultural discourse, based on the definition of desire as the engine of modernity: a desire that, according to Anna Seiderer, “is reducible not to its objects, but to the mnemonic trace satisfied by an imaginary representation of the lost or absent object” (ibid., 133). Objects, as well as cultural practices or rituals which are presented incorporating foreign elements comprise a plural narration, where all five continents are represented. If the common thread is the manipulation of fetish, the narrative includes various subjects for origin and social location, arranged according to different themes. (“Cliché Factory,” “Made in...,” “Modernity Between Discourse and Practice,” “Desire for Modernity,” “Gluttonous Modernity,” “Chic and Cheap Shop”). The result is a portrait which questions the relationship between the West and the rest of the world by revealing the proximity and overlap of practices that are the result of hybridisation and reciprocal fertilisation.

In this ideological context, the first operation performed in the exhibition is criticism against ethnographic museums that have had (and in many cases still have) a key role in the construction of stereotypes in the perception of “others”—“Cliché Factory.” Thereafter the thought of modernity as an identity attitude is developed by objects: those produced by and for trade, which reveals a plurality of modernity invalidating the opposition centre to periphery which is supposedly “non-modern” and highlights the mechanisms of hybridisation. This usual opposition considers different societies as if they remain frozen in time as they are, keeping silent about their constant change

IMG. 8.32 — View of “Cliché Factory” thematic area. Photo by Jo Van de Vyver©, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



IMG. 8.33 — View of “Mystic village” thematic area. Photo by Jo Van de Vyver©, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



IMG. 8.34 — “Gluttonous Modernity.” Photo by Jo Van de Vyver©, courtesy of Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.



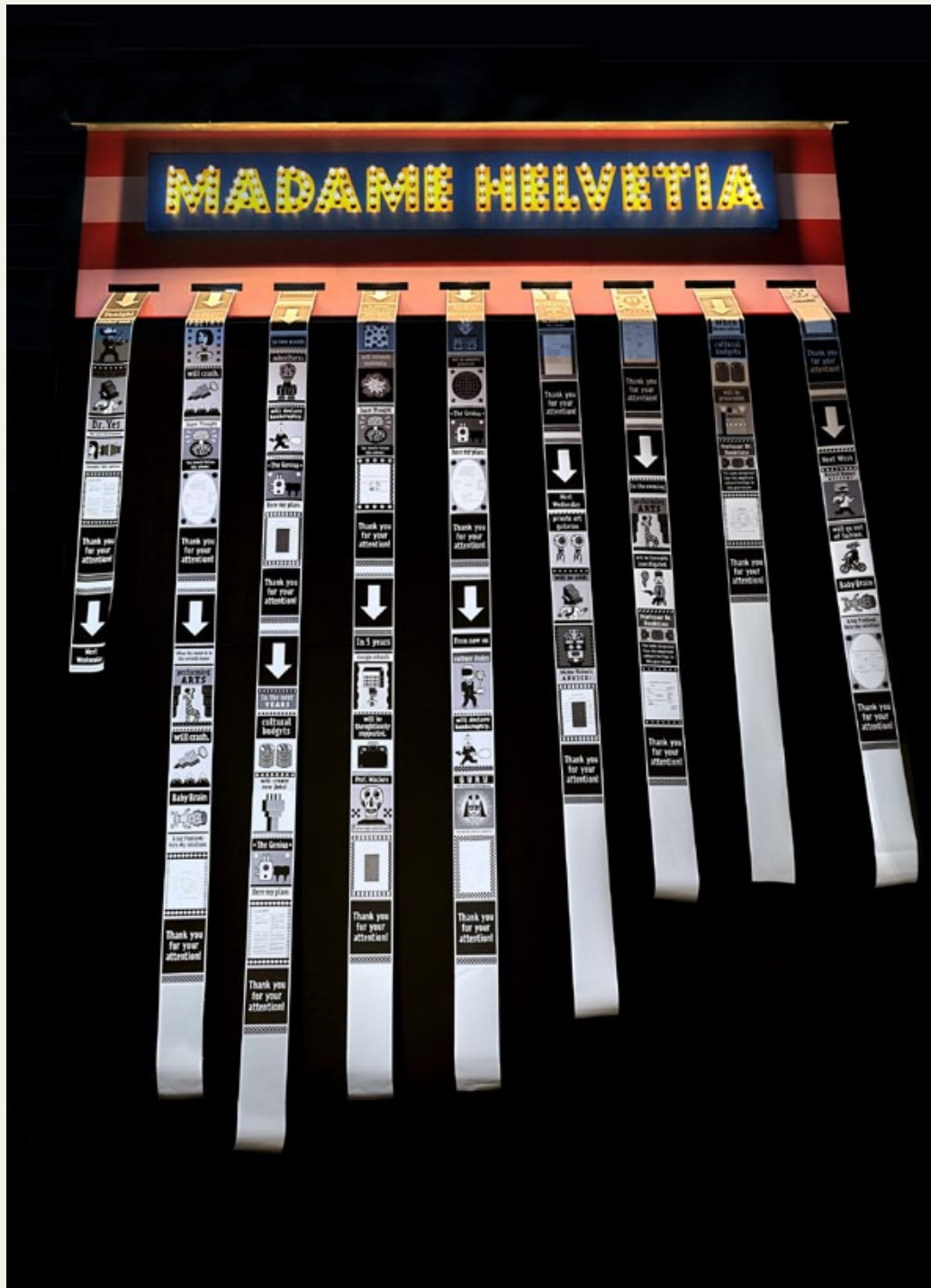
and susceptibility to external influences. “Made in...,” “Modernity Between Discourse and Practice” and “Desire for Modernity” also highlight the role of the Western ideal of consumerism, which assimilates the “other” to mere passive consumers, implementing social paradoxes, after which, first faith is betrayed in humanistic ideals, denying other people the enjoyment of human rights and rejecting its borders—“Gluttonous Modernity”—and then feeds a remarkable flow of tourists whose goal to consume is linked to the idea of the exotic—“Chic and Cheap Shop.”

