

MUSEUMS IN AN AGE OF MIGRATIONS

Questions, Challenges, Perspectives

edited by
Luca Basso Peressut and Clelia Pozzi



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

Museums in an Age of Migrations

MELA*Books

Museums in an Age of Migrations

Questions, Challenges, Perspectives

edited by Luca Basso Peressut and Clelia Pozzi

MELA BOOKS 01 – RF06 ENVISIONING 21ST CENTURY MUSEUMS

Published by Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura

© March 2012, The Authors



This work is provided on line as open access document under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported. The work is protected by copyright and/or other applicable law. Any use of the work other than as authorized under this license or copyright law is prohibited. For additional information <http://creativecommons.org/>.

ISBN 978-88-95194-32-5



POLITECNICO
DI MILANO

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



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

MELA CONSORTIUM

Politecnico di Milano (Coordinator), Italy – Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche ITIA, Italy – University of Glasgow, United Kingdom – Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain – Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France – The Royal College of Art, United Kingdom – Newcastle University, United Kingdom – Università degli Studi di Napoli "L' Orientale," Italy.
www.mela-project.eu

ENGLISH EDITING

David T. Turturo, Julia Weeks

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Zetalab — Milano

LEGAL NOTICE The views expressed here are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Table of contents

7	Acknowledgements
10	Introduction
17	Questions
19	Envisioning 21st Century Museums for Transnational Societies <i>Luca Basso Peressut</i>
55	The MeLa Project: Research Questions, Objectives and Tools <i>Francesca Lanz, Gennaro Postiglione</i>
65	Challenges
67	National Museums Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future <i>Peter Aronsson</i>
77	Museums, the Sociological Imagination and the Imaginary Museum <i>Gordon J. Fyfe</i>
107	Materialization and Dematerialization, Migration and Emulation, Museum and Library <i>Sreten Ugričić</i>
121	Sustainability in Contemporary Museums <i>Massimo Negri</i>
131	European Museums as Agents of Inclusion <i>Giovanni Pinna</i>
139	Perspectives
141	Cultural Memories, Museum Spaces and Archiving <i>Iain Chambers</i>
153	Museums, Peoples, Places: European Museums and Identity in History <i>Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason</i>

161	What Kind of Technology is the Museum? <i>Jamie Allen, David Gauthier, Kirsti Reitan Andersen</i>
173	Bridging European Communities: Investigating Networks and Collaboration Models for Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions <i>Perla Innocenti</i>
187	Reinventing the Museum to Mankind <i>Michel Van Praët</i>
193	Process Versus Product: New Paths for Archiving in the Field of Contemporary Artistic Practices <i>Mela Dávila Freire</i>
203	Curatorial Methodology and Exhibition Practice <i>Mark Nash</i>
209	Selected Bibliography
221	MeLa Consortium
229	Illustration Credits

Acknowledgments

This book grew out of the Kick Off Meeting that launched the research project *MeLa—European Museums in an age of migrations*, funded by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities programme (Seventh Framework Programme). The Kick off Meeting—organized by the MeLa research group of Politecnico di Milano—was conceived as an International Conference entitled “Re-interpreting Europe’s Cultural Heritage: Towards the 21st Century Library and Museum?” The event was held at the Musei Capitolini in Rome on March 9th 2011, and it was open to the academic and research community, as well as to experts and practitioners from the museums and libraries communities. In addition to the representatives of the nine European partners involved in the MeLa project, a number of keynote speakers were invited to attend the meeting, participate in the discussion and submit papers to be published here.

The conference would not have been possible without the help of the institutions that supported and hosted the event and their representatives. Therefore, special thanks go to Claudio Parisi Presicce and Marina Mattei, respectively Director and Archaeological Curator at the Musei Capitolini in Rome, Romolo Martemucci at the Pennsylvania State University-Sede di Roma and President of the Accademia Adrianea di Architettura e Archeologia, and Margherita Guccione and Pippo Ciorra, respectively Director and Senior Curator at the MAXXI-Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo. Special thanks also to Wolfgang Bode, former MeLa EU Project Officer, who attended the three days meeting, and to Imma Forino for her editorial advice.





Introduction

** “Mela” is a Sanskrit word meaning “gathering” or “to meet.” Today it is used for intercultural assemblies, intended as opportunities for community building that can perform a strong socially cohesive function.*

This volume collects a series of essays that offer a starting point for the European research project *MeLa-European Museums in an age of migrations*, funded under the 7th Framework Programme.

MeLa is an interdisciplinary four-year project led by Politecnico di Milano that reflects on the role of museums and heritage in the forthcoming years. At the core of MeLa’s investigation lies the notion of “age of migrations” as a paradigm of the contemporary globalized and multicultural world. Migration is here adopted as a key term for thinking through planetary processes that reveal the refashioning of the cultural and political spheres under the impact of the accelerated mobility and nomadism of people, goods, ideas and knowledge. This condition certainly affects the communities we live in: it leads up to the formation of pluralistic civic environments, characterized by fast-changing needs, multiethnicity, multiculturality, different individual and collective memories, and plural identities and citizenships. It’s a critical transformation in the composition of society, one that affects the definition of geographical borders as we traditionally know them.

In order to respond to the complex cultural needs of such nomad and global society, museums clearly need to rethink their role, mission, exhibition and communication strategies—the same applies to other cultural institutions devoted to the conservation and transmission of knowledge, like libraries and archives. In this regard, debates have been raised about the importance of considering multivocal, multicultural and transnational perspectives to actually transform museums into institutions for the representation and construction of inclusive scenarios of pluralistic societies. In fact, as economy, society and culture become globalized, the issues of representation and inclusion become all the more crucial. Ethnic, religious, political minorities, marginalized groups, immigrants,

PREVIOUS PAGE — Giovanni Battista Piranesi, “Veduta del Romano Campidoglio con Scalinata che va alla Chiesa d’Araceli.” From *Vedute di Roma disegnate ed incise da Giambattista Piranesi architetto veneziano. Rome 1748-1778*. Private collection.

local communities—all these actors of our society claim representation in museums, for they perceive the museum as a powerful agent of memory representation and identity construction. One could claim that the museum is understood as the ultimate acknowledgement of everyone's right to "be in the world" and be recognized as a visible part of it.

The redefinition of the museum's role in contemporaneity, then, becomes a key component of the political agenda, because the museum makes us come to terms with the tensions between local and global, the dualism of "selfness" and "otherness," and issues of inclusion and exclusion. It is here that the complexity of our multicultural society acquires a visible form through the museum representation. This is especially true of those museums that focus on themes born out of our postmodern and postcolonial age, when great national narratives have given way to a multiplicity of stories, voices, and narratives. Yet as the consequences of migrations and globalization are so pervasive of all aspects of our life, the whole museum world seems to be called into question, involving different types of museums: history museums; ethnographical, archaeological, identitarian museums; art, science, local, and city museums, etc.

