



Great Narratives of the Past Traditions and Revisions in National Museums

Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums:
Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen,
Paris 29 June – 1 July & 25-26 November 2011

Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein & José María Lanzarote Giral (eds)
EuNaMus Report No 4



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Editors

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Preface

Uses of the Past – Historical Narratives and the Museum

Dominique Poulot

Text translated from French by Felicity Bodenstein

For the historian, the museum represents both a resource and a place where his work may be presented. As a visitor, the historian is also an expert of the institution's performance, capable of judging it in relation to his own field of knowledge, related to the nature of the collections and the museographical project that guides their display. The museum can also be a place that inspires, reactivates, or even induces historical work, suggesting new topics or points of view. The writings of historians bear witness to the stimulating effect of the museum, such as Jules Michelet's by now classic account of his visit to the *Musée des monuments français* created by Alexandre Lenoir (but also to the galleries of the natural history museum), or Arnold Toynbee's reaction to the display of civilisations in the British Museum. The visit to the museum is an essential experience in the birth and development of historical imagination.

The historian may be a specialist of all or part of a museum's collection, whether on display or stored in its reserves. He establishes a direct relationship with the objects, contributing to their understanding. In this case, the historian is part of the museum's team, and must adapt his work to the needs of its management, in particular in terms of communication and public policy, whilst adhering and imposing the ethical standards of his own profession, its erudite specificity and methods of scientific interpretation. The historian becomes part of the sphere of "public history" and dedicates a more or less important part of his activity to guaranteeing a balance in the mediation of his research for the interests of scholarly communication with the development of civic values and the public success of the establishment that he works for or with.

However, in relation to the museum the historian more often than not plays the part of the independent scholar who, if needs be, may express his opinion of the institution in critical terms, appreciating and questioning the interpretations that nourish the exhibitions that it dedicates to events, personalities, objects, sometimes dealing with memorial, political, cultural or social issues. In this case, the historian sees the museum as he might see any other media, such as cinema, television productions, historical novels, school manuals, etc., that popularise what he considers to be his field of expertise. Lastly for the historian of historiography or memory studies, the museum has itself become an object of inquiry as it provides particular insight into the constitution of collective memory, the state of historical knowledge in the past, providing a more or less clear panorama of the practices and issues at stake in the way the past was used to serve the present at different points in the museum's history.

The diversity of relationships that exist between the historian and the museum needs to be considered in the context of the different kinds of historical genres and the variety of specialised domains that they engender. An historian of art, or more generally of forms and objects, who

may see himself as a veritable archaeologist of more or less banal things, relating to past societies, will most likely find himself entering into direct contact with some form of museum collection. On the other hand, the historian of economy or politics, international relations or doctrines, may feel very detached from the accumulation of old manufactured products or the relics of great men that more classical museums might dedicate to such themes. The relationships between narrations and museums are conditioned, on the one hand, by the modalities that organise the writing of history and forge the didactic ideal of its diffusion, and on the other, by the logics inherent to writing about collections, including different rhetorics of enumeration and listing, and the sense of vertigo that goes with them, as described by Umberto Eco.

The museum and the historical account

The philosopher Jacques Rancière attempted to define a certain typology of historical meaning in four modes, which can also be considered as categories for thinking about history museums. Firstly, “history as the account of memorable events, an anthology of examples preserved by tradition and offered for emulation”. He also identifies “history that is an assemblage of elements unified in order to offer an organised representation”, such as the fable of tragedy or the *historia* of the painting. Another kind is “history as a regime of coexistence”, “the science of men in time”, dominated by the idea expressed by Marc Bloch that men are “rather sons of their time than of their fathers”. Lastly “a history that is an oriented kind of time; that is to say that it is not just a time that goes from the past to the future but it accomplishes a greater principle” (Rancière, 1996). In relation to this typology one might distinguish the museum of examples, the museum as presenting a *tableau* kind of overview, the museum of scientific history and lastly the oriented museum, that is presentist or that desires to be a guarantee for the future. In any case, the elaboration of an historical museum is a phenomenon that needs to be considered concurrently to the evolution of accounts by historians and the models of public discourse considered as best adapted to expressing the objectives of the institution.

Throughout European history, material elements of the past, presented as repertoires of monuments, collections and relics, have been identified with the prestige of a territory or a specific political regime. The glory of the prince, the quality of a population, the spirit of a place have always been partially defined by historical considerations and aesthetic judgements of value related to such material. This might be the classical definition of a museum built to celebrate the glory of a city, the best example of which are probably the humanist collections of the Capitoline museum in Rome. In the course of the eighteenth century, the development of antiquarian science reinforced the relationship between patriotism and artistic or archaeological research, with the different Italian states undertaking measures to protect their treasures from the vicissitudes of the antiquities market; this new sensibility was later interpreted as a founding initiative in the establishment of a unified Italy.

The humanist gallery, such as Paul Jove’s collection of copies that decorated the corridor of the *Uffizi* gallery from 1587 onwards, and similar installations, has been dedicated to the memory of Caesars and other illustrious men of the past. The intersection of this tradition with the later notion of a museum of national identity resulted in the creation of national portrait galleries. Such institutions, created from the nineteenth century onwards, were determined by both historical and artistic considerations, in the service of royal families or of great men, as defined by

the Enlightenment. The national portrait gallery in Stockholm opened its doors in the palace of Gripsholm in 1823, based on the traditional royal collections. The British National Portrait Gallery opened in 1856 and was also designed to illustrate the biographical history of the country (Pointon, 1993). Another tradition is that of the antiquarian museum that serves different forms of specific curiosity and specialised history: such museums may be dedicated to groups of objects such as utensils, engraved stones, costumes, etc. If one accepts the idea that the birth of modern history came about through the “fusion of the antiquarian and the historian” (Momigliano, 1983), then in practice this can be observed in the progressive articulation of a relationship between objects that represent the everyday life of the past, works of art that occupy the connoisseur, and history as established by scholarly literature.

The hanging of paintings in galleries was originally conditioned by the academic doctrines of aesthetic distribution and the balancing out of the different qualities of paintings through their placement. It wasn't until the end of the eighteenth century that the notion of national schools of painting appeared, allowing for a classification of paintings at once hierarchical and encyclopaedic that related to an underlying patriotic claim. In France, the principle of the elegant assembly, so important in curiosity cabinet-type displays, still prevailed in the debates surrounding the organisation of museums at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the Louvre, as in the model of the Vatican that preceded it, the display of antiquities refers to a prestigious past and the statues are witnesses to a form of continuity across the centuries. The Museum of French Monuments, on the other hand, presents a juxtaposition of centuries from one room to the next, through a collection of original elements and plaster copies evocative of the typical decors that represent the century in question, producing a repertory of *historia* that can inspire the painter of history, or the so-called *troubadour* artist.

Conversely, over a generation later, the Cluny museum offered the visitor the experience of reconstituted historical interiors, as the earliest examples of *period*-rooms. The suggested possibility of being transported back into the past haunts the visitor and bears witness to the efficacy of museographies based on the idea of presenting habitat and, more generally, the context in which the past could be experienced. It is interesting to observe that it was developed at a time when figures such as François Guizot in France or Walter Scott in Great Britain incarnated a new intellectual and romanesque use of the past. In the context of the Universal Exhibitions, the principle of retrospective exhibits was developed, with the creation of spaces designed to identically reproduce the past; everything from the former streets and towns of the nation to those ethnographic villages where lost traditional worlds could be rediscovered. The museum seemed to provide an answer to the historical ideal expressed by Leopold von Ranke, who affirmed in 1824 that it was no longer a question of “judging the past, informing contemporaries to better understand the future” but that it was rather more about “showing what had really happened” (Bouton, 2004).

The question of provenance in relation to the museum introduced a new “use of the past” as the question of the origins of an object became a counter-revolutionary argument that was indeed a contestation of the principle of the institution itself. The historian and philosopher Quatremère de Quincy successfully put forward the idea that the true heritage of Rome was the Roman sky, the topography of its hills, the mentality of its inhabitants, the music of its language, and that its monuments, once exiled to the banks of the Seine or elsewhere, had lost their true value

(Quatremère, 1796). The evocation of the artefact's past became an integral part of the political confrontation opposing the partisans and the adversaries of the museum, between traditionalists and progressivists. The traditional use and definition of heritage as used by inhabitants or those most familiar with it was dismissed as based on errors of appreciation. In the context of the modern construction of heritage, of which the museum is an exemplary space, the object was legitimated and recognised by the specific frame provided by the museum's educated and critical interpretation (Poulot, 1997). All over Europe, the museum established a new use of the past at the expense of former practices considered as unsatisfying, inappropriate, or unworthy – an assemblage of representations, of legends and souvenirs, precisely those that Quatremère and his followers recognised as the real truth of the artefact.