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IMG. 8.35 — “Helvetia Park,” MEN Musée d’Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2009–2010. View of “Madame Helvetia.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.

“Helvetia Park”

MEN Musée d’Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
(5th September 2009–16th May 2010)

In 1795 General Charles Daniel de Meuron gives his Cabinet of Natural History to the city of Neuchâtel: this will be the origin of the future museum collection. Throughout its history, the ethnographic collection is enlarged, divided and changes location several times.

15 May 1902: James Ferdinand de Pury, recognised as the most important historical benefactor of the city, offered his villa (architect Léo Châtelain) on the hill of Saint-Nicolas to house the “Ethnographic Museum.”

14 July 1904: the Museum of Ethnography of Neuchâtel is inaugurated.

Between 1954 and 1955 a building for temporary exhibitions was constructed and in 1986, a new building was inserted between this one and the villa, as an extension of the Institute of Ethnology of the University.

→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The exhibition is made by MEN in collaboration with the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia under the programme “Ménage-Culture and Politics at the table” and is defined as “a playful promenade that addresses the points of contact and friction between different ways of thinking about culture in Switzerland today.”

Helvetia Park draws an unexpected portrait of contemporary Switzerland that addresses, with irony and active public participation, including hot and politically incorrect topics. Although focused on culture, the exhibition reconstructs without reservation the close relations that exist between it and political and economic power. In this sense Helvetia Park becomes a place of awareness with the aim of knowing ourselves, going beyond common and consolidated images and subverting cliché. Helvetia Park becomes a portrait of a society, with its chiaroscuro effects

and makes visitors feel like “others” in their own land, forcing them, with the spontaneity of the game—the metaphor of choice for the staging of the narrative—to be creators of destabilizing discoveries themselves.

Adopting irreverent environments (eleven-booth fun fair, independent of each other) and the interaction between the typical actions of each playful attraction and revelations of the concept of culture thus derived, Helvetia Park reveals an original and creative use of immersive technologies, especially of a mechanical nature rather than through the use of electronics.

The field of investigation is the concept of culture according to contemporary Swiss life and therefore the aim of the exhibition presents a local national profile: the development of the idea of national culture seems to be a very interesting premise for the subsequent enlargement of the comparison with “other” cultures.

It is a narrative that to the inclusion of the expression of “other” cultures and minorities prefers a more intense awareness of the mechanisms themselves, often conflicting, of conforming and diffusion of culture in its different ways of being conceived according to points of contact, friction and power games. Helvetia Park is an interactive walk that allows the visitor to compare the variety of forms of mental constructs and cultural beliefs surrounding it which leads to a better understanding of the mechanisms. A different representation of the national identity is thus created according to the mechanisms of critical inquiry that profoundly re-evaluate and negotiate the most common stereotypes: as extremely interesting as any other experimental system for investigation of the theme of identity.