This is the breeding ground out of which the MeLa project develops to understand the extent and modalities of the museum's involvement in the construction of democratic and inclusive forms of European citizenship. To succeed in its aim, MeLa will bring together theoretical, methodological and operative contributions that overturn the long-established idea of the museum as a place for the consolidation and transmission of the identity of a dominant social group. This strategy emphasizes the key concepts of *multiplicity*—of voices, points of view, theories—and *hybridity*—of forms, identities, physical expressions—which operate in contemporary culture. Within the proposed multiple and hybrid frame of reference, however, the line between the differences that are accepted and welcomed, and those that merely stay "other," is not always clear-cut, and not everyone agrees on where this line lies. Hence MeLa's efforts are directed toward envisioning solutions and scenarios that could actually enable the construction of cultural integration and inclusion within the museum. It's a holistic endeavour that affects missions, curatorial practices, exhibition layouts, architectural spaces, networks with other cultural institutions, and use of information and communication technologies all at once.

Along this trajectory, MeLa will deal with issues of history, memory, identity and citizenship, and their effects on the organization, functioning, communication strategies, exhibition settings and architecture of museums. The contributions brought together in this volume engage these questions from different perspectives, and offer a panoramic view on some of the most recent debates and concerns of the museum field.

In the first section of the book—“Questions”—Luca Basso Peressut outlines the general frame of the MeLa project, focusing his attention on the complex phenomenology of contemporary museums (representations, exhibitions, architectures), and their relations with places, territories and communities. National, regional and local museums, public and private museums alike, are examined against the evolving notion of heritage to understand how they tackle the social and physical transformations of our territories and metropolitan areas. In the face of the current trend toward diversification of audience expectations and interpretations, between global and local identities, the need for a review of the roles and missions of museums is then put forward that reckons current political and cultural dynamics, but also historical values and consolidated experiences. Ultimately, for Basso Peressut “The challenge that museums face in this new millennium lies in the capacity to perform a transformational balance between the sensitivity of traditions and the necessary thrust of innovation.”

In describing the structure of MeLa and its Consortium, Gennaro Postiglione and Francesca Lanz highlight the importance of its interdisciplinary approach to deal with the future perspectives of cultural institutions in a global and multicultural world. Crucial questions stem from their discourse: how do museums face the challenge of representing multiple cultures in contemporary society? How can museums engage their users in dialogic and participative narratives? How can museums play the role of mediators in cultural exchanges? Beyond discussing such theoretical and methodological issues, these first two essays also outline some of the key questions and actions pertaining to the MeLa research fields.

In the second section of the book—“Challenges”—scholars and researchers with different expertise give their perspective on the issues debated by MeLa.

Peter Aronsson compares the experience of EuNaMus—an ongoing research on European national museums—to the broader museum scenario that MeLa focuses on. In Aronsson's account implicit and explicit narratives, and conflicts and goals of cultural policies must balance both the traditional nation-based European identity and the complex perspectives opened by today's multicultural Europe. As he states in the conclusion of his essay, "MeLa reaches out to heritage institutions and a wide range of stakeholders and communication strategies, while EuNaMus focuses on the power of institutional trajectories and adopts comprehensive comparative perspectives on a more narrowly defined institution that we call 'national museum.' In combination, this might prove to make a difference in the making of cultural policy in Europe."

A sociological approach to museum studies is contributed by Gordon J. Fyfe. Proceeding from the concepts of "sociology of museums" and "museum sociology," he analyzes their development in Europe and the United States along the twentieth century, to then elaborate theoretical speculations and questions for the contemporary debate on museums and globalization. A large part of his essay is dedicated to the British Sociological Society and its commitments in museums missions, as well as to the Keele University archive that contains numerous reports related to the Society's interests. His conclusive claim confirms the "museum's potential as a fluid and fertile social space."

Sreten Ugrčić discusses the issue of migration in terms of technology and socio-cultural movements. Centering his discourse on cultural polarities like materialization/dematerialization, migration/emulation, and differentiation/complementarity, Ugrčić reflects on museums and libraries to acknowledge their inherent differences, complementary natures and purposes, and the conditions of their collaboration. Stressing the importance of Information and Communication Technologies and digitalization, he emphasizes an understanding of memory as production, and the role of cultural heritage as "work in progress." In this sense museums and libraries can co-operate "only if they build and produce on the immanent difference and complementarity."

The question of "sustainability" of contemporary museum trends is advanced by Massimo Negri, and analyzed with reference to the ongoing phenomena of proliferation of museums, multiplication of museum typologies, merging of different museum institutions, and contradiction

between energy saving needs and sophisticated yet energy consuming conservation equipment. Negri sees museum as institutions “under stress” that face an increasing lack of resources, thus making apparent the need for new models of organization and functioning. Maybe, as Negri provocatively says, we should focus on the keyword *less*: “less museums, less investments, less technology, even less collections.”

Giovanni Pinna reflects on Mary Louise Pratt’s renown concept of contact zones, and on James Clifford’s assumption that this concept can be applied to museums as “agents of inclusion.” Pinna’s central reflection concerns the kind of museums that can rightfully be addressed as contact zones in Europe today. Such museums could be, for instance, the small local museums: they seem to assume a “genuine status of contact zones” by virtue of their being born “from the need for self-representation and self-interpretation of small communities, above all in non metropolitan areas,” and, paradoxically, for their being born “in contrast to other cultures and ethnicities.” As these reflections seem to be contradicted by the favour encountered today by major European museums like Louvre, Prado, etc., Pinna’s final remarks address a series of recent questionable choices made by the European Union in matters of museum policies.

In the third section of the book—“Perspectives”—the partners of MeLa Consortium collaborating with Politecnico di Milano describe concerns, methodology and goals of their specific contribution to the MeLa research fields on the future developments of European cultural institutions.

In light of a postcolonial critique that focuses on histories, cultures and social groups that have been marginalized or excluded, Iain Chambers investigates the museum and the library as sites of cultural powers and traditions. Reading the postcolonial museum as a heterotopic space to house negated pasts, he traces a critical structure for the folding and unfolding of contemporary museum and library practices. Museum rooms are never “empty,” never neutral—he claims: they are marked by difference and discrimination, they are politically imbued by the theories and practices of historiography and museology. For Chambers, only when the “logic of governing the past in order to discipline it and render it transparent to our will is subverted, there can emerge the perspective of the museum and the library as a complex, uncertain and fluid zone of contacts, frictions and contaminations.”