Henceforth, museological organisation privileged the principle of national schools as an incitement to compare talents, styles and sources of inspiration. The idea for a special museum dedicated to the French school finally came to fruition with the creation of the Luxembourg museum in 1818 as a means of putting contemporary artists in competition, but also to compensate for the Louvre's loss of the finest antique sculptures, returned to the Vatican. Throughout the nineteenth century, the use of the past in the museum progressively became an element in a larger construction of historical consciousness. The museum claimed to be in this way a frame for the future, at once archive and laboratory for the auxiliary sciences of history – as was the case of the Museum of Archives opened in Paris in 1867. This work ideal is accompanied by a growing sense of pedagogical responsibility: the visit contributes, in parallel to mandatory education, the growing diffusion of newspapers, etc., to the establishment of “imagined communities”. Certain history museums came to include libraries and research centres, to edit and distribute manuals, as was the case of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum of Nuremberg (1852) or the Ossolineum of Lvov (1817) – driven by a progressivist and cumulative idea of the past in the service of a patriotic enterprise.

In terms of “uses of the past”, as related to properly “national” collections, a decisive turn was the development of archaeological practices that gained increasing importance from the 1850s onwards. Krszystof Pomian describes the emergence of a second kind of archaeology, national and rooted, alongside that of older antiquarian archaeology, which had provided such an important aesthetic and moral canon (Pomian, 1991). In this new ideological, aesthetic and scholarly context, the discoveries provided material for the opening of galleries of national art whose legitimacy rested on the performance of the long past of nations, their sovereigns and the settlers attested to by the results of archaeological digs. Another related evolution is the qualification of national art through an “ethnographic” approach that focuses on popular and local art: the myth of the labourer's home and the museums that develop it, especially in Northern and Central Europe, constitutes an emblematic kind of use of the past.

With the triumph of scholarly history based on the archive and privileging political and international perspectives, the practices of collecting and exhibition became increasingly removed from the realm of academic history. The preoccupation with material culture as presented in the museum became more related to the work of linguists, anthropologists and ethnographers. This separation can be observed most strongly in the countries of the New World. When Henry Ford decided to found Greenfield Village, a history museum destined to present the true life of generations of Americans, it was openly conceived of as an enterprise that, by showing tools and

everyday objects, opposed itself to the history of intellectuals and universities. Though they do not necessarily share the populist and anti-intellectual intentions present at Greenfield, many other history museums have adopted similar conventions of display. For certain European ecomuseums, their approach is related to a certain sentiment of dissatisfaction with academic historiography and their aim is to invent other kinds of narratives, but also participation and even mobilisation of the past.

The museum and the story of art

Artistic collections that bear the title of “national museum” may do so in reference to their status as public property, to their management by the state, no matter what their nature, but also in reference to their collections, characterised as products of national artists, territory or populations, and as such emblematic of the nation’s identity in artistic or scientific terms, or indeed both. If the development of an identitarian iconography is the simplest approach, constructed through an enumeration of subjects held as “national”, another method consists of regrouping artists of national origin to define a national school of art. The creation of national art museums in the nineteenth century is accompanied by more or less affirmed proclamations, such as the royal decree that created the Royal Museum of Art in Brussels, to be exclusively dedicated to the most remarkable Belgian painters, sculptors, engravers and architects (Roberts-Jones, 1987:26). The “nationalisation” of artworks and objects from the past responds to the need for a rich and exemplary past. As an episode amongst others, this is illustrated by the identification of the Flemish school with the so-called Belgian school in the speech made by the mayor of Brussels in 1840 to incorporate in the nation’s folds such artists as Van Eyck, Rubens and other great masters (Loir, 2001:49).

A notable turn in the second half of the twentieth century, in terms of the different pasts privileged or used by the museum, is without any doubt related to the development and the questioning of notions of modernity and contemporaneity in art. Of course, one can consider the restructuring of national museums according to the chronological divisions of modern and contemporary art as answers to pragmatic problems of space. However, is the history of art museums not also that of these temporal breaks based on an ideology and an aesthetic of the present? This might be considered the case in Norway, where the post-1945 break with the collections of the national gallery was established through the creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1990, or the creation of the Tate Modern in 1992 as an international gallery of contemporary art imagined as a break from the Tate Gallery of British art, founded in 1879 and dedicated uniquely to national art. In this perspective, the creation of a contemporary art museum is a way of performing a chronosophy, or a philosophy about the movement and the breaks of time. In France, the history of the modern art museum established in 1818 in the Luxemburg palace is one of a progressive divorce between modernity and the art actually represented in the state’s collections. The recreation of the museum of contemporary art after 1945 was an attempt to reconcile, in the words of its director, Jean Cassou, the state and genius. The Moderna museet in Stockholm, however, truly managed to incarnate an image of the modernity of Swedish society, and it became a model for the large national museum of art, the Centre Pompidou, in Paris.

In many European countries, the national museum is more or less completely an affair of state, depending directly on central government agencies to define it by weighing in on the choice of collections, through commissions but also through forms of censorship, going as far as contributing to the definition of a national-ideological style. The case of popular democracies during the cold war amply illustrates such practices, as did the fascist and Nazi dictatorships in the most sinister examples of the interwar period. Such nationalist constructions rely on the categorisation, identification and adoption of values that constitute the specificity of national art, held as the expression of a community or of a political project. Of course, national state museums are not systematically condemned to presenting an official version of the past: the use of the past is rather more the product of a compromise between different political movements at work inside of the state's apparatus.

The national museum is often related to scholarly sociability at a national level that provides elements of the study of those civilisations that are the pride of the nation, its origins and influence. Many art museums are conceived of in terms of a particular form of militant implication for a particular cause, be it scholarly or aesthetic, to which the state did not contribute directly, at least not in the traditional sense of the term. Thus certain museums that have come to have a national status are the result of personal or collective initiatives of collectors or associations of scholars, artists or amateurs that managed to gain collective recognition and state support for their projects. The result can lead to museums that are very different for the traditions of national history museums, and that participate in movements refused or locally ignored, for example related to a more international modernity. The representation of the art of the past and history also form a complex geography more or less related to the nation itself and its geo-political relation to other territories. This is inherent in the claim of certain national museums to the title of 'universal museum', developed specifically in reaction to restitution claims for objects issued by former colonies or countries formerly under the tutelage of a specific nation.

The museum's call to witness

Today it is the explicit intention of many history museums to develop specific pedagogies of historical understanding and thinking in their visitors by establishing a stronger resonance between the past and the present. It is a matter of using the experience of each and everyone to develop their capacity to interpret history and the identities related to it, mainly thanks to new museographical practices that use eyewitness accounts or environments designed to provoke and promote a more active role on the visitor's part. The museum needs to provide and maintain a culture of history that is first and foremost a response to the need, recognised by Jörn Rüsen, as felt by everyone, to be oriented in time. The history museum intends to provide a way of learning about the past based on the acquiring of specific competencies: not simply reading a story but analysing a document or learning about practices, collected and presented in a manner adapted to their nature and context. It is mainly dedicated to the development of learning through the visual culture of the past, as can be seen in the case of "classic" history museums, which to borrow the famous expression of Michelet, provide a "history that can be seen with the eyes". But more and more often, it resorts to a culture that uses the entire range of documentary possibilities open to the museum, especially through the means provided by new technologies.

The most recent generation of museums, such as that of the Museum of the History of Immigration, differentiates itself by calling on family and personal memories to incarnate the utopia of a democratically shared past, where all participate in historical research and writing. This strategy of making direct appeals for personal contributions to collections is used in holocaust museums, museums of terror or genocide, or, more generally, museums dedicated to the memory of a specific community. Such practices refer to a diversity of national political cultures, in as much as they claim to contribute to modalities of history writing that are in opposition to academic writing or at the least complementary to more classical forms of research. They often call on “independent” historians or claim to represent “public history”, or even to partake of a kind of militant civil mediation. The risk of such narratives is the instrumentalisation of historical knowledge, the use of research to supply lessons for the instruction of public morals or the defence of community interests up until then denied or neglected.