The eleven metaphors hidden in the review of the main fun fair diversions reveal important

IMG. 8.36 — “Culture Crash.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.37 — “Telldorado.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.38 — “Freak.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



perspectives and non-obvious relationships between culture and society. In Culture Crash you discover the permeability of the cultural fields and their continuous slippage between art, folklore and ethnography.

The Shooting Gallery describes the strategies of social distinction typical of any cultural investment, while at the Carousel, rituals are evoked that claim on a regular basis the values and principles of human societies seen as ritual practices recurrent and updated over time. Each topic is brought to the attention of the public by focusing on the action implied by participation in the act of play and this formula allows the tackling of even the most complex topics such as the principle of public funding which ensures the existence and independence of economic institutions and that in the exhibition is represented

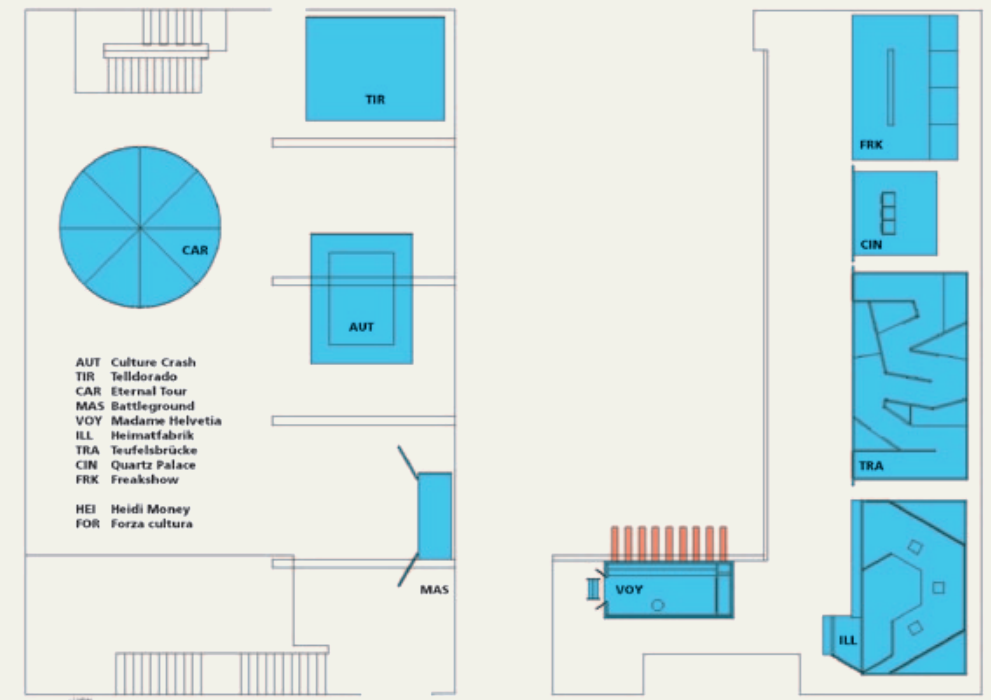
by a machine dispenses coins which operate all the games. In addition, prophecies reveal landscapes that reflect off mirrors to reveal the artificial freaks of nature that undermine the boundaries between normality and monstrosity.

Marco Borsotti

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IMG. 8.39 — Plan of the exhibition “Helvetia Park.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.40 — “Destination X,”
Världskulturmuseet, Gothenburg, Sweden,
2010–2012. “Pillar Hall.” Courtesy of
Världskulturmuseet–Museum of World Culture.

“Destination X”

Världskulturmuseet, Gothenburg, Sweden
(29th April 2010–20 December 2012)

“The museum interprets the concept of world culture in a dynamic and open-ended manner. On the one hand, various cultures are incorporating impulses from each other and becoming more alike. On the other hand, local, national, ethnic and gender differences are shaping much of that process. World culture is not only about communication, reciprocity, and interdependence, but the specificity, concretion and uniqueness of each and every individual.” (From the background information on the museum’s website homepage.)

Financed by the Swedish Government, the Museum of World Culture is under the auspices of the Swedish government agency Världskulturmuseerna (National Museums of World Culture), based in Gothenburg, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture in Sweden. This agency aims to adapt the collections of historical and ethnographic museums to the globalisation process, as well as to investigate intercontinental migration and multicultural societies. The Världskulturmuseerna network is composed by the Ethnography Museum, the Museum of Far-Eastern Antiquities, the Museum of Mediterranean and Near-Eastern Antiquities and the Museum of World Culture. Together they host about 400,000 objects from all over the world, including China, Korea, Japan and South-East Asia in Archaeological, Ethnographic and Art Historical collections. The mission of the Världskulturmuseerna is to spread and sustain the world’s cultures, particularly indigenous cultures from outside of Sweden. The institution produces documentation to highlight the different expressions of culture and the human condition and promotes cultural events and exchanges, both in historical and contemporary thematic areas.