Christopher Whitehead and Rhiannon Mason stress the importance of “place” in museums as a conceptual, epistemological and representational framework. For them, “museums inevitably articulate relations between people, cultures and places, be this through archaeological origin stories accounting for settlement patterns in relation to the morphology of places, through the journeys made by curators to map and collect parts of the world at home or abroad, or through the explicit institutional and political desire to present place (nation, region, city, colony, etc.) to audiences both local and non-local.” Addressing the place-people(s)-culture relations, Whitehead and Mason thus comment on the ways that contemporary European museums manage to define places and their inhabitants through representational practices, while geo-political and social orders are changing per effect of EU legislation, migration and mobility.

Jamie Allen, David Gauthier and Kirsti Andersen focus their research on interaction design and read people’s relationships with technology as both a framework for negotiating and a means for expressing identities. With regards to museums, the questions advanced by the authors discuss the benefits of understanding networked and social media technologies as Foucaultian “technologies of the self.”

Perla Innocenti explains the ways Glasgow University’s research group intends to investigate innovative coordination strategies between European museums, libraries and public cultural institutions for the benefit of multicultural audiences and towards integration in a globalised world. For Innocenti a theoretical framework to define such collaborative models for the transnational and multicultural European society still needs to be developed. Nevertheless, partnership between museums and libraries are increasingly important to their future sustainability.

Michel van Praët of the Musée de l’Homme in Paris discusses the relationship between natural environment and human societies. He also describes how the museum—closed for renovation in March 2009—aims to integrate its researches with the Musée d’Histoire Naturelle project on human evolution, thus extending the original role of the museum to incorporate environmental issues. The “aim is to turn the museum space into an ‘agora,’” to discover, to discuss, to share knowledge, to answer questions.

Mela Dávila Freire, of the MACBA–Museum of Contemporary Art

in Barcelona, examines the research tasks of the MACBA Study Centre and the open role that documentary collections and documentation centers play with regard to contemporary artistic practices. For Mela Davila the Study Centre is placed “in the interstices which open between traditional museums and traditional libraries,” since its mission aims “to preserve and systematize (as in libraries) but also activate and disseminate (as in museums) collections which share, in their very physical materiality as well as in their relationships and resonances, conceptual and aesthetic features that are usually associated to library and museum materials, respectively.”

Finally, Mark Nash and Jamie Gilham of the Royal College of Art discuss the aims of their research in relation to existing curatorial works and exhibitions on issues of migration, borders, fluid identities, etc. The stated objectives include research on artists and curators working on migration and related issues, as well as an inquiry into the role of museums and galleries showing and disseminating knowledge of these issues. As Nash and Gilham state, “The concept of migration has many meanings, but it is worth mentioning that both art and artists have also been mobile.” Within the framework of MeLa, then, RCA will proceed to develop critical lessons, curatorial methodologies and exhibition practices that reflect the complexity of the issues at stake.

This volume is concluded by a selected bibliography of books on museum topics published in Europe and in the United States in the last two decades, which integrates the reference lists provided by the authors of the anthology. Most of the books listed here are related to the research issues investigated by MeLa, and represent a first step for the reader who wishes to further explore the different fields of the MeLa research.

LBP, CP

Questions

The MeLa Project

Research Questions, Objectives and Tools

→ FRANCESCA LANZ, GENNARO POSTIGLIONE

Francesca Lanz is Post-doc Research Fellow in the Department of Architectural Design of Politecnico di Milano and Assistant of the Project Coordinator for MeLa. She holds a PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design, and she is currently Temporary Professor in Interior Design at the School of Architecture and Society of Politecnico di Milano. Since 2006 she has collaborated to several research projects and teaching activities in the field of interior architecture.

Gennaro Postiglione is Technical Manager of the MeLa project and one of its authors. He is Associate Professor of Interior Architecture and board member of the PhD in Interior Architecture and Exhibition Design at Politecnico di Milano. He sits in the editorial board of the *AREA* journal and in the advisory board of the *Interiors* journal. His researches focus mainly on the preservation of collective memory and cultural identity. He also has a particular interest in Nordic architecture.

→ ABSTRACT

Contemporary museums are currently facing a process of deep transformation of their missions, strategies, and modes of representation. As their role and purpose are being rethought, their spaces, tools and communication approaches need to be reformulated too. The MeLa project is located in this context. It assumes that one of the main challenges for a museum today lies in dealing with the conditions posed by what the project defines as “an age of migrations.” The ongoing process of European unification, the growing phenomena of migration and mobility of people, goods, knowledge and ideas, the construction of a pluralistic civic community, and the consequent multiplicity of contemporary culture ask for a redefinition of the museums’ organization and representation strategies in a more pluralistic and shared sense. The four-year interdisciplinary research MeLa aims at envisioning one such development of contemporary European museums.

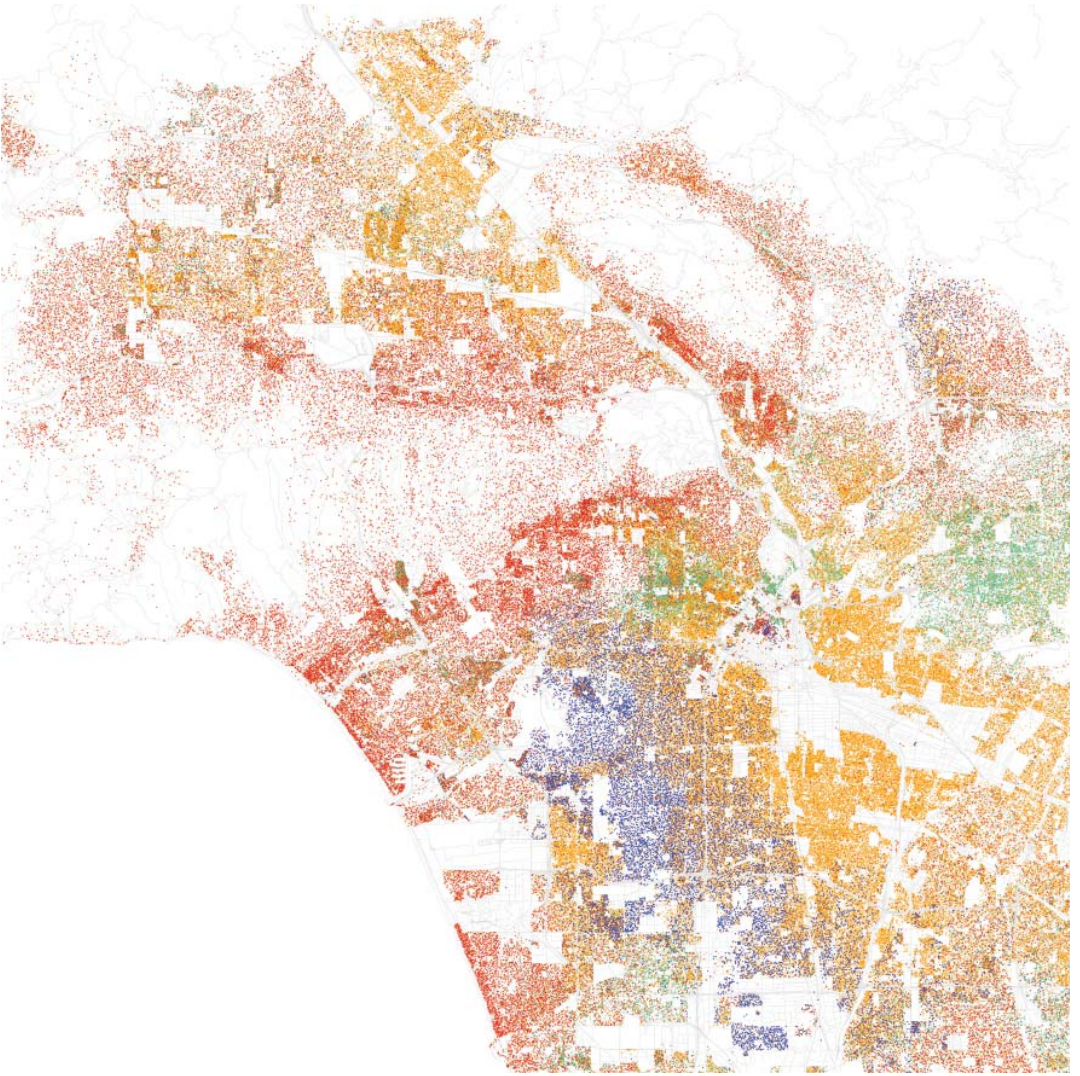
→ MUSEUMS IN “AN AGE OF MIGRATIONS:” RESEARCH RATIONALE