One of the major challenges for national museums today in their use of the past is to find a way of taking into account the field of oral history and memory studies (Wieviorka, 1998 ; Frank, 1992) – generalising the precept expressed by Freddy Raphaël some years ago in relation to the ecomuseum, to become “provocateurs of memory”. If the history of mentalities has experienced exemplary success in museums of late, then this is due to what Phillipe Ariès defined as the “recent rapprochement between the past and the present” (Ariès, 1954). Indeed local museums, or museums of identity, regional museums of ethnography and the different forms of ecomuseums, all sought to “provoke memory” (Raphaël & Herberich Marx). This was also the aim of the Imperial War Museum North, set up in Manchester in 2002 in a building by Daniel Libeskind that immerses the visitor into the struggles suffered by soldiers during the war and by their parents and grandparents, soliciting real or imagined memories. Inversely, professional literature on the museum is also filled today with the autobiographical memories of visits to the museum in young years and the indelible traces that they leave behind (Preziosi, 2003 ; Shore, 2005).

In certain cases, the national museum is no longer an “attic full of facts” (L. Febvre) that the historian visits at his leisure, or a means of vulgarising historical knowledge, but rather it has become a clinic for acts of memory (Andrieu et Lavabre, 2006), and first and foremost those memories that are felt as most traumatic, related to issues of memory and history under public discussion. Based on the collaboration of political and social movements, these museums privilege a kind of truth about the past anchored in the present, from the perspective of memories and values located at the heart of civic and political debates. The past is conjugated in the present but in a discontinuous form, focusing on particular moments that seem to appear sometimes contradictorily, in accordance with the rhythm of historical commemorations.

As has been shown by several generations of studies dedicated to the political manipulation of the past and to public uses of history, the collection of any museum is the product of reconstructions based on selection and choice, on selective omissions and voluntary commemoration. The relationship of the museum to the uses of the past, in terms of its activity in exhibiting and communicating history, is tightly bound to another larger story, that of oral and written narrative. Responsible for vulgarising scholarly history written in the context of or related to its collections, the museum first began by exhibiting national icons, evocative relics, capable of maintaining patriotic feeling and political fidelity, before turning to the everyday past that allowed

it to address the memories of the visitor. Although the classical or traditional history museum was capable of raising the spirits of national communities and even inspiring vocations in budding historians, a new generation of establishments is more set on provoking memory than on providing a kind of unified narrative.

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Introduction

Felicity Bodenstein & Dominique Poulot

The study of national narratives as a means of analysing the complexities and ambiguities of the national construct was established with the publication in 1990 of a collection of essays edited by Homi Bhabha as *Nation and Narration*. By framing the national narrative as an independent subject of inquiry, the product of *imagined communities*, to quote Benedict Anderson (1983), Bhabha's collection took the question beyond the spaces that memorial studies had provided for its examination in the now famous *Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1992). These appeared as expressions of the *roman national*, and Pierre Nora had recognised a series of themes, buildings, events and traditions for their capacity to incarnate and naturalise the history of the nation. In the 1990s, disciplines themselves increasingly came under scrutiny; academic historiography, art history, ethnography and archaeology were examined and interpreted as discourses that participate in the constant construction and invention of what Bhabha called the “system of cultural signification” that makes up the nation and that is ambivalent precisely because it is in constant flux. At the same time, museum studies developed and adapted a Foucauldian frame of interpretation that focused on the role played by the museum in the exercise of power through knowledge. This frame has been greatly nuanced over the last two decades, and the history of museums has reverted again to a more positive tone, as museums themselves have responded to the accusation of representing the power house of the nation's elite by developing policies that reflect the desire to engage in a more open relationship with the public and promote their image as institutions “not of confinement but of exhibition” (Bennett 1998, 74). Just as the discourse of the nation itself was characterised by Bhabha as *Janus faced*, the museum too seems to pivot between perceptions of progress and conservatism, tradition and revision.

This collection, of course, reflects the combined heritage of these perspectives, examining the different narratives that museums have, since their inception and up until the present day, developed as monuments to and of national histories. Including work commissioned in the form of reports for the EuNaMus project and texts developed from conference proceedings¹, the collection has attempted to examine how history has been narrated in the museum across Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The aim has been to identify how narratives and their impact might have changed over time and more particularly how this can contribute to our understanding of how they might be changing today. The approach adopted by the EuNaMus project also needs to be considered in the context of other major projects that are currently dedicated to understanding the changes in narrative constructions introduced by the creation of new institutions, i.e., *Museums in an Age of Migration*, MeLA (Basso Peressut, Pozzi 2012) and *Exhibiting Europe* (Kaiser, Krankenhagen et al. 2012), focusing respectively on the relationship between museum narratives and multiculturalism and European integration in the last two decades. The long historical perspective adopted in the questioning of the museum's *Uses of past*,

the second chapter of the EuNaMus project, is dedicated and adapted to understanding the historically and administratively defined place that the national paradigm has occupied since the inception of the museum as a staple institution of the nation state (see also the first set of EuNaMus publications: Aronsson, Elgenius 2011). This allows us to consider different temporalities of institutional change that show that inclusion and negotiation with other paradigms is a constant factor of changing narratives in European museum history. Whilst one can clearly observe an acceleration of this phenomenon, a variability of the frames of references do not exclude current reinventions of specifically national narratives that are often, but not always, deconstructions of a certain tradition and that appear in parallel to new developing master narratives of, e.g., world cultures, migration and Europeanization.

In terms of disciplinary coverage, whilst a majority of these papers deal with what can clearly be defined as “history museums”, nearly equivalent attention has been given to narratives of art history, ethnography and archaeology. Despite the large chronological and geographical scope of this collection of texts, the overall structure places emphasis on the idea that narratives of the past are accounts based on the diversity of materials or factual sources used to illustrate them, constrained by conventions that bestow particular values or meaning upon them. Whilst history might appear as a limitless domain potentially capable of providing an infinity of accounts, Appadurai’s seminal article ‘The past as a scarce resource’ posits the existence of formal constraints that can be identified in the interpretation of how a society tells the story of its past. Just as a country or a society might possess a limited amount of natural resources, the past is exploited according to what Appadurai believes to be a set of universal constraints that all cultures use and establish according to an infinite set of variations, adapting them to their specific needs. It follows that one might consider these formal constraints as tools for structuring comparisons, formulating differences and analysing the narrative construction of the past in national museums across Europe. The four minimal dimensions listed by Appadurai—authority, continuity, depth and interdependence—have in a certain sense structured the organisation of texts that form this publication (Appadurai 1981, 203).

Firstly, the question of authority, which cuts across all of the papers, has been addressed in a specifically explicit manner in the first section, as contributions have tried to relate the notion of the individual curator or museum director to the notion of the author in general and how he/she develops a disciplinary language that is recognised as authoritative when presented in the museum (Bann, Hillström, Lerario, Catapoti). The exception to these examples appears with the case of museums under communism, where the national museum indeed did appear to represent directly the voice of the state (Petkova-Campbell). The eclipse of the individual voice behind that of the authoritative institution appears as a specificity of the museum’s way of constructing national narratives. Another aspect of authority is “place” and the force it bestows on the story being told; Versailles (Cordier), the house where Goethe died (Breur, Kahl) or the Acropolis (Ntaflou) are examined as the major sites of history; however, one might add that these places may also be recreations of sites, as for example the reconstitution of torture chambers in the Budapest House of Terror (Apor).

Continuity and depth can be related to the expression of historical temporalities as translated into the language of the museum. They contribute to defining what precisely constitutes the “traditional” narrative and help to characterise a potential break with tradition, as examined in the

second and fourth sections. What makes a national history appear as a seamless whole? Are there ruptures and how and when have they been expressed? What depth is given to the historical narratives by privileging specific periods, by considering some more fundamental or characteristic of the nation than others? Some of these questions are directly addressed in most of the papers, but they appear most particularly in terms of depth in Watson's work on the current representation of "origins" or in Pettersson's discussion of the case of Swedish archaeology and racial theory, whilst the instrumentalisation of collections to establish a sense of continuity is perhaps best exemplified by the use of national ethnography in Central Europe over the past 150 years (Vukov, Pohrib). Such exceptional historic breaks as the French Revolution or the fall of Communism have challenged the need for continuity; the latter is considered by Peter Apor in his examination of what he terms as *Mystical Nationalism*, defined as a means of overcoming the divide that now separates former communist countries from their most recent past.

