

MUSEUMS: INSTRUMENTS OF CULTURAL DIALOGUE?

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Theme 2: Curators, Collections, Collaboration: Towards a Global Ethics

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ABSTRACT

After mid-twentieth century the form to expose and understand the exhibits are change. The conception of what is to be museum expands from the broadening of the concept of heritage. As a result of these changes, the form of museum operates changes dramatically and increases the possibilities of working with the object. Museums are now turning to the preservation of cultural references of the societies.

With this, the discourse becomes guided by other forms of organization and not by the categories time and types, because it is understood that the role of museums today is to provoke reflection and exchange information. Now the valour is in the project, the speech, the explicit intentionality. The mode to perception the public of museums was changes. The public is seen as an important factor in the planning of exhibitions, because he is considered like an agent and partner of expository message.

Based in the above assertions this paper aims to discuss about the perspective that museums can be instruments for promoting / creating empowerment. Its objective is discussed how a museum in their actions becomes agent of social relations and space for cultural diversity, for which communities historically excluded for the actions and the practices of museums, become proponents and formulators of this institutions. What is the participation of these communities in this new model of museum? This is really possible. These are some of the issues and questions that permeate the article, whose purpose is, contribute to the debate.

Keywords: museum, cultural dialogue, social participation.

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INTRODUCTION

After mid-twentieth century the form to expose and understand the exhibits are change. The conception of what is Museum expands from the expansion of the concept of heritage; the Museum's forms changes and increase dramatically the possibilities of working with the object.

Museums are turning to the preservation of the cultural references of the various societies. With that, the speech becomes ruled by other forms of organization and not by temporality and category; because we understand that the role of museums today is to provoke reflection and the exchange of information. There is an appreciation of the project, the speech, the explicit intentionality.

The way to apprehend the public by the Museum are changes. The public is seen as an important factor in the programming of exhibitions, because he happens to be regarded as an agent and partner of expository message. In view of the above probes it is necessary to make a reflection about the prospect that the museums can be instruments of promotion/creating empowerment; to discuss how a museum through their actions becomes agent of social relations and space for cultural diversity, whereby communities historically excluded from doing, become museums proponents and executors. What is the participation of these communities in this new Museum model? This is actually doable.

THE OBJECTS OF REFLECTION

In this part shall be submitted generally a number of museums that present themselves as institutions that act in the perspective of empowerment and dialogue between cultures as a basis for our reflection/discussion about the existence of museums whose proposals covering these new features to delineate for the museums area today.

Museum of the Indian - Rio de Janeiro (Botafogo) - Brazil - Creation 1953

The Museum of the Indian in their exhibition and educational action put into practice a new approach to its collections therefore makes possible the perception of otherness in a new light, favoring the understanding of different as part of cultural diversity, and stimulating the production of a critical reflection and conscious about the existence of different ways of

conceiving the world, that makes it's possible to have another's visions and interpretations of the world.

The educational action is one of the main instruments used by the Museum of the Indian to achieve its main objective: to combat prejudice. Claudia Menezes (1983), in his article on the new perspectives and possibilities offered by the educational practices of the Museum of the Indian front to other similar institutions, he says, and we agree with this statement, that this museum is a "radiating center of knowledge", because it breaks with certain assumptions and concepts in effect until its creation. The first is the traditional understanding that a museum is a local designed to guard relics and sacredness of the past. The second disruption refers to the tradition that the main function of a museum is to be a temple of knowledge of the **elites**. According to Menezes, the Indian Museum, in its specific qualities as ethnological museum, offers a new way for themselves to enable restoration of cultural heritage and seek to value the objects (or artifacts) that are under its guard, while significant assets to cultures of the Brazilian nation.

Throughout of its trajectory the Indian Museum suffered major conflicts and crises that overcame with mastery, through the work of various professionals imbued with the main goal which was to put this museum. This institution is still in continuous process of change and perfecting which can be proven with each new exhibition that opens or according Chagas,

The Indian Museum is moving. Created to combat prejudices, (...), he developed a speech bases with museum combining romanticism and civilizing project. Over time, went through several crises, was well liked and was passed over, was valued and was stigmatized was made, unmade and remade, and, as with some indigenous populations after nearly extinct grew back and to reaffirm its identity museum [and anthropological] - an identity that is also not given, but, on the contrary, is made and remade continually, though remains, somehow, linked to the so-called "indigenous cause" has now reconfigured. In this game of changes and continuities, it is no more what it was before. With the renewal of their practice of mediation and its museographics and museological procedures, the Museum is aligned with the institutions that move in the hybrid arena, resulting from the crossing of the classical museology and the new museological postures. Without abandoning its political role, it reaffirms itself as the institution of social memory that works with contemporary cultural diversity. (CHAGAS, 2007: 194).