The project *MeLa-European Museums in an age of migrations* has been funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Programme under the Socio-Economic Science and Humanities in 2011, and answers to the European call “Reinterpreting Europe’s Cultural Heritage: Towards 21st century libraries and museums.” In particular it is one of the research themes foreseen by the “Activity 5 group,” whose program states:

In the context of the future development of the EU, the aim is to improve understanding of, first, the issues involved in achieving a sense of democratic “ownership” and active participation by citizens as well as effective and democratic governance at all levels including innovative governance processes to enhance citizens’ participation and the cooperation between public and private actors, and, second, Europe’s diversities and commonalities in terms of culture, religion, institutions, law, history, languages and values. The research will address:

- participation (including youth, minorities and gender aspects), representation, accountability and legitimacy; the European public sphere, media and democracy; various forms of governance in the EU including economic and legal governance and the role of the public and private sectors, policy processes and opportunities to shape policies; the role of civil society; citizenship and rights; the implications of enlargement; and related values of the population.
- European diversities and commonalities, including their historical origins and evolution; differences in institutions (including norms, practices, laws); cultural heritage; various visions and perspectives for European integration and enlargement including the views of the populations; identities including European identity; approaches to multiple coexisting cultures; the role of language, the arts and religions; attitudes and values. (European Commission 2009)

MeLa moves from the conviction that the called-for reinterpretation of European cultural heritage in the twenty-first century is crucial for museums: it implies an in depth analysis of their role, modes of functioning and use in a globalized context that tends to be more and more characterized by a renewed communication of knowledge and by the continuous “migration” of people and ideas [Img. 01]. The cultural framework of MeLa is defined in the previous essay by Luca Basso Peressut, MeLa Project Coordinator. As he states, migration may be considered not only as a matter related to people, but as a complex condition of the contemporary society. The project thus assumes that one of the main challenges for a museum today lies in the need to deal with the conditions posed by what it defines as “an age of migrations.” It is widely recognized that contemporaneity is deeply influenced by an ever-growing mobility of people, objects, information and ideas—a fluid “circulation [which] is at the basis of the exchange of goods; of migrations; of the diffusion of idea, techniques, or values [...] a factor of change, of innovation, of freedom, of wealth [...] however, also [...] a factor of destabilization and



even of destruction” (Prevelakis 2008, 16). It’s a factor that is affecting all the aspects of human life, including the very nature of “identity” and, consequently, its representation and narration in museums.

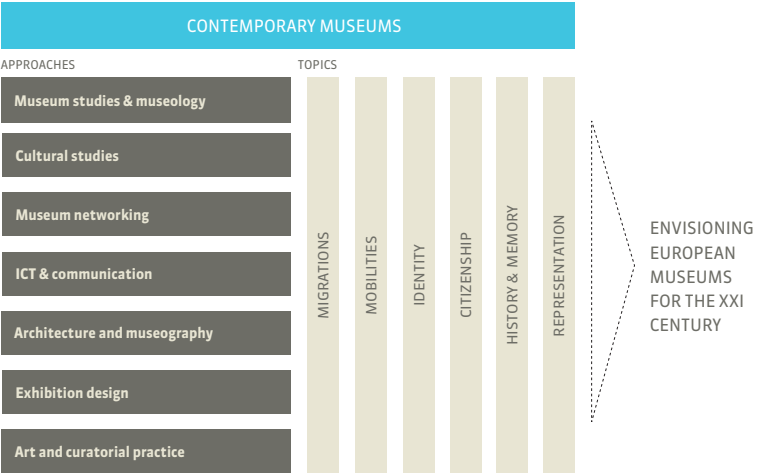
Yet if museums have historically been implicated in identity representation as well as in the definition of shared and common values, the dynamics of today’s multiethnic and multicultural Europe ask for something different. Today we recognize the need for a shift in the organization, design and use of cultural institutions, from an approach focused on the formation of national identities to a new one based on complex multiplicity of voices and subjects involved, one that would be able to foster a rewriting of museums’ narratives considering a more articulated postnational and transcultural scenario (Macdonald 2003). As a consequence, museums are currently in the middle of a process of deep

IMG. 01 — “Race and ethnicity 2010: Los Angeles” map. Eric Fischer. Red is White, blue is Black, green is Asian, orange is Hispanic, yellow is other, and each dot is 25 residents. Data from Census 2010. Base map.

institutional transformations. Amongst these, the most important in recent times is probably the change of role of the museum itself, which is enhancing its possible role of “social agent” (Sandell 2007; Clifford 2007; Karp et al. 2006): from cultural institution to social, economic and urban fact, as well as “contact zones,” “spaces of encounter,” places of meeting and mutual understanding. An interdisciplinary, pluralistic and shared approach to cultural communication, the concept of “intercultural dialogue” (European Union 2006) and “cultural diversity” (UNESCO 2002) thus might become methods for museums to define and design new cultural proposals.