The interdependence of different pasts and how these help construct or provide alternatives to the national is explored in the third section, *Intersecting authorities, territories and narratives*. How are the necessary relations that the national entertains with other authorities and territories expressed? What narrative space is given to those cultural and geographical areas that intersect with the national: the regional, universal and the transnational? How does the space of the museum contain and mirror the vast geographical spaces that its collections metonymically represent? Case studies dealing with issues such as the presentation of the heritage of the Catholic church in Spain (Cerezales) or the intersection between the national narrative and a regionalised gender narrative of contemporary art in Sweden (Sundberg) consider interdependency of authority. Meanwhile, universal or cosmopolitan values in national museums have been considered in the context of nineteenth century Hungary (Ebli, Szekely) and its bid for national independence, the colonial past discussed in relation to Spain's nostalgia for its former Empire (Lanzarote-Guiral), and finally the resolutely post-colonial context of twenty-first century Britain (Jenkins). The question of transfers of museographical traditions, such as the relationship between Turkey and the European museum tradition (Savino), is also closely linked to that of the existence of transnational narratives and dialogues. These were considered in a study on the representation of Napoleon across Europe (Bodenstein), through the international exchange of national narratives in contemporary exhibitions (Passini) or as a comparison of histories told across such borders as those separating the Republic of Ireland from Northern Ireland (Cauvin). Lastly, the idea of a connecting narrative, such as that of national maritime enterprises, was also examined (Sawyer). Though an analysis of how these different narratives work may lead to the identification of master narratives, nevertheless these "constraints" have the advantage of not reducing these tales to myths.

Indeed, the narratives of the museum, of history, archaeology, art history and ethnography all seek to establish and display facts, the specific status of which also needs to be recognised and analysed in its own right. The recent tendency has been to place the emphasis on the "imagined" nature of these narratives as fictions, perhaps as the result of an unconscious misunderstanding of Benedict Anderson's so often quoted title. In the introduction to a collection of essays analysing the narratives of human sciences, Jeannie Moser defines the dual characteristic of these "stories", likened to objects that are both naturally determined and the product of a cultural context, that can be attributed with symbolic meaning without losing their factuality (Höcker,

Moser et al. 2006). This means that to explicate the narrative structure in the museum's representation of a particular episode of the past does not necessarily imply that the material content of the narrative is demonstrated to be mere invention. The invention is in the structuring of the narrative itself and can contribute to its "imagination" even in the case of what was as yet a non-existent nation state, as shown with the establishment of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Kammel), where the unification of the German-speaking community was staged before it officially existed and came to provide the idea of a cultural memory *without national borders*, alternatively mobilised for more or less positive ends throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The recognition of this duality is all the more important as narrative itself is of course a notion whose study is essentially related to literary disciplines dealing with the textual analysis of fiction; by adopting narrative as a central notion for the analysis of the museum, the project intended to encourage an interdisciplinary approach that can be related to the "expansionism" (Kindt, 2009) of narratology towards other disciplines in recent years. The historian's relationship to narratology can be traced back to the 1970s and the seminal studies of historical writing published by Hayden White as *Metahistory* (1973). In 1978, art historian Stephen Bann for the first time applied instruments of textual analysis to the museum by considering how France's first history museums dealt with the representation of the past in the first half of the nineteenth century (Bann, 1978). Over thirty years later he returned to the question in the first EuNaMus "Great Narratives" conference, recalling his method; adopting concepts developed in structuralist narratology to the analysis of museum display, he "read" display as a rhetorical strategy that he described using the same figures of speech habitually identified in text analysis: metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche.

The second narrative approach to the museum can be related to the interpretation by James Clifford of the museum as a contact zone expressing a set of power relationships that place the nation in a larger context or that relate it to its constitutive internal entities. This perspective is due in particular to the emergence of post-colonial studies (Loumpet-Galetzine; Lien & Nielssen), but also to the development of gender studies (Sundberg). Whilst Bann analysed the visual aspect of the museum narrative, in this perspective attention is given to narration as the expression of conflicts often related to the museum's past, to the constitution of its collection, as described first and foremost in those narratives related to the provenance of objects, which will receive more in-depth development in the second WP3 EuNaMus volume but which provides the background of certain themes dealt with here (Jenkins, Ébli, Lanzarote-Guiral).

In effect, the historiographical threads represented in the work of the aforementioned authors consider the two main kinds of narrative produced by the museum, which can loosely be termed as external and internal: firstly those narratives that are intentionally constructed as outward, public expressions of the museum's mission, using the collections; they can be "read" mainly through the act of display and are in a sense performed during the museum visit. They may also find expressions in texts related to the museum's display activity, such as guides, catalogues etc.; they produce accounts of the past as defined by the different materials present in the museum's collection. Secondly, there are those narratives that are produced by the practices related to the establishment of the museum and the development of its activities; these are in a sense part of the story of the museum itself and may be defined as narratives of discovery, salvation,

preservation, and provenance. They are, historically speaking, often relatively invisible in the museum's display itself but important in structuring accounts of museum practice that help the institution to define its mission and justify its pedagogical, social, and in some cases political role. However, and thirdly, it may be observed that in the context of the recent reflexive turn in museum display, the separation between these internal and external narratives has been challenged, with displays and exhibitions that document the history of archaeology, ethnography, and collecting, and that critically consider (their own) display traditions. They make museum practice an object of the exhibition itself by paying greater attention to the story/the history of the object as a collectable, or by attempting to deconstruct the myth-making role of former museum narratives. The identification and analysis of this third category shows that the museum has become more aware of the question of its own voice (Malama, Meyer). As an institution that tells a story, its choices, its orientations and programme, in short its voice has in some cases become more identifiable and thus its great narratives more critically balanced.

The results of this part of the EuNaMus project will try to establish the specificity of the museum's authority in recounting the past as a material performance opposed to the written narratives produced by professional historians or academics. And although museums often directly employ academics and express in many cases the opinions of professional historians, their strong official, social and political role still means that they tend to seek out a consensual presentation often gained through absences or silence rather than critical confrontation. In order to consider the difficulties that face the curator and to consider his voice from inside the institution as well as from the outside, this collection has called on the contribution of several museum professionals (Kammel, Meyer and Malama). The history told by the museum is considered here as an expression not only of professional historiography but also of the nation's *Geschichtskultur*, to use the concept formulated by Jörn Rüsen to express a larger more public relationship to historical matters. Corollary to this difference of *genre* is a different kind of experience, an assertion made by Mieke Bal when she writes that: "a visit to a museum is an event that takes place in space and in time, and that it therefore produces a narrative" (Bal 2000, 149). The examination of the experience of these narratives is attempted in several of these papers, such as the relation of the exhibition of religious art to the stations of the cross (Cerezales), the immersive character of the museum complex (Arena) or the narrative power of the visitor's path through the museum (Meyer).

In theoretical terms, the specificity of the museum narrative can be considered by focusing on the historiographical notions of "great narratives" employed in the title and the corollary notion of "master narrative," which leads us back to the notion of authority by introducing the metaphor of the *master* in relation to typically anonymous but institutionally legitimated museum narratives. As a pioneering figure in the questioning of the structure of museum narratives, Mieke Bal described her use of narratology as the effort to establish connections "between a narratological perspective and ideological issues" (Bal 1990, 750). Most of these papers have sought to bring ideological questions to the forefront of the analysis of narratives. The notion of the master-narrative helps the analysis of the museum appear as explicitly interpretative and contributes to the elaboration of a real comparative overview of how, for better or for worse, the representations of the past in museums are related to the construction of national identities. This appears as a necessary effort, though to be pursued with care, in the context of a project that

proposes to deal with such a large chronological and geographical frame as 200 years of European museum history.

Indeed, beyond the notion of narrative itself, understood as the modalities of story telling, these papers seek to deal with the creation of great national narratives in the particular context of the museum, relating them to the general ideas or principles about the nation that are being expressed. The question of the master narrative has been considered in relation to the work of historians; in Stefan Berger's introduction to the collective volume, *Narrating the Nation*, he states that historiographical studies have become increasingly aware of how historians have contributed to the shaping of a national myth or a "variety of national master narratives that were situated within and were themselves part of cultural and political power relationships" (Berger, 2011:5). The notion of the master narrative can easily be metaphorically related to that of the author/master identified by Krijn 'Thijs' article dedicated to the "Metaphor of the Master". It proves to be particularly fruitful in the case of institutional narratives produced by state-run museums (Thijs 2011, 74). In this case the master narrative appears as the "*big story* told by the dominant group in a given society." This point of view is interesting to the objectives of this project, as we ask whether the national museum enjoys a particular status in terms of who is allowed to tell stories. With 'Thijs, one might ask whether national museums are part of an "historical culture that is marked by a specific hierarchy, at the top of which stands the 'master'" (Thijs 2011, 65). Is the national museum's narrative of history always a master narrative because it stands as a generally uncontested account that, by its power to include and exclude certain stories, necessarily provides a master narrative? Is it also a master narrative in the sense that 'Thijs suggests, as provider of a narrative framework that is the master copy for other narratives – developed again in other museums (Petkova-Campbell, Ébli and Vukov)?