The Museum of World Culture provides a public platform for the ethnographic collec-

tions of Sweden. It also serves as a forum for international and local events, incorporating an auditorium, a research centre, a library, seminar rooms and administrative offices, as well as a restaurant. As stated by Cécile Brisac and Edgar González (Brisac González Architects), winners of the international competition to design the new museum, in 1999, “the design strategy revolved around creating a clearly marked difference between a solid west wing, containing the gallery spaces and offices along the street, and an open east wing towards the hill, where public activities take place. Between the solid west and the open east is a canyon-like zone containing the building services, with public circulation weaving its way through the three areas.” (Brisac and González 2004) Their building incorporates collections from the former Ethnographic Museum of Gothenburg and provides 10,500 square metres of space. The museum does not have any permanent exhibitions.

The Världskulturmuseet was opened on 29th December 2004, but its history began nearly sixty years before. In 1946, the Ethnographic Museum of Göteborg became an independent division of the 85-year-old Göteborg Museum. In 1992, as a result of reorganisation by the Göteborg Museum Board, the Archaeological, Historical and Industrial Museums merged into the City Museum of Göteborg, so the Ethnographic Museum moved from the East India Building to the building vacated by the Industrial Museum. On 1st January 1999, a new national agency, the National Museums of World Culture, was formed, establishing a new political direction for Sweden’s ethnographic museums. The Swedish Parliament voted in 1997 to place the Ethnographic Museum of Göteborg under the auspices of this agency, and that a building should be constructed to house the museum.

IMG. 8.41 — “Homo mobilis” thematic area. Courtesy of Världskulturmuseet—Museum of World Culture.



IMG. 8.42 — Exhibition entry. Courtesy of Världskulturmuseet—Museum of World Culture.



IMG. 8.43 — “Travel recollections” thematic area. Courtesy of Världskulturmuseet—Museum of World Culture.



IMG. 8.44 — “Pillar hall” thematic area, detail. Courtesy of Världskulturmuseet—Museum of World Culture.

The Göteborg City Council ceded a plot of land near the Universeum Science Centre, the Liseberg amusement park and the Swedish Exhibition Centre. In the autumn of 2000 the Ethnographic Museum of Göteborg closed and moved its collection to a new storehouse.

“The Museum of World Culture is rooted in and committed to the values of cultural pluralism and cultural democracy. Through exhibitions and programs it celebrates the potential enrichment and dynamics of cultural diversity in an increasingly interdependent world, but explores also the urgent and challenging conflicts and dilemmas of uneven distribution of wealth and welfare, of migration, of diasporas. The museum will be a place for dialogue, where multiple voices can be heard and controversial topics raised—an arena for people to feel at home across borders.” (From the opening press room booklet).

→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

“Destination X. About travelling from different perspective.” The main theme of the exhibition is travel and in this sense might seem a typical approach, almost obligatory when dealing with the issue of migrations, which are, by definition, acts of human movement from one land to another. Destination X reveals an original approach to the topic, however, by investigating different perspectives from which to look at the individual who travels, and, in so doing, reveals unexpected parallels and contrasts, highlighting the destabilising juxtaposition of contrast and nearness. The result is a new attitude of critical awareness on the part of the visitor.

Destination X reminds us that we all have been, and still are, travellers: “It is an exhibition about being on the road, on the road or on the run—about tourists, immigrants, adventurers, pilgrims, explorers, refugees, travellers and nomads” (from the exhibition booklet). It also reminds us, however, that in the different conditions of our travel—voluntary or forced—we can find clues of common identity that immediately become profound differences, linked

to existing systems of social, political and economic (im)balance. The “X” is not simply an unknown destination, it is a symbol for the unknown related to the social conditions of the traveller, because travel itself is a representation of the human condition and, above all, the influences that individuals are subject to.

The journey as a choral narration offers the opportunity therefore to draw a portrait of choral humanity on the move, but with deeply different modes and consciousnesses. Tourist and migrant routes (legality vs. illegality) thus reveal disturbing underground parallels, with a common denominator that “exposes” the intrinsic essence of travel as “goods offered for sale,” according to the rules of a consumerism which is not only economic, but also, unfortunately, social.