National Museum of Colombia Bogotá - Colombia - Creation 1823

The National Museum of Colombia initial mission was to consolidate the new Colombian republic (GONZÁLEZ, 2000).

Two hundred years later, this Museum means for themselves, through legislation of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia (which is linked to the body), the mission of being a multicultural space, which should be represented all the country's cultural diversity.

In this perspective its action must be directed to the multicultural representation and thus for the realization of bridges between cultures, since will express the various ethnic groups that make up the Colombian nation.

The National Museum of Colombia, using their collections and funds, engaged in the promotion the differences in the expression of national identity, fulfilling the goals and mission proposed by their management institution - the Ministry of Culture and the Government of Colombia - and if adapting the new job prospects dictated by global regulatory institution - the International Council of Museums / ICOM.

For this article we selected two temporary exhibition actions that illuminate the proposed actions in favor of cultural dialogue and multicultural representation:

a) Exhibition "The Story of a Scream"

Between July 2010 and January 2011 was held the temporary exhibition titled "The Stories of a scream. 200 years of being Colombian ": one of the events organized by the Colombian government to commemorate the bicentennial of the independence of the country. The decision to hold the exhibition was a directive from the Ministry of Culture, which filed an application to the Museum, reinforcing what had already been pre-determined in the Strategic Plan of the Museum, proposed for the period 2001-2010.

The direction and curatorial staff, to the make the clipping of the proposed expositional, sought to place greater emphasis on demonstrating the museum as a place of diversity. In this sense, the intention was to represent the symbols of national identity in a way different from the views that had been held by then, including other actors related to the independence of Colombia.

El propósito fundamental es desmitificar la historia tal y como ha sido narrada por muchos años en los libros de historia, proponer nuevas reflexiones y cargar de contenido una historia que más que nada tiene que ver con nuestro papel como ciudadanos, responsables de deberes y herederos de una serie de derechos que en la mayoría de los casos ha sido luchados (MUSEU NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA, 2010, P.11).

The exhibition aims to provide a reflection on what is being represented and narrated in relation to episodes and characters that marked the achievement of independence in Colombia.

La exposición que hoy presentamos quiere dar cuenta de ese recorrido, múltiple y cambiante. Por eso, no se pretende llegar a posiciones definitivas sino propiciar en nuestros visitantes la pregunta, la curiosidad, la inquietud sobre cuáles son esos mecanismos de participación en el ahora y sobre la forma como los utilizamos para

la construcción de nuestro país a futuro (MUSEU NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA, 2010, P.09).²

Another aim of the exhibition was to critically review the representations built on independence seeking deconstruct, demystify and denaturalize the narrative about the idea of nation and the construction of the Colombian cultural identity. Through the identification of individuals or groups who, by their terms ethno-racial and / or social, were excluded from the narrative process of the country.

Thus the ultimate purpose of the exhibition was to rescue these characters and restore to them their place in the history of nation-building.

b) Show II - Wakes and Saints Alive - Black Communities, Afro-Colombian, Palenque and Raizales

The temporary exhibition "Wakes and Saints Alive - Black Communities, Afro-Colombian, Palenque and Raizales" was held by the National Museum of Colombia between August and November 2010. Its realization had the partnership and support of various Colombian academic institutions and their implementation had the participation, at all stages, of groups and community leaders involved, who had the firm intention of providing greater visibility to those, are still today, excluded from processes of the Colombian identity construction.

The whole process of realization of the exhibition - design curatorial, research, expography, team training educators - had the participation of these groups and leaders, who also brought to the museum objects used in their celebrations and participated in the setting of their rites and forms celebration of the lives of their saints and ancestors.

The exhibition aimed to promote the permanent inclusion of African-Colombians in reporting on national identity, which is the object of the National Museum of Colombia, making evident the contribution of these communities to build the nation and its identity symbols.

It is worth noting that the Museum to the produce the exhibition on the culture of those communities managed to fulfill important social role by contributing to highlight the culture of those peoples, who over the centuries suffer from marginalization and obscurantism. Furthermore, this museum action could create an environment conducive to the promotion of reflections and questionings about the culture of African-Colombian communities and on their role in the constitution of the whole nation.