The notion of the master narrative has become central to the study of cultural identity and historiography since it was imported from literary studies and applied to historical writing by post-modern authors such as Hayden White. It has since become a widely employed term, by historians but also by a wider public, and has come to be used in relation to nearly all kinds of social and cultural phenomena (Sabrow, Jarausch, 2002). The *master narrative* may be defined as the overreaching ideological message about the past that motivates the museum's general programme and structures its display(s), it is "intended to enable mastery of the messy and complicated real world" (Greenhill 2000: 24). Underlying ideas or principles, it brings together stories, great and small, general and particular, to make them intelligible and in the most explicit cases to allow for the identification of a national artistic "specific" (Vukov) or that of a national psyche, as suggested by Eilertsen's identification of the "freedom loving" northerners.

Formally, the master narrative does not necessarily imply the identification of a specific narrative structure as related to its beginning, middle or end; however, we have already shown that chronological organisation and depth are essential factors to describing and understanding the master narrative. Historically, Megill situates the master narrative in the context of the rise of nations in the nineteenth century: "In each case there was a master narrative that was seen as running through the nation's history – the master narrative of the nation's movement from its early beginnings, through the rise of national self-consciousness, to its current struggle for recognition and success" (Megill, Allan et al. 2007, 33). In this sense, of course, its construction has accompanied the coming of age of the museum as a public institution.

Eileen Hooper-Greenhill provides us with another useful set of factors that condition the specificity of constructing master narratives in the museums and that recall the notions of authority and interdependence suggested by Appadurai. According to Greenhill, they “depend on a number of techniques of inclusion or exclusion. These include hierarchies of value (which relate to the intentions of the museum), authenticity (object is both there to be observed and is presented as ‘the real thing’), and verifiable knowledge (the provenance of the object demonstrated through documentation). These combinations produce apparently reliable and trustworthy material evidence” (Greenhill 2000, 24). All of these have been taken into account by considering how the collection itself is conceived of and used, in the question of racial theory in Sweden’s national museum of archaeology (Pettersson) or also in Lerario’s description of the creation of the *Museo Pigorini* in Rome. As factors that are generally implicit to the workings of the museum, these considerations allow us to relate the case of the museum to another major characteristic of the master narrative defined by Allan Megill: “because it is a master narrative, it is often partly hidden, lying in the background, to be deployed selectively by the historian”. Indeed as shown in the case of the museum of Neolithic archaeology in Greece (Catapoti), the absence of all explicative texts can in fact be the manifestation of an implicit master narrative and reinforce the sense of authenticity (Cox, Stromquist 1998, 15). Thus one needs to be attentive to the fact that whilst historical narratives are told through the means of texts, objects, images and other media, the master narrative that guides them may not be underlined in any such an explicit manner but is rather more expressed through their combined effect. Care should be taken to examine the extent to which the museum is indeed presenting such a thing as a truly coherent master narrative and to what extent other factors related to the constraints and contingencies of museums and collections, as noted by Hooper-Greenhill and as opposed to history texts, influence their presentation of the past. In fact, in some cases there is even a veritable refusal to express anything like a coherent national narrative, not related to contingent factors but rather more symptomatic of the absence of consensus and of an on-going negotiation about how the establishing nation should represent itself (Bergvelt, Loumpet-Galetzine).

In order to avoid any misunderstanding concerning the expressions of “great”, “grand” and “master” narratives, it is useful at this point to consider Megill’s differentiation: “A ‘grand narrative’ is an account that purports to be the authoritative account of history in general; to this notion we can add the closely allied notion of a ‘master narrative’, which is an account that purports to the authoritative account of some particular segment of history – say the history of a nation”. In the case of national master narratives, Megill states that “behind the master narratives, there lay a larger ‘grand narrative’ – a secularized version of the Christian narrative of pristine origin, struggle, and ultimate salvation” (Megill, Allan et al. 2007, 33). This grand narrative, for example, appears to have been recovered by the Spanish church in order to compete with the national one in the case of the *Edades del Hombre* exhibitions (Cerezales). Catapoti has also shown the importance of the grand narrative of scientific and progressive modernity in structuring Greece’s national story.

The expression “great historical narratives” was chosen to avoid being tied down to the more ideologically specific defined notions “grand” and “master” narratives. Indeed, the perspective of these conferences was to consider the principles that have allowed the national museum since its creation to coherently present great histories in a literal sense – vast and spanning major

chronological and geographical subjects. As a more neutral term, “great narrative” allows us to consider the present state and evolution of the *master narrative* in relation to the telling of great stories. However, one should add that this predominance of “great narratives” in the context of the museum is in itself not ideologically neutral. The museum does indeed tend towards a representation of what John Brewer (2010) has termed as “prospect history”, those great overviews that sum up vast frames of time and represent large territories. Though, one should add that there are also some exceptional examples of *micro-narrative* type national museums – such as the Goethe National Museum in Weimar (Breuer & Kahl), the first biographical museum to receive the label of ‘national’.

By trying to represent vast overviews of history, the museum often makes an implicit claim to completeness –Lerario’s discussion of the case of Luigi Pigorini and his role in the creation of the Museo Preistorico Etnografico in Rome in 1875 shows that the newly united Italy was clearly represented through the remains of physical anthropology – however, when the first visitors entered the museum they were confronted with still empty yet already labelled showcases for the yet-to-be collected objects (see also Bertolino for the Italian case). This anecdote illustrates the museum’s ambition for completeness, perhaps “the most exclusionary version of historical narrative. It supposes one true history rather than competing histories” (Brewer 2010, 97) — though one might add that the great narrative is not necessarily more exclusionary than micro-history. The explicit or implicit elements that express the museum’s claim to the production of an authoritative narrative are more important than any specific type of content or history. A contemporary approach that can be found in national history museums that have attempted, in many cases, a revision of their traditional narrative (Poulot, Clarke) appears to be related to the historiographical duality of the use of the term master-narrative, as considered by Jarausch and Sabrow (2002). In fact, it refers to the extensive overview, the great synthetic historical tradition that presents the spectator with a rather monolithic vision of how things were; but at the same time, the term was developed to analyse the construction of history itself and immediately introduces a critical approach towards the idea of a “unique history”. This is the conundrum that the recent reinstallation of the main gallery in the Swiss national museum tried to solve by establishing a wheel of myths, as described here by one of the exhibition’s curators: “Within the wheel, Swiss myths and stereotypes are presented: crossbows, cowbells and Heidi. It is the wheel of history, the wheel of constantly recurring historical images, familiar to – and made use of by – every nation” (Meyer).

Once this kind of myth identification has taken place, one might ask to what extent contemporary museums express the need, ever more pressingly felt within the discipline of history, to write a post-modern history that “opposes the historic monism of the twentieth century and that seeks to embrace the plurality of views that could characterize the narrative of the twenty-first century” (Jarausch, Sabrow 2002, 12). From a narratological perspective, a general remark can be made about story-telling in the museum – that is the absence of the first person narrative and the predominance of a third person narrative, whose identity is perceived to be the “voice” of the institution itself. The national museum represents an authoritative voice that speaks for the state, which it appears to represent. As emphasized by Mieke Bal, “the ‘first person’ remains invisible”. This fact greatly reinforces the museum’s capacity to establish a narrative that can be felt by the visitor to be representative of the collective, in as much as it is

anonymous. The possibility to tell stories from multiple points of view appears as an essential challenge for museums today, one that can be partially taken up by the increased importance of temporary exhibitions that allow for a new diversity of narratives (Hegaradt, Malama, Bodenstein). However, opening up the museum to narratives that are inclusive of multicultural communities and of ethnic diversity inside of nations remains difficult. How to reinvent universalism, the traditional narrative of the other, by globalising it, as in the ideological transformation currently being undertaken by the British Museum (Jenkins), so that the museum truly speaks to the world? How to go beyond the deconstruction of the national narrative towards something new? These questions appear as the major challenge faced by museums today.