“The UN declaration of Human Rights on the right to movement will set our direction for journeying through the exhibition. Human movement is a human right according to UN declarations nos. 13 and 14. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement. However, the conditions of human mobility differ considerably; it is a matter of choice for some, an imperative for others. The urge to be mobile and to travel is often associated with the desire for openness and freedom, and mobility is often portrayed as an indispensable part of a cosmopolitan cultural capital. Other forms of mobility are, on the contrary, seen as a security problem, as something in need of restriction and control, and often forbidden and hindered.” (From the synopsis of the exhibition). Although not immediately obvious, travelling is, in fact, a condition where the same mobility systems may be positive, sophisticated and expensive, but also prohibited, illegal and subject to strict legal limits, in a sort of short-circuit logic which can be explained only by referring to the overlap of the economic interests of exploitation. A tale of mass and individual at the same time, Destination X combines smiles with tears, defining situations which are often both not univocal and mutual, through extensive use of the tools of artistic representation (cinema, photography, installation, setting and collections of personal items).

The main means of communication of the exhibition is paradox, established by combining apparently unrelated realities and the revelation of an unexpected proximity, to show hitherto separate forms of mobility as interdependent and related. The form of the exhibition has been designed by the Swedish artist, Agneta Andrén, and is based on the aesthetics of comics—speech bubbles are used for general information.

The key themes of the exhibition are:

→ the issue of mobility—a continuous search for lands in which to settle, renewed today along two main axes; the first, entertainment, refers to the economy of leisure and work (and subject to the laws of supply and demand of the market economy) and intersects the routes of survival, and thus the second axis of exploitation and illegality. The idea of *homo mobilis* is, therefore, a common identity (data for these modes of mobility are all on the rise), where different historical moments tell similar stories (the present-day migration from Africa to Europe is reminiscent of the great migrations from Europe to North and South America in the last century). This is an introductory section where extensive use is made of photographic images and video in order to approach different modes of human movement, comparing the past with the present.

→ the concept of travel—“Dreams of other places, or real illusions, magic lands, wishes to escape (...) pack your bags and get away. What are you searching for?” (From the synopsis of the exhibition). This section actively engages visitors by asking questions about their personal experience of travel, and these testimonies become part of the material on display, painting a portrait of planetary travel—compared with the unusual and provocative “Top Ten” lists of the world’s most popular destinations for tourism and migration.

→ the social and political meaning of the journey—this theme is inspired by the UN declarations of Human Rights on the right to movement and the right to nationality, in order to focus on the political and social structures that have created the need and desire to move, and the structures which restrain or facilitate that