Thus, it is assumed that museum institutions should respond to the increasing complexity of contemporary culture and life by representing collective values, histories and memories at a scale not constrained by national borders, and for a large multifaceted audience with diversified cultural needs. MeLa therefore has at the core of its reflection issues such as “migration,” “mobility” and “multiplicity”—of voices, points of view, theories, etc.—characterizing contemporary culture; “representation” and “hybridity”—of narratives and their expressions—distinguishing museums and exhibition spaces; “identity” of a variety of subjects—who could and should be represented and who experience museums—with their intellectual and cultural differences; as well as the acknowledgement of the pressing museums’ need to display a multicultural shared knowledge enriched by multiple perspectives. These remarks are seen as cornerstones for rethinking European contemporary museums, and for enhancing their innovative and active role in citizenship building [Img. 02].

IMG. 02 — MeLa project: topics and research perspectives.



The question of how these changes and these new theories can influence in practice the design and the organization of museums is thus a crucial point. Therefore, the MeLa project objectives for the forthcoming four years therefore are on one hand to study and deepen the above

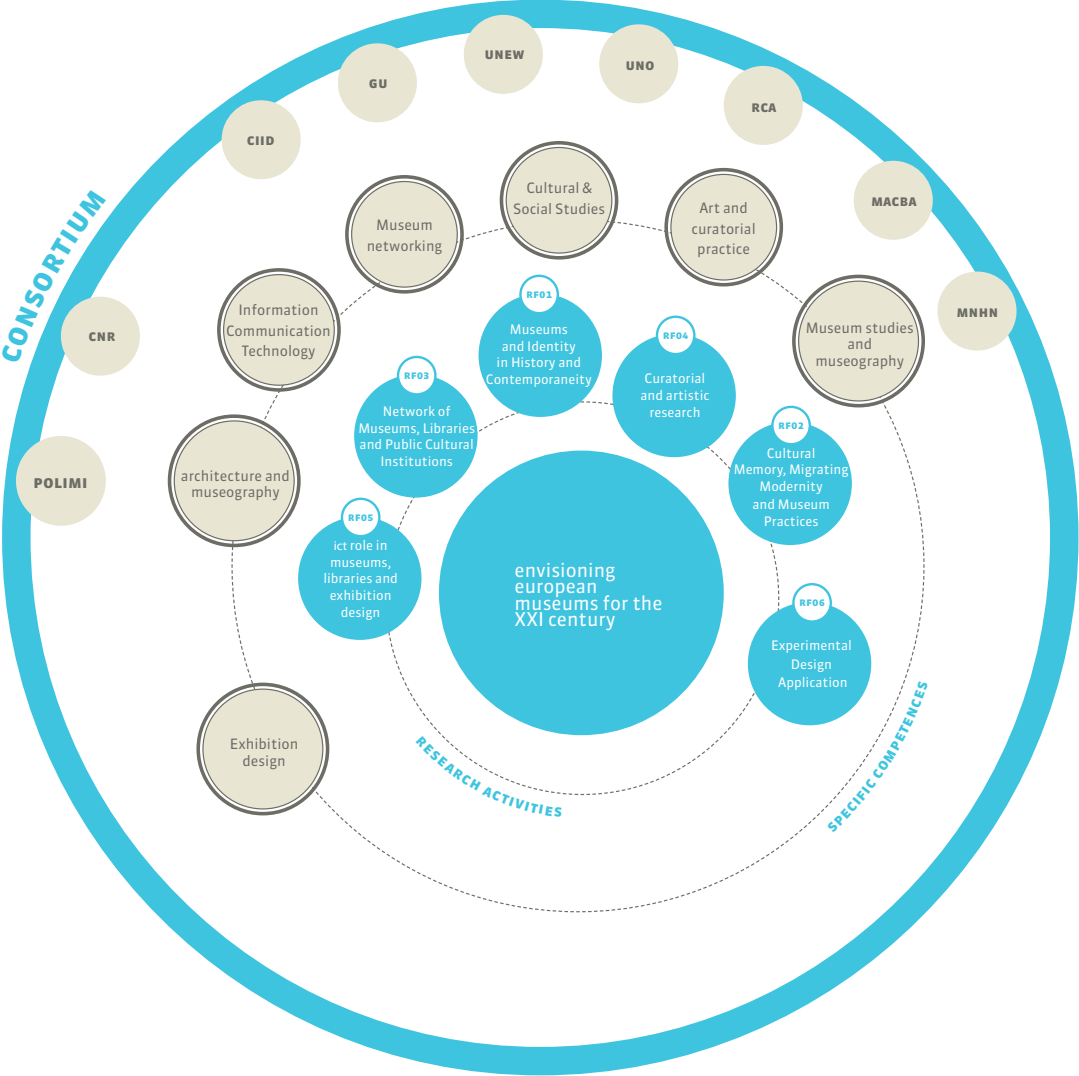
mentioned theoretical reflections, and on the other hand to evaluate their operational effectiveness and applications to museum architecture. With its objectives MeLa wants to reinterpret and improve the effectiveness of the European cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) as a promoter of a more effective and shared citizenship and identity in relation to the contemporary phenomenon of globalization that operate within the European Community (a phenomenon seen both as “Europeanization” of Europe and its “colonization” by migratory fluxes). This condition implies more proper definitions and answers starting from the peculiarities of museums and galleries in the organization of their collections and contents established over the centuries, as a prerequisite to defining their possible evolution and adjustments, to fulfilling new demands and needs and to coping with the issues concerned with the transformations acting in present-day age of migrations.

→ UNFOLDING SOME CRUCIAL QUESTIONS: THE PROJECT RESEARCH FIELDS

Within this scenario, which represents the general theoretical framework of the research, some questions arise that urgently ask for an answer. How are cultural negotiation processes remapping museum and curatorial practices as sites, institutions, categories, organizations, and sets of social practices? How do museums face the challenge of representing multiple cultures in contemporary society? What can happen when the “peoples” and “places” implicated in, and at least to some extent constructed in, museum representation shift, change, multiply, fragment and/or move? How can museums engage their users in dialogic and participative ways that challenge authoritarian and monocentric narratives? How can a visit to an exhibition be transformed into a journey into the “other-than-self” and present a comparative vision or multi-vocal narration (Drugman 2010, 200)? How can museums represent memory and identity with an intercultural approach? How can museums play the role of mediators in cultural exchanges? Should museums’ representational practices and design strategies change? If so, how?

These are some of the matters lying at the heart of the project. They will shape the project’s research activities and drive its investigation towards the definition of innovative museum practices reflecting the challenges posed by the contemporary processes of globalization, mobility and migrations and by the new museum’s roles. As people, objects, knowledge and information move at increasingly high speed rates, a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity is needed to facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion. MeLa’s main objectives, then, are to empower museums spaces and practices with the task of building this identity, to respond to contemporary museums challenges, to reflect on the idea European citizenship, and to achieve an overall relevant advancement in terms of knowledge in the fields of the research.