Notes

- ¹ These proceedings are based on the presentations made by researchers that came together from across Europe during two separate events organised by EuNaMus work package 3, “Uses of the Past”, directed by Dominique Poulot at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne : *Great historical narratives in European museums (1750–2010): Building National, Looking across Borders and Remembering the Past*, Paris, Institut national d’histoire de l’art, 29th of June to the 1st of July, 2011; *Great historical narratives in Europe’s National Museums*, CRRMF, Louvre and Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris, 25th and 26th of November 2011.

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Constructing Narratives in the Museum: Authors and Locations

The Authored Museum



Alternative Paradigms for the Historical Museum: Lenoir's Monuments Français and Du Sommerard's Cluny

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Abstract

This paper considers two French museums that can lay claim to being the first historical museums, and, in a special sense, the first national museums to be created in Europe. The first was set up in the 1790s, during the French Revolution, by Alexandre Lenoir, who was memorably pictured at the time defending the tombs of the French monarchy at the Abbey of St Denis from the assault of iconoclasts. Installed in the former monastery of the Petits-Augustins on the left bank of the Seine in Paris, this remarkable institution survived throughout the Empire, and was only closed after the return of the Bourbon dynasty to France in 1815/16, when many of the monuments that he saved from vandalism returned to their former locations. The second had a very different origin. Alexandre du Sommerard, a wealthy magistrate, began in the 1820s to collect a wide variety of objects of medieval and Renaissance origin, and was pictured as 'L'Antiquaire' by the artist Charles Renoux in 1825. Having rented the entire first floor of the medieval Hôtel de Cluny in the Latin quarter of Paris in the early 1830s, he installed his collection and welcomed visitors there from around 1834. After his death, in 1843, the French state officially purchased the collection and the building for the nation, and inaugurated the Musée de Cluny, now known as the Musée National du Moyen Âge.

I shall be speaking today about two French museums that can lay claim to being the first historical museums, and, in a special sense, the first national museums to be created in Europe. The first was set up in the 1790s, during the French Revolution, by Alexandre Lenoir, who was memorably pictured at the time defending the tombs of the French monarchy at the Abbey of St Denis from the assault of iconoclasts. Installed in the former monastery of the Petits-Augustins on the left bank of the Seine in Paris, this remarkable institution survived throughout the Empire, and was only closed after the return of the Bourbon dynasty to France in 1815/16, when many of the monuments that he saved from vandalism returned to their former locations. The second had a very different origin. Alexandre du Sommerard, a wealthy magistrate, began in the 1820s to collect a wide variety of objects of medieval and Renaissance origin, and was pictured as 'L'Antiquaire' by the artist Charles Renoux in 1825. Having rented the entire first floor of the medieval Hôtel de Cluny in the Latin quarter of Paris in the early 1830s, he installed his collection and welcomed visitors there from around 1834. After his death, in 1843, the French state officially purchased the collection and the building for the nation, and inaugurated the Musée de Cluny, now known as the Musée National du Moyen Âge.

I should make it plain from the start that I am also attempting to sum up, briefly, a debate about the significance of these two museums, and their relationship to one another, that goes to the heart of what we might mean by a historical museum. I hope it won't seem self-indulgent if I link this debate to the sequence of my own writings on the subject. These date back over a third of a century, but as my study of 1984, *The Clothing of Clio*, has just been reissued in paperback, and published in a Russian translation this year, I might be forgiven for thinking that the issues are still alive. I first aired my thoughts about these two museums when lecturing at Princeton and Wesleyan universities in 1977. The outcome was an article in the journal *History & Theory*, published in 1978, and translated into Italian for the journal *Lotus* in 1982, where it was accompanied by an article of Dominique Poulot on 'The birth of the museum of architecture in France during the Revolution'. In 1984, I published *The Clothing of Clio*, of which one chapter was a revised and expanded version of my earlier article, and in 1986 Dominique Poulot published an essay in Pierre Nora's famous collection, *Les lieux de mémoire*, in which he discussed my article in the light of his own interpretation of the Monuments français, and commented on my interpretation of its relationship to Cluny.¹ I won't go any further into the bibliography around these two museums, which has swelled from a tiny trickle into a vast flood. But I will suggest that there is a fundamental issue at stake here about the identity of the historical museum, which still bears close examination.

Dominique Poulot's position is clearly stated in the 1986 piece. I had argued that the two museums stand in opposition to one another, in so far as they represent two alternative modes of visualising history. He suggests: 'The difference between the century rooms at the Petits-Augustins and that of the 'Chamber of François 1er at Cluny, though it be eloquent, should not mask their common ambition to figure history as it has been 'really' incarnated. The virtuosity of the first attempt had moreover left such memories that the transformation of the Du Sommerard collection into a public museum took place under the auspices of Lenoir'. I absolutely agree with the second sentence, but I am still inclined to query the first. And since I also spent a full chapter of *The Clothing of Clio* trying to set the context of what the German historian Leopold von Ranke meant when he said the historian should recount how things 'really' happened – 'wie es eigentlich

gewesen' – I am not so ready to accept that one and the same concept and practice of historical recreation can be stretched to include both museums.²

I will pass rapidly to discussing the surviving views of these two museums, and analysing some of the reminiscences that indicate how they might have been viewed at the time. But first I should refer to the little chart that I originally used to clarify my approach. In the 1970s, we had all learned from Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* to test the proposition that different 'epistemes', or regimes of knowledge, had succeeded one another in European history since the Middle Ages. Thomas Kuhn had built on the work of Bachelard to argue that the sciences proceeded not through continuities, but through what he termed a 'paradigm shift', in which again one regime was discontinuous with its predecessor. Moreover Hayden White had proposed in *Metahistory* (1973) that the predominant historians of the nineteenth century 'emplotted' their work in accordance with different rhetorical strategies – such as metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. As indicated in my chart, these arguments led me to propose a structuralist model (employing Saussure's concepts 'syntagm' and 'system') that conveyed the essential difference between the two museums.³ In the *Monuments français*, the ordering principle would be essentially the 'century room', in which 'specimens' of sculpture are arranged, next to one another, but with no overarching thematic unity. In Cluny, by contrast, the wager is to combine diverse material objects in such a way as to create an overall sense of 'lived' history – 'le vécu'.

How do we set about resolving this question of how the two museums might have communicated a sense of history? Obviously the surviving artistic representations of the different collections are themselves viewed through the prisms of particular sensibilities and styles. When Hubert Robert paints a room in the *Monuments français* around 1803, he endows it with the same atmospheric gloom as he was employed in the representation of caves and grottoes. When an artist of the next generation, Jean-Lubin Vauzelle (b.1787) depicts the 13th century room for a valedictory publication in 1816, he pays much more attention to colour and detail, though he also cheekily adds his own name to the side of a tomb.⁴ Besides these visual records, the expressed intentions of the respective founders, Lenoir and Du Sommerard, must indeed be taken very seriously – though Francis Haskell's excellent essay on the *Monuments français* shows that Lenoir was obliged to take almost contradictory positions as the phases of the Revolution proceeded, in order to sustain his initiative in rescuing the symbols of the tyranny of the Ancien regime. First of all, he was committed to a narrative of rise and decline, which was to encourage young artists to grasp the opportunity to rescue French art from its monarchical past. Later he addressed himself more specifically to creating local colour and historical atmosphere.⁵ As a third category of reception, the accounts of visitors to these museums are obviously of prime importance – though, as we shall see, such accounts might date from many years after the original visits, and so be subject to the inevitable distortions of memory.