Museum of America - Madrid / Spain - Creation 1941

² Tradução livre: A exposição que hoje apresentamos objetiva dar conta desse percurso múltiplo e cambiante. Por isso não se pretende chegar a posições definitivas, mas sim propiciar aos visitantes o questionamento, a curiosidade, a inquietude sobre quais são esses mecanismos de participação na atualidade e como os utilizamos para a construção de nosso país para o futuro (MUSEU NACIONAL DE COLOMBIA, 2010, P.09).

The Museum of America is a museum owned by the Spanish Ministry of Culture and is located in University City, its creation took place from the collections of archeology, ethnography and American, belonging to the National Archeological Museum moved to the new Museum of America. Just like other national museums Spanish this museum was also subject to several changes: naming, its headquarters and its proposal expographic. To reach the current proposal this institution remained closed for two decades (mid-1970 to mid-1990) for renovations. The two major changes were the expansion of exhibition spaces and a new proposal narrative and expographic, whose main purpose was to act in favor of cultural dialogue, especially in relation to the Hispanic culture and the meeting of cultures of America and Spain.

The Museum of America after its reopening and its most recent history, has been carrying out various actions that help to define it as an institution devoted to promoting cultural dialogue and the formation of bridges between cultures.

It is worth noting that in addition to its activities and services this institution also works in the structuring of programs that go beyond the headquarters; with performances beyond its walls. Within this perspective extra walls deserves mention two actions:

1. The project Migrate es Culture (<<http://www.migrarescultura.es>>), to collect the most different cultural aspects of different cultures, bringing them together in the same space where you can view the cultural riches of the planet, and thereby, contribute to the valorization of the cultures. The program aims to collect and make available, via the web, the diversity and cultural enrichment produced by migration (immigrants and emigrants). It comprises various aspects of cultures, ranging from the present to the past. The idea of the organizers is that the project be an example of voluntary participation of people who venture to build a different version about migrating and the relationship between America and Spain.
2. Another action focused on intercultural dialogue and seeks to encourage cultural dialogues was exhibition called "Colombia becomes el Museum of America", held between October and November 2012 by the Museum of America and included exhibitions, lectures, workshops, interventions arts, among others. With this type of action is expected to even that the actions of the Museum extrapolating its walls, and who knows, those of Spain itself.

In this sense, the Museum of America progresses toward communication museum, and out of mere discourse on the other, proposing dialogues and venturing in favor of interculturalism.

CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the issue of the relationship between museums and their social action, it is necessary to note that the museum occupies in the contemporary world, a central place in the political scene and cultural. Today, these institutions are conceived as instruments of social change and sustainability for its role in memory preservation and dissemination of culture - local, national and universal, and also for its multiple interfaces within society. In addition, the museum is a potentiality economic, social and political, for the richness of the collections, which, in turn, serve as the basis for the construction of local and regional identities, strengthening self-esteem and promoting the generation of income and employment.

The museums are also potentials for social and cultural inclusion, since mobilize actions for the integration of people and processes, to combat different forms of violence, arbitrariness, social inequalities, sociocultural exclusion.

The action museum today has focused their narratives in favor of social dignity. We call them social museums or museums in the first person, as their focus includes: community leadership; acting together; interdisciplinary; professionals and workers as mediators and articulators; dynamics of the relationship with the environment, revitalization of the social function of the museum.

The Museology in your new strand, that seeks a greater social inclusion, should act in the present and have the proposal to create the object with meaning and purpose previously defined and explicitly stated, so as that takes the visitor to question certain situation (e.g. who made the Colombian independence, the heroes or the people?) and provoke dialogue with the memory of the other (e.g. how the public reacts front of objects brought of their culture of origin [America] that are exhibited in the Museum of America?).

After all, what museum you want? One ready for the consumption? An institution incorporated under our aspirations and those of others? The society goes to the museum - or should go? Or the museum can be a teaching tool, communication and learning?

It is important to highlight that the different approaches of the museum are all valid, there is no way to choose the best. What is needed is to take into account that the act itself has no value, but the meaning given to it makes all the difference and is coated with values and meanings that are being imperceptibly passed without it to be perceived.

Emphasizing: the museum cannot be hostage to the collection. The collection is not the problem, but the way it is approached. Hence the need to explain from where you're talking about and what the instruments used to reach the desired result.

It is necessary to enforce the right to difference and daring. The big change of museology in current times is the right to difference and visibility.

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