In order to tackle such a complex research topic and fulfill its objectives, MeLa is articulated in detailed domains of study [Img. 03]. They represent the theoretical and thematic fields of investigation identified as



IMG. 03 — MeLa Consortium: expertise and research fields.

the most meaningful and promising for positioning emerging research questions. The first Research Field, “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 the museum practices. The second one, “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. The third one, “Network of Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions,” broadens the scope of the research: it investigates coordination strategies between museums, libraries and public cultural institutions

in relation to European cultural and scientific heritage, migration and integration. Research Fields 04 and 05 propose some more innovative research tools and areas that contribute to providing the research with an interdisciplinary approach to project questions. On one hand, “Curatorial and Artistic Research”—also through a series of art exhibitions—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. On the other hand, Research Field 05, “Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions,” investigates and experiments new communication tools, ICT potentialities, new user centered approaches, and innovative practices of “research by design” aimed at defining new tools and strategies for the design of the contemporary museum.

The described research activities and the related findings will produce an advancement of knowledge converging both in specific scientific publications and policy briefs, and in the sixth Research Field, “Envisioning Twenty-first Century Museums.” On one hand this will develop specific investigation aimed at fostering theoretical, methodological and operative contributions to the interpretation of diversities and commonalities of European cultural heritage, and at proposing enhanced practices for the mission and the design of museums in the contemporary multicultural society. On the other hand, this Research Field, which will last throughout the project, has been designed as the project’s backbone: it will direct the research and stimulate its development through a series of public discussions and workshops, it will involve the European community of scholars and the wide public, and it will finally elaborate a conclusive scientific publication that, together with a closing exhibition, will critically summarize the project findings and disseminate them.

→ THE RESEARCH INTO THE RESEARCH: INNOVATIVE METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS

The MeLa working group consists of nine European organizations of recognized experience in the fields of the research at the international level. Project partners have been selected to combine appropriate knowledge and rooted research background, in order to efficiently cover all the expertise needed to implement and validate the scenarios presented and achieve the project objectives. The Consortium has been built mainly on a thematic structure, rather than a geographical one, to create a large interdisciplinary network specialized in the main research domains. It includes different universities, a research institute, and—unlikely most of the socio-humanities projects, especially in the field of museums studies—it also involves two museums and a small enterprise in order to foster not only academic research, but also “field” experience. Each partner will be responsible of one research field both from an organizational and scientific point of view, coordinating those activities that require the cooperation of all MeLa scholars and researchers. The project therefore is characterized by a strong interdisciplinary program that should guarantee an all-accomplished approach to the research topics in order to

provide the most comprehensive view possible of the questions at stake. The quality of the whole project and of its results is also committed to its research tools and methodology. In fact, on one hand MeLa makes use of some standard research methodologies, which mainly are “desk research”—traditional secondary research to investigate the state of the art, such as bibliographical surveys, conference attendance, etc.—“field investigations”—aimed at analyzing and monitoring case studies—and “international conferences”—organized with call for papers in order to gather knowledge and widen the discussion. On the other hand, the project will use and implement other tools that are experimental in themselves and adopt an interdisciplinary approach. These will be developed to offer the opportunity to investigate the research themes through unconventional disciplines and thus provide new perspectives and ideas. We believe that an abreast topic such as the investigation of “European Contemporary Museums in an age of migrations” needs a new approach, and that academic research therefore needs to implement new research methods to investigate such emerging complex issues. These new tools include “brainstorming sessions—interdisciplinary closed workshops for MeLa researchers and invited guests focused on the core topics of each Research Field. These meetings involve external experts and practitioners, to foster connections and synergies and provide further stimuli to the research. Another innovative tool that will be implemented by the MeLa project is the “art-practice-based research,” which starts from art or art practice and extends to issues of curating contemporary art to stress and investigate the relevance and strategic value of the curatorial and artistic research project for the advancement of knowledge in the area of the MeLa project themes. A further new research method will be the “research by design,” consisting in the production of various experimental exhibition designs—either virtual or real—and prototypes. The experimental design applications are a tool to measure the operational effectiveness of the developed theoretical reflections and their applications. Thus, on the one hand they will be a test verification of the results connected with the first phases of the research, and, on the other hand, a further stimulus for the development of the subsequent phases.

→ HORIZONS

One of the MeLa objectives is to produce a relevant contribution to the discussion on the role and evolution of museums, also enhancing the raising of public awareness about identity complexity and its representation within the European cultural agenda. It aims at becoming a reference research project in the field of museum studies in relation with the issues of cultural identity and heritage complexification, stratification and hybridization ensuing from the contemporary growing phenomena of migration and mobility of people, goods, knowledge and ideas. Parallel to the process of Europeanization, in fact, Europe is facing a consistent presence of large communities of migrants who live in Europe on a long term base: according to the Eurostat 2010 census, the 9,4% of

the twenty-seven European states' population comprises citizens born in a country different from the one in which they reside. Overall, there are 32.5 million "migrants," about two thirds of which were born in a non-European country (Eurostat 2011). These data confirm the general belief that we're living in a moment of profound changes, whose consequences are already visible in any domain of human life. Such changes transcend the political-economical sphere, and go so far as to affect art, culture and ordinary life, too. Hence, questions and concerns related to globalization, migration, and the growing ethnical-cultural mix that characterize contemporary society are identified by the project as some of the most pressing challenges for contemporary cultural institutions, and specifically museums.

MeLa, then, reflects from different points of view on the institutionalization of collective memory and its public representation in museums, and on the interdependency between this representation and cultural integration, with a specific focus on migration dynamics and mobility to, from and within the European Union. The purpose is to elaborate new theories, models, design practices and tools to rethink the roles of museums, and enhance their capability of building a truly democratic and inclusive European citizenship. And by understanding common heritage as something that encompasses both European established memory and traditions, and the identities and cultures of the less recognized and official European communities, MeLa will seek to envision European museums in "an age of migrations."

→ REFERENCES

- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Drugman, Fredi. 2010. "Una meravigliosa risonanza." In *Lo specchio dei desideri: Antologia sul museo*, edited by Mariella Brenna, 199-202. Bologna: Clueb. First published 1995.
- European Union. 2006. *Official Journal of the European Union* (412): 44-50. Accessed March 27, 2012. <http://cordis.europa.eu/documents/documentlibrary/90798681EN6.pdf>.
- European Commission. 2009. "Research in Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities: Indicative Strategic Research Roadmap 2011-2013." Accessed March 27, 2012. http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/roadmap-2011-2013-final_en.pdf.
- Eurostat. 2011. "Foreign citizens made up 6.5% of the EU27 population in 2010." News release 105, July 14. Accessed March 27, 2012. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-14072011-BP/EN/3-14072011-BP-EN.PDF.
- Karp, Ivan, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, eds. 2006. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press.