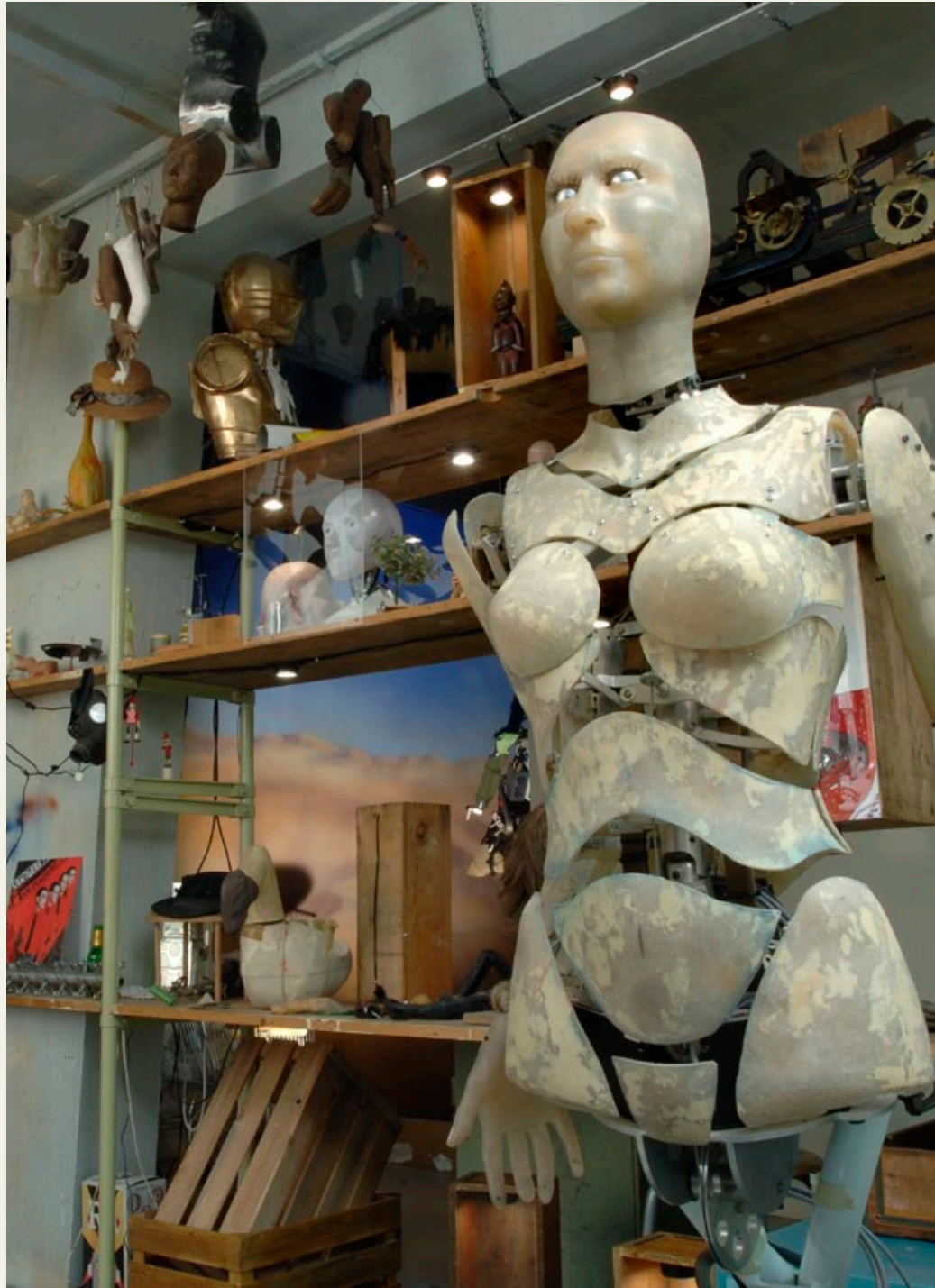
movement. Here, above all, the metaphor of the journey reveals the true nature of broad-spectrum instruments of social analysis, introducing themes such as identity, gender, inclusion/exclusion, transformations and borders. This section is set in the so-called “Pillar Hall” where large aluminium cylinders contain objects from the museum collections, as well as photographs and video, which attempt to visualise some of the many complex and interrelated issues and aspects of human movements.

Here, several stories are presented which focus on issues closely related to the system of human displacement, but which are rarely analysed in terms of their close relationship. The environmental effects of human movements recalls the importance of the role of environmental degradation and climate change in both forced and voluntary migration; the travel paradoxes compares different aspects of the “journey” in artistic forms and documentary collected together in a large storyboard, representing an overall picture where separate forms of mobility reveal their related and interdependent nature; the memories of the trip transforms the ordinary objects of our daily lives, souvenirs purchased to fix the image of a memory in a real collection of attitudes, reminding us that a large number of museums (especially science and anthropological) were created thanks to the collections of a large and diverse group of travellers; we are shown how this attitude to collection is both constant over time, and yet, in its diversity of choice, depicts a continually changing perception of the world, and the “other.”

Marco Borsotti

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IMG. 8.45 — “Figures de l’artifice,” MEN Musée d’Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2006–2007. View of “The Atelier of Robots.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.

“Figures de l’Artifice”

**MEN Musée d’Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
(11th November 2006–11th November 2007)**

In 1795 General Charles Daniel de Meuron gives his Cabinet of Natural History to the city of Neuchâtel; this will be the origin of the future museum collection. Throughout its history, the ethnographic collection is enlarged, divided and changes location several times.

15 May 1902: James Ferdinand de Pury, recognised as the most important historical benefactor of the city, offers his villa (architect Léo Châtelain) on the hill of Saint-Nicolas to house the “Ethnographic Museum.”

14 July 1904: The Museum of Ethnography of Neuchâtel is inaugurated.

Between 1954 and 1955 a building for temporary exhibitions is constructed and in 1986, a new building is inserted between this and the villa, as an extension of the Institute of Ethnology of the University.

→ CRITICAL ANALYSIS

“Figures de l’artifice” is an exhibition focused on the relationship between advanced technology and the human body, analysed to include social practices, scientific research and popular myths, in a temporal path which, although welded to the contemporary, runs through the centuries, revealing a human impulse, continuous and widespread, to question the very essence of corporeality—in its dimension of machine flawed, but ambitious, that looks to death and eternity. An exploratory path is able, in this way, to trace the threads of belief, certainty and practices which represent recurring elements in different geographical and ethnic areas and reveal completely unexpected identity systems.