Let me emphasise from the start, however, that contemporaries did indeed express regret for the destruction of the *Monuments français* in 1816, and linked it to the future development of the Musée de Cluny. The historian Jules Michelet's comments on the subject are well-known, and I will be considering them closely in this paper. But it is also noteworthy that Prosper de Barante, the historian whose *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* was the first major work of Romantic historiography to appear in the mid-1820s, commented on the subject when he presented the report advocating the acquisition of Du Sommerard's collection by the French state in 1843:

The Hôtel de Cluny will take the place [for young students] of that Musée des Petits-Augustins that we were wrong to destroy, and where, in our youth, when we also were students, we went and walked, beneath these old cloisters, among the tombs that M. Lenoir had preserved from the revolutionary destruction.⁶

So Cluny was seen by Barante as ‘taking the place’ of the Monuments français. But does that also mean that it offered the same kind of vision of history? The way in which Barante emphasises first and foremost the aspect of ‘preservation’ from revolutionary vandalism is consistent with the tone of one contemporary testimony that I believe I discovered, since I found it in the unpublished manuscript diary of a young Scottish aristocrat, Lord John Campbell, who visited the museum in 1802:

[...] we went to see The ci-devant Convent of the Augustins in which are deposited all the tombs and monuments which escaped the fury of the revolutionists, (they are arranged in different cloisters and apartments) each containing the specimens of statuary and sculpture during one century beginning with the earliest periods of the art, and receiving light through windows of coloured glass as nearly of the same antiquity as possible. Some very beautiful and curious specimens [...] are among them.⁷

Now I know that Pascal Griener, who is doing remarkable though as yet unpublished work on the Monuments français, would explain that foreign visitors often had a jaundiced view of the installation – maybe this British visitor was unaware of the fact that one of Lenoir’s first concepts had been the creation of a kind of secular equivalent to England’s Westminster Abbey! For me, nonetheless, the fact that Campbell (like Barante) notes particularly the aspect of preservation from the ‘revolutionists’, and that he views the objects as individual ‘specimens’, rather than for their collective impact, is significant.

I will return later to Barante’s interesting report advocating the acquisition of Du Sommerard’s collection for the nation. But for the present, it is worth noting that, being born in 1782, Barante became a student at the Ecole Polytechnique in 1798, and so his reported experience of the Monuments français dates from this period. 1798 was however was the very year of Michelet’s birth, with the consequence that his memories of the museum dated essentially from his childhood in the period of the Empire, roughly a decade later. Since Michelet’s account of these experiences does indeed bulk very large in all accounts of the impact of the museum, it is worth examining his texts in some detail.

First of all, as Haskell acknowledges, it is surely significant that Michelet’s first published record of his visits came as late as 1846, where he was already in middle age. What Haskell does not perhaps acknowledge sufficiently is the complex layering of these recorded memories. Initially, in 1846, it is in the context of a letter to Edgar Quinet, that prefaces his book, *Le Peuple*, that Michelet records the two strongest impressions that he received in his childhood: first of all came the reading of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*, then:

The next strongest impression of my childhood is of the museum of French monuments, which has so unfortunately been torn down [*détruit*]. It was there and nowhere else that I first received a vivid impression of history. I filled these tombs with my imagination; I felt the dead through the marble; and it was not without a little terror that I visited the low vaults, where Dagobert, Chilperic, and Fredegonde were sleeping.⁸

This recollection is then virtually repeated in a more elaborate form in footnote to the text of Michelet’s great History of the French Revolution, in the volume that appeared in 1853:

Here I am opening a wound in my heart. This museum, where my mother during my age of childhood poverty, nonetheless rich in imagination, where my mother so many times led me by the hand, it perished in 1815. A government born in a foreign country hastened to destroy this sanctuary of national art. How many souls had caught there the spark of history, the interest in great memories, the vague desire to remount the ages! I can still recall the emotion, always the same and always vivid, that made my heart beat when, very small, I entered beneath the sombre vaults and contemplated these pale faces, when I went and searched, ardent, curious, fearful, from room to room. I was searching for, what? I do not know: the life of then, no doubt, and the genius of the times. I was not quite certain that they were not still alive, all these marble sleepers, stretched out on their tombs; and when, from the sumptuous monuments of the 16th century gealing with alabaster, I passed to the low room of the Merovingians where was found the cross of Dagobert, I did not quite know if I would not see Chilperic and Fredegonde rising and sitting up.⁹

It is of course a wonderful passage, in which a tender scenario of the historian's childhood is refracted through the mind, and recreated in the prose, of the mature Romantic writer. But let us also bear in mind that this is a footnote to the main text, in which Michelet is specifically addressing the question of the place of the museum in French history, and consequently as a historical museum. First of all, Michelet establishes the crucial point that the Louvre is an international museum, a 'musée des nations', whereas the *Monuments français*, adopted by the Revolution in the same period, 'could be called [the museum] of France': it was indeed precisely a 'national museum':

[...] an incomparable treasure of sculptures drawn from convents, palaces, churches. A whole world of the historical dead, summoned from their chapels at the powerful voice of the Revolution, had come and taken themselves to this valley of Jehosaphat. There they were yesterday, with no plinths, often badly placed, but not in disorder. For the first time, on the contrary, true order, the only true, that of the ages. The perpetuity of the nation was reproduced there. France saw herself finally as herself, in her development; from century to century and from man to man, from tombs to tombs, she could effect in a sense an examination of her conscience. Who am I? she said. What is my social and religious principle? And what then is the life that beats in my heart?¹⁰

This is a very substantial claim, which allies the message of the 'destroyed' museum with the vast project of national self-examination that only the historian, that is Michelet himself, can undertake to bring to fruition. Indeed, it is Michelet the historian speaking, conscious that this is his self-appointed task, whereas in the footnote dealing with his childhood, we have the over-determined memory of Michelet the child and devoted son.

But let us focus for the moment on just one implication of his claim as a historian. Michelet admits that the sculptural objects are 'often badly placed, but not in disorder', because 'the only true' order is 'that of the ages'. My argument is indeed bound up in the hypothesis that the *Monuments français* and Cluny are not simply two museum types in a historical sequence, but alternative paradigms indicating different perceptions of the past. I would certainly not deny that the *Monuments français* had an 'order', but it is surely significant that Michelet's two retrospective views of the museum indicate rather different ideas on how that 'order' might be understood. My own view of the individuality of Cluny is pitched precisely against what is evidently the lack of understanding that even the curators of that museum displayed, in the not so distant past, with the regard to the system that Du Sommerard was putting into place for the first time. As late as 1972, the official guide to the collections (still the only one available when I was originally working on the material) wrote about his achievement in this way:

Engravings and old paintings allow us to imagine with what picturesque disorder the Du Sommerard collection was then presented. It is romantic taste that had presided over the assemblage of objects. It was a matter of evoking history much more than of giving value to works of art. All the genres, all the periods were mixed up; on the beds rested helmets, cuirasses and gauntlets; on the coffers of the Renaissance, precious Byzantine ivories were the neighbours of enamelled salt-cellars, mirrored boxes, and Gothic locks; the most beautiful embroidered hangings disappeared behind Venetian mirrors and trophies of arms; suits of armour, upright, lance in hand, guarded the sleep of the collector. Quite often, he had composed furniture from antique fragments, but of diverse provenance; quite often, let us admit it, he had not known how to recognise a forgery, since archaeological criticism was only then at its beginnings.¹¹

It is a nice paradox that the worthy curator of the 1970s who celebrates the progress of historical knowledge seems quite incapable of appreciating the originality of an installation that, for the first time, was presenting the past not in terms of detached ‘monuments’, but as a vivid spectacle of interconnected objects, all of which could be woven together to stimulate a coherent narrative of the past. This is precisely what a visitor like Madame de Saint-Surin was doing when she published her description of the Hôtel de Cluny in 1835. She certainly had no particular trouble in linking together the different elements that the curator of the 1970s found so incongruous:

Lifting up the tapestries across the doorways, we pass into the Room of François I. His bed is there, with elegant caryatids supporting the roof; his armour is laid out on the counterpane; you would think it was the hero resting! Two knights standing at the foot of the bed, with lance in hand and lowered visor, seem to stand guard over their master. At the sight of these pictorial episodes, the imagination is struck and tempted to take the marvel for reality.¹²

If Madame de Saint-Surin was in no doubt that the knights were there to guard their master, François I, she was also willing to be convinced by the spectacle of two suits of armour engaged in a game of chess, in the window embrasure: ‘two knights seated in front of one another are getting ready to move the first pawns; and certainly with less imagination than Hoffmann had when he wrote his fantastic tales, it appears as if you are present at this game.’¹³ Only when her account migrates to the medieval chapel of the Abbots of Cluny, does she venture a slight criticism of the ingenuity with which Du Sommerard has sought to engage the imaginative response of his visitors:

Most the visitors repaired to the chapel where you can see, in the forms appropriate to the Middle Ages, all the furnishings suitable for a place of prayer. One thing alone seemed to us to contrast with the gravity of the place: this is a statue clothed in priestly robes which is standing before the lectern.