Macdonald, Sharon. 2003. "Museums, National, Postnational and Trans-cultural Identities." *Museum and society* 1(1): 1-16. Accessed March 27, 2012. <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/mands1.pdf>.

Prevelakis, Georges. 2008. "City Museums and the Geopolitics of Globalization." In *City Museums and City Development*, edited by Ian Jones, Robert R. Macdonald, and Darryl McIntyre, 16-26. Plymouth: Altamira.

Sandell, Richard. 2007. *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*. London & New York: Routledge.

UNESCO. 2002. *Cultural Diversity: Common Heritage, Plural Identities*. Paris: UNESCO.

MeLa Consortium



MeLa Consortium

POLIMI

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Dipartimento di Progettazione
dell'Architettura (DPA)

Dipartimento Industrial Design, Arte,
Comunicazione e Moda (INDACO)

www.polimi.it

Politecnico di Milano is ranked as one of the most outstanding European Universities in Engineering, Architecture and Industrial Design.

The Department of Architectural Design (DPA) focuses on research and teaching activities related to policy and management of the built environment in the fields of architectural design and urban development, historical and critical analysis of the context, conservation and valorization of cultural heritage. The activity of DPA research group “New Museography” is mainly aimed at researching and developing theoretic and design proposals in order to investigate the new roles of Museum Institutions.

Born in 2002, INDACO is the first Italian Department dedicated to Industrial Design, Arts, Communication, and Fashion; it focuses on research and education activities devoted to critical and theoretical elaborations, and on operational ex-

perimentations within the field of design sciences. INDACO research unit “Design for Cultural Heritage” (DeCH) is aimed at developing design strategies and methodologies for the exploitation and the enhancement of Cultural Heritage.

DPA

Luca Basso Peressut, *MeLa Project Coordinator*
& *RF06 Leader*

Gennaro Postiglione, *MeLa Technical Manager*

Imma Forino

Marco Borsotti

Mariella Brenna

Francesca Lanz

Stephanie Carminati

Anna Chiara Cimoli

Elena Montanari

Camilla Pagani

Margherita Parati

Clelia Pozzi

Claudia Raimondi

INDACO

Raffaella Trocchianesi

Eleonora Lupo

Rita Capurro

Paola Cordera

Lucia Parrino

Davide Spallazzo

Sara Radice

CIID**Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark**

ciid.dk

The Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design is an integrated structure focused on the area of interaction and service design. The institute, that is a recognized leader in the field, incorporates education, research, and consultancy activities. By encouraging the development of a cross-disciplinary and multi-cultural environment, CIID works on new research models that interface with both academia and industry, in order to elaborate innovative products, services, and technology.

The School and Research Lab at CIID provides a platform for a strong post graduate program and innovative research projects. The consultancy is focused on the development of real-world ideas, and on the enhancement of projects with a wide range of international and domestic clients. In these years CIID has built lasting relations with significant private and public partners within ICT, Health Care, Public Administrations and Cultural Institutions.

Jamie Allen, *RF05 Leader*

Simona Maschi

Jakob Bak

David Gauthier

CNR**Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy**

Istituto di Tecnologie Industriali e

Automazione (ITIA)

www.cnr.it

The National Research Council is a public organization focused on the promotion, diffusion and improvement of research activities in the main sectors of knowledge growth and on their application. The

Institute for Industrial Technologies and Automation (ITIA) is an applied centre for research and development, focused on such themes as machine tools, production systems for different sectors, as well as Virtual and Augmented Reality application for products, processes and Factory Design. According to ManuFuturing paradigm, ITIA works on a new concept of Factory, applying new technologies on the product life cycle through the development of a Digital and Virtual Factory. In this perspective ITIA started applying the Virtual Factory on a single machine or single products, bringing Virtual and Mixed Reality to the various production phases applicable for small and medium enterprises.

ITIA, that has managed the largest Growth Project within the EU 5th Framework Programme (EUROShoE), developed a long experience in managing national and international consortiums.

Marco Sacco, *MeLa Project Manager*

Claudia Redaelli

GU**University of Glasgow, United Kingdom**

History of Art, School of Culture and Creative Arts (HOA)

www.gla.ac.uk

The University of Glasgow is one of United Kingdom oldest Universities, ranked in the world top 100 Universities. Member of the Russell Group, it is a major internationally renowned research hub, with an annual research income in the UK's top ten earners. It also achieved outstanding results in the 2008 UK Research Assessment Exercise, with the majority of research being internationally recognised.

In particular the University of Glasgow is the UK's leading centre for the study of

History of Art. The School of Culture and Creative Arts is focused on continuing and further developing its national and international research profile, enhancing a cluster of art, science and technology, and fostering connections and collaborations with international institutions and projects. The History of Art (HOA) team developed particular strengths in Museum and Art History Studies, management and curation of digital assets, cultural heritage informatics.

Perla Innocenti, *RF03 Leader*
John Richards
Sabine Wieber

MACBA

Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain

www.macba.cat

Through its collections, exhibitions and activities program, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona aims to construct a critical memory of Art of the latter half of the 20th Century, focusing on post-1945 Catalan and Spanish production, but also including foreign art. The institution is managed by MACBA Consortium; MACBA Foundation cooperates with the Generalitat of Catalonia, Barcelona City Council and the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

MACBA achieved an international prestige through a continuous research work and an energetic contribution in the expansion of international museum networks, by developing relations with other institutions and by co-producing exhibitions. As a museum and a study centre, MACBA developed a leading role in the production of knowledge by enhancing its own style in the presentation of contemporary art, offering a high-quality exhibition program, producing publications and

conceptual contributions, and providing educational services.

Bartomeu Mari
Mela Dávila Freire
Pamela Sepúlveda
Marta Vega
Maite Muñoz
Eric Jiménez

MNHN

Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France

Musée de l'Homme, Department "Homme, nature, société" (DHNS)
www.mnhn.fr

The Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, founded in 1793, is a governmental institution developing research, collections, expertise, and education in the fields of Natural History and Human Sciences. The institution, that includes several scientific galleries situated in Paris and all over France, exercises a major patrimonial function, by acquiring, conserving, restoring, managing, and exhibiting important national collections (living organisms, inert elements, databases).

Musée de l'Homme is an internationally exhibition and research centre, created in the occasion of the Universal Exhibition in 1937. Managed under the authority of various ministries and grouping several entities from the research centres, this institution is dedicated to the natural and cultural history of Humanity in its environment. In particular the Homme, Nature, Société Department aims to investigate the unity and diversity of man and his relationship with nature over time and space, from a biological, cultural, and social point of view.