An extreme narrative mode that reconstructs scenarios of the contemporary and exposes them as being evolved and technologically advanced versions of ancestral questions, sophisticated

replies of perceptions belonging and common to many human communities. This is research which also reflects on the possible future consequences of these thoughts and actions that aim to move the very borders of being “human.”

In the conceptual structure of the exhibition, there is a clear comparison between the western world which is born out of the classical myths and transforms them into the ideology of the plastic-coated, perfect body, fruit also of, as yet unknown, genetic manipulation. This stands in opposition to the model which still looks to the ability to modify the body through spirituality, magic and transcendence. The perspective also recognises a dense and overlapping network of attitudes and behaviours. The exhibition is organised into environmental reconstructions involving the insertion of unexpected elements into evocative configurations of apparently normal situations, with the aim of activating multiple and overlapping levels of awareness of issues which are conceptually related. In this way several co-present and often complementary levels of interpretation of the exhibition are revealed—the different variations of approach, conceptual and practical, that man implements with dualistic man/man, man/god, man/animal and human/machine, but also parallel reflections which, using the highly theatrical language of the set up, address the issue of the role, tasks and tools of the contemporary museum institution.

The narrative of the exhibition is developed around the mythical figure of Daedalus, who personifies the different souls of the man who tests himself by trying to subvert the limits of his physicality, according to four main approaches: the aesthetic, which is realised in the pursuit of modification of the body; the demiurge, who tries to infuse life into objects (the ideological premise of genetic modification); the conservative wonders, about the possibility of repair of

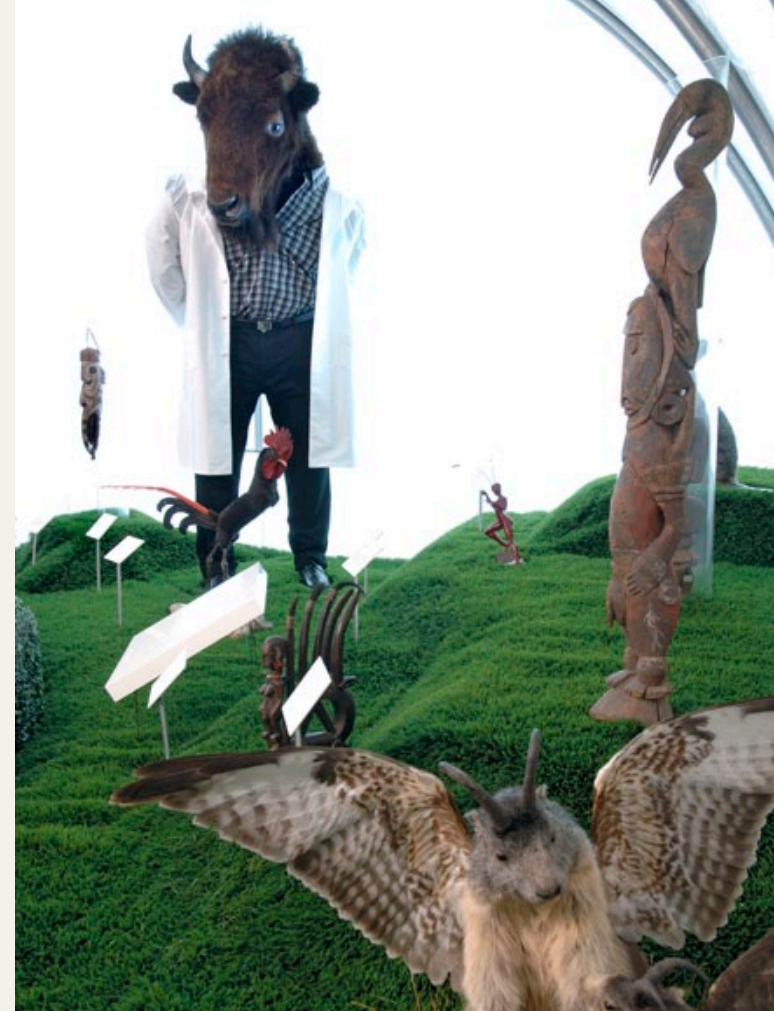
IMG. 8.46 — “The Operating Room” thematic area. Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.47 — “The Atelier of Robots,” detail. Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.48 — “The Garden Laboratory.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.49 — “The Labyrinth.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.50 — “The reinforcement gallery.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



IMG. 8.51 — “The leather dress.” Courtesy of Musée d’Ethnographie de Neuchâtel.



and increase in the performance of the corporeal machine and, finally, the transcendental who follows the evolution of physicality to formlessness, available today through the computer network. The sections are:

→ The Operating Room, which looks to Daedalus as a precursor of the mythical ideal measure of the beauty that now becomes surgery, but “also criticizes the choice of some museums to eliminate, with almost surgical devices, weak little value materials such as those associated with costumes and masks, to maintain a ‘genuine’ sterilized view of these artifacts, placing, thus, the emphasis on their clean lines.” (Gonseth 2006, 11)

→ The Atelier of Robots, thinking to Daedalus as the constructor of the famous wings, introduces the theme of the attempt by humans to become creators of life themselves, expanding the capabilities of the objects designed to provide them with their own soul, moving between the myths that draw heritage from different cultures and technological research that represents the will of advanced experimentation, while the research on the role of the museum offers a “reflection on the relationship between exhibition and reality.” (ibid., 17)

→ The Garden Laboratory reminds us of the Minotaur, a symbol of the intersection between man and animal, which is a topic of partnership which enhances man, but also of the disaster that produces monsters. As always, the narrative is highly stratified and moves from the commonality and similarity of myths and traditions from very different cultural backgrounds to geographical criticism of genetic modification. As in the previous sections, the reading level, linked to the aim of the museum’s mission, remains, where the “set up reminds us that the museum can also be given the right to create a reflective or aesthetic shock, mixing genres, periods and styles, rather than storing them in drawers, wisely separated.” (ibid., 25)

→ The Labyrinth, referring to the prison of the Minotaur, introduces visitors to the essence of the path of initiation that every human being undertakes in relation to their own fears and hopes. “The staging, here very simple, offers a

reflection on the relationship between museology and object.” (ibid., 31)

→ The Reinforcement Gallery, offers a reflection on the practices that are meant to enhance the body and the mind beyond the limits of human possibilities, and that, in doing so, disrupt the idea of normality that belongs to every human, as a member of the human species—from human to post-human.

→ Second Life introduces the topic of alternative worlds made possible by information technology, virtual spaces that often outweigh the true ones, offering man a chance to live alternative models of experience and memory transferred onto the picture of their avatars, a modern form of estrangement reminiscent of the ancestral practices of shamanism.

→ The leather dress is the “open” finale to the narrative: is the body to become a secondary accessory, perhaps even a useless one? Does the future lie in the dominance of the mind? Is it to be preserved as a pure “download” of information in an ethereal network address? But as the story of Daedalus ends with the death of Minos and the disposal of the body, imperfect and decadent machine that it is, does this mean the loss of the human being, his essence becoming a pure infinite duplication of data? To then lead to the dispersion of each identity?

“The heart of this exhibition lies in questioning openly the meaning of our journey and our choices in a context where the present instant and sight navigation take the place of a mental horizon and orientation mode.” (ibid., 3)

Marco Borsotti

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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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EUROPEAN MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK (VOL 3)

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EUROPEAN MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK

This book grew out of the earliest work of the MeLa Research Field 6, "Envisioning 21st Century Museums," aimed at exploring current trends in European contemporary museums. Analysing their ongoing evolution triggered by this "age of migrations" and with specific attention to their architecture and exhibition design, the volume collects the preliminary observations ensuing from this survey, complemented by the some paradigmatic examples, and further enriched by interviews and contributions from scholars, curators and museum practitioners.

With contributions by Florence Bal en, Michela Bassanelli, Luca Basso Peressut, Joachim Baur, Lorraine Bluche, Marco Borsozzi, Mariella Brenna, Anna Chiara Cimoli, Lars De Jaegher, Maria Camilla De Palma, Hugues De Varine, Maria De Waele, N lia Dias, Simone Eick, Fabienne Galangau Qu rat, Sarah Gamaire, Jan Gerchow, Marc-Olivier Gonset, Klas Grinell, Laurence Isnard, Marie-Paule Jungblut, Galitt Kenan, Francesca Lanz, Jos  Maria Lanzarote Guival, Vito Lattanzi, Jack Lohman, Carolina Martinelli, Frauke Miera, Elena Montanari, Chantal Mouffe, Judith Pargamin, Giovanni Pinna, Camilla Pagani, Clelia Pozzi, Paolo Rosa, Anna Seiderer.

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VOL. 3, COVER IMAGE — Ruhr Museum, section "Industrial work."   Ruhr Museum, photo by Brigida Gonz lez.

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