Michel Van Praët

Fabienne Galangau Quérat
 Laurence Isnard
 Sarah Gamaire

RCA

The Royal College of Art, United Kingdom
 Department of Curating Contemporary Art (CCA)
www.rca.ac.uk

The Royal College of Art is the only wholly postgraduate University of Art and Design in the world. Through teaching and research activities, as well as fruitful collaborations with industry and commerce, the institution is focused on the advancement of learning, knowledge, and professional competence particularly in the fields of fine arts, in the enhancement of principles and practice of art and design, in the development of their relation to industrial, commercial, and social processes.

Co-funded by Arts Council England and the Royal College of Art, the Curating Contemporary Art Department (CCA) established the first postgraduate programme in Britain to specialize in curatorial practice related to contemporary art, and to develop an explicitly international perspective on its role in today's museums and galleries, providing a professional preparation for curators and arts administrators, supported by critical studies in contemporary curatorial practice, history of aesthetics and recent theory and history of art after modernism.

Mark Nash, *RF04 Leader*
 Clare Carolin
 Jean Fisher
 Deianira Ganga
 Ros Grey
 Kit Hammonds
 Jan-Erik Lundström
 Eszter Steierhoffer

UNEW

Newcastle University, United Kingdom
 The International Centre for Cultural and
 Heritage Studies (ICCHS)
www.ncl.ac.uk

Newcastle University is a research institution with a reputation for academic excellence, focusing on the creation and the dissemination of knowledge, developing research and teaching activities, as well as engagement in national and international strategic initiatives. It is ranked among the top 20 higher education institutions in the UK. UNEW, which has one of the largest European Union research portfolios, is also a member of the Russell Group, comprising the top twenty research institutions in the UK. In order to promote interdisciplinary research, the University has established a range of internationally renowned research institutes.

The ICCHS is a leading academic centre for research and teaching in museum, gallery and heritage studies, fostering improved professional practice within the sector on national and international levels, and enhancing the understanding of museums, galleries, and cultural and natural heritage organisation.

Christopher Whitehead, *RF01 Leader*
 Rhiannon Mason
 Susannah Eckersley
 Victoria Patton

UNO

**Università degli Studi di Napoli
 "L'Orientale," Italy**
 Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Sociali (DSUS)
www.iuo.it

"L'Orientale" is the oldest school of Sinology and Oriental Studies in Europe, with a strong tradition in language, cul-

tural and social studies, related to Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Since its very beginning, in 1732, it has set itself up as a centre for learning and researching through a comparative and intercultural analysis.

The Department of Human and Social Sciences (DSUS) provides the context for contemporary interdisciplinary and intercultural studies, in between a developing tradition in cultural and postcolonial studies focused on questions of migration, memory and the mutation of social and cultural formations. Working with literary, audio-visual and musical languages, critical attention has been devoted to understand the political and poetical affects of such languages in configuring cultural memories, the construction of the historical archive, and the subsequent institutional practices that sustain modalities of historical identification and cultural belonging.

Iain Chambers, *RF02 Leader*

Lidia Curti

Marina De Chiara

Tiziana Terranova

Alessandra De Angelis

Beatrice Ferrara

Giulia Grechi

Mariangela Orabona

Illustration Credits

Peter Aronsson: p. 69 Img. 01; p. 71 Imgs. 02-03; p. 74 Img. 04.

Luca Basso Peressut: p. 18; p. 27 Img. 06; p. 28 Img. 07; p. 29 Img. 08; p. 32 Img. 09; p. 33 Img. 10; p. 35 Img. 12; p. 39 Img. 14; p. 41 Img. 15; p. 43 Img. 17; p. 45 Img. 18; p. 47 Img. 20; p. 49 Img. 22; p. 66; p. 123 Img. 01; p. 125 Img. 02; p. 134 Img. 02; p. 135 Img. 03; p. 137 Img. 04; p. 147 Img. 03; p. 151 Img. 04; p. 167 Img. 02; p. 195 Img. 01.

Stephanie Carminati: cover image; p. 125 Img. 03; p. 141; p. 210.

Luigi De Ambrogi: p. 23 Imgs. 03-04; p. 42 Img. 16; p. 151 Img. 05.

JC Domenech MNHN: p. 188 Img. 2; p. 189 Img. 03; p. 190 Imgs. 04-05; p. 192 Img. 06.

Susannah Eckersley: p. 155 Img. 01.

The Foundations of British Sociology: the Sociological Review Archive (FoBS), Keele University: p. 85 Img. 01; p. 87 Imgs. 03-04; p. 89 Imgs. 05-06; p. 90 Imgs. 07-08; p. 95 Img. 10; p. 96 Imgs. 11-12; p. 97 Img. 13.

Francesca Lanz: p. 145 Img. 02; p. 163 Img. 01; p. 169 Img. 04.

MACBA Study Center: p. 196 Img. 02; p. 198 Img. 04; p. 201 Img. 05.

Rhiannon Mason: p. 156 Img. 02.

Elena Montanari: p. 115 Img. 03; p. 117 Img. 04; p. 144 Img. 01.

Massimo Negri: p. 128 Imgs. 04-05.

OpenStreetMap, CC-BY-SA: p. 57 Img. 01.

MeLa: p. 25 Img. 05; p. 58 Img. 02; p. 60 Img. 03; p. 179 Img. 01; p. 180 Img. 02; p. 181 Img. 03; p. 196 Img. 03; p. 222.

SFO Museum: p. 46 Img. 19.

Nikola Smolenski: p. 115 Img. 02.

Studio Azzurro: p. 167 Img. 03.

All rights to the architectural drawings belong to the respective designers.

MUSEUMS IN AN AGE OF MIGRATIONS

QUESTIONS, CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES

This volume collects a series of essays that offer a starting point for the European project *Me-La-European Museums in an age of migrations*, an interdisciplinary research that reflects on the role of museums and heritage in relation to the contemporary global and multicultural world. International scholars and researchers interrogate themselves on issues of history, memory, identity and citizenship, and explore their effects on the organization, functioning, communication strategies, exhibition design and architecture of museums.

With contributions by: Jamie Allen, Kirsti Andersen, Peter Aronsson, Luca Basso Peressut, Iain Chambers, Mela Dávila Freire, Gordon J. Fyfe, David Gauthier, Perla Innocenti, Francesca Lanz, Rhiannon Mason, Mark Nash, Massimo Negri, Giovanni Pinna, Gennaro Postiglione, Sreten Ugričić, Michel Van Praët, and Chris Whitehead.

EDITORS

Luca Basso Peressut, Architect, PhD, is Full Professor in Interior Architecture, Exhibition Design and Museography at the Politecnico di Milano. He is MeLa Project Coordinator.

Clelia Pozzi, Architect, MDesS in History and Philosophy of Design from Harvard Graduate School of Design, is Research Associate at the Politecnico di Milano.

COVER IMAGE — The Geffen Temporary at MoCA, Los Angeles. "Art in the Streets" exhibition, 2011.

MeLa-European Museums in an age of migrations



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

ISBN 978-88-95194-32-5