When you are on the point of penetrating into the oratory of the widow of Louis XII, you expect to find there a mysterious solitude; and the appearance of this canon of stone, in ceremonial costume, standing, motionless, with a face either pale or illuminated (we could not vouch for the colour of his complexion, for we shut our eyes), becomes for some a subject of surprise; whilst the others ... can only see the bizarre side of this phantom.¹⁴

I am certain that many of us have experienced just this kind of ambivalence when confronted with at a modern historical installation in a historical building. I think myself of the English Heritage restoration of Dover Castle – a splendid make-over of the building involving newly made furniture and hangings, made in authentic period style – which also incorporates hologram

projections of conversing figures in medieval dress who appear suddenly in a window or a dark passage. Are they just ‘surprising’, or are they ‘bizarre’ – and do they add something to the experience? But the point is that Du Sommerard is producing this complex of reactions for the first time. At the Musée de Cluny, the aim was to involve all the senses in a spectacle of historical recreation designed to make the past come to life again.

But of course Du Sommerard was not alone in inviting the Parisian public of the 1830s to assent to this novel form of representation. Note the particular terms that Madame de Saint-Surin employs to express his challenge to the visitors – ‘tak[ing] the marvel for reality’, and requiring of them ‘less imagination than Hoffmann had when he wrote his fantastic tales’. These words ‘marvellous’ and ‘fantastic’ relate specifically to the new fictional genres that had become all the rage in France – as elsewhere in Europe – the ‘Tales’ of the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann being a noteworthy example. In other words, the visitors of the 1830s had become skilled in the ‘suspension of disbelief’, when reading tales that defied the laws of science and common sense. They were being invited to extend that imaginative capacity to encompass a site that claimed to resuscitate past history.

However the distinctive achievement of the Musée de Cluny was to stimulate the imagination not through words on the page, but through the presence of material objects. Balzac, so skilled at detecting the tastes of his fellow citizens in the period of the Restoration, wrote a wonderful novel in 1843-4, entitled ‘The Muse of the Department’. In this novel, he tells the story of an intelligent young woman called Dinah, living near Sancerre, and married to an older man who has profited from the Revolution to buy up a substantial estate, and incidentally a historic chateau. Dinah disdains his shrewd money-making, but makes it her special task to furnish the chateau of Anzy in period style:

Dinah wanted to give visible proof of her love for the most remarkable productions of Art: she threw herself into the ideas of the Romantic School, including within the sphere of Art, poetry and painting, the printed page and the statue, the piece of furniture and the opera. So she became a medievalist [*moyen-âgeiste*]. [...] Thus she acquired, in the first days of her marriage, the furnishings of the Rouget at Issoudun, at the sale that took place in 1824. [...] At the end of five or six years, the antechamber, the dining room, the two salons and the boudoir that Dinah had arranged for herself on the ground floor [...] was overflowing with masterpieces selected from the four surrounding departments.¹⁵

As usual, Balzac manifests a piercing eye for contemporary manners, and a concern for precise dating. Dinah’s fictional career runs parallel to the real career of Du Sommerard as a collector, and in case we have missed the point, Balzac informs us that Dinah’s visitors were able to experience at Anzy, by the 1830s, ‘catacombs of old-fashioned things arranged as in the home of the late Du Sommerard’.¹⁶

In other words, Du Sommerard was for Balzac an emblematic representative of a more general taste for historical objects that had begun to thrive during the Restoration, in parallel with the rise of the Romantic movement in France – the distinctive feature of Romanticism being its all-encompassing nature as a cultural tendency, involving ‘poetry and painting, the printed page and the statue, the piece of furniture and the opera’. The Musée de Cluny thus differed from the Musée des Monuments français in particular because its creator could feed upon an integrated culture that gave material content to such formerly abstract notions as the ‘Middle Ages’; and the ‘Renaissance’.

Nor do we have to take Balzac's word for it. There is a small corner of the Gallery of the Petit Palais in Paris where you can view examples of the furniture commissioned by a rather up-market version of Dinah de La Baudraye. Aimée Carvillon des Tillières, a fabulously rich young heiress born in 1797, married in 1817 the future Marquis d'Osmond, heir to an ancient Norman family, and immediately started to transform the furnishings of her family home in the smart district of the Chaussée d'Antin in Paris.¹⁷ No chairs in the Empire style for her! She promptly commissioned the fashionable cabinet-maker Jacob-Desmaller to design a Gothic study in which a set of fabulous chairs adorned with the Osmond arms and motto was among the principal ornaments.

These Gothic chairs were, of course, highly fanciful, rather than authentic, examples of Gothic furniture. However the installation of two of their number in the basement gallery of the Petit Palais in Paris cleverly suggests the continuum between representations and material objects that would be increasingly reinforced as the pace of the Romantic movement accelerated. To their left, there is hung one of the earliest examples of the paintings of the so-called Troubadour School: Marius Granet's *Blanche of Castille delivering prisoners*, which dates from 1801. Such works were much prized during the Empire, and specially interested female patrons since the fashion for collecting them was set by the Empress Josephine. Hanging directly above the magnificent chairs of Mme d'Osmond is another 'Troubadour' painting by Ingres, in this case dating from the Restoration period. Also, to keep company with the neo-Gothic furniture, there is a genuine 15th century Gothic chest that has been placed nearby – or rather a chest that rates as 'mostly' genuine (the label tells us), since now we look more carefully at the dating of such artefacts than was the case during the French Restoration.

I have reached the point where I can offer a provisional conclusion by setting out the case for distinguishing Cluny from the *Monuments français*. It is fundamentally a matter of the success with which Cluny assimilated, and contributed to, a new, integrative notion of historical culture that included material objects, and used them to evoke the fantasy of a resuscitated past. When Prosper de Barante presented his favourable report to the Chamber of Peers on 15 July 1843, he had no doubts about the propriety of turning the Du Sommerard collection into a national museum. Some of the arguments that he marshalled were specifically in answer to various objections that had been raised. It had been maintained that France already had a national museum: the Louvre. Barante side-stepped that objection: 'The museum of the Louvre will be for the artist; the Hôtel de Cluny for the worker. In the first, the imagination will take fire; in the second, practice will be perfected and ennobled'.¹⁸

But the main feature that in his view characterised the future museum, and gave it its integrity, was that it appealed to a sense of history. As he put it: 'Its principal merit lies in bringing together so many objects, that are found to be connected by a historical link. [Son mérite principal c'est la réunion de tant d'objets, qui se trouvent rassemblés par un lien historique]'.¹⁹ In this respect, Cluny would indeed, as he claimed, 'replace' the *Monuments français*. But it was not just a question of 'more of the same'. The past as a subject of study had itself acquired a much deeper hold over the imagination, and generated so much broader expectations, in the period that followed the Fall of the Empire in 1815 – with the effect that the vanished *Monuments français* also, from this later perspective, came to be regarded in a new, nostalgic light.

All the most powerful voices from whose work I have quoted here were speaking with hindsight, and their commentaries begin essentially in the 1840s – Barante, and of course Michelet, speak as historians, Balzac as a chronicler of his own times. But I am not in the end contesting the point that there was a continuity in the development of historical culture over the entire first half of the 19th century that includes the very earliest years of the period, those of Michelet’s childhood and Barante’s early manhood. In a recent article, I have returned to the question of the genesis of the ‘Troubadour’ style that I briefly mentioned in connection with the Petit Palais installation. A summary of this paper will help to conclude my argument.²⁰

In 1802, a young artist from Lyon, Fleury Richard, composed a small painting of *Valentine de Milan* mourning for her husband, the assassinated Duc d’Orléans. Richard had begun by sketching Valentine after her funeral effigy in its temporary location, the Musée des Monuments français. The lively drawings in a notebook that is kept in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon show how Richard brings to life the recumbent figure – a feat acknowledged even by Richard’s studio master David, who rightly saw in his use of light a radically new departure. Painters made creative use of the monumental specimens of Lenoir in this fashion, and when the monuments had been restored to their former locations, a painting like Charles-Marie Bouton’s *Fourteenth-Century Room in the Musée des Monuments Français* (1817) kept alive the memory of the Petits-Augustins as a scene for historical reenactment – though in this case the action is a rather unconvincing representation of the madness of King Charles VI.²¹

Yet, even in respect of the Troubadour school, I am inclined to make a crucial distinction: not so much a chronological distinction as in the case of the two museums, but one that sets apart two types of historical representation, the first of which happens to be characterised by the work of Fleury Richard, and the second by his close friend, and no doubt ultimately his rival, Pierre Révoil. When Révoil painted his *Convalescence of Bayard*, first shown at the Paris Salon of 1817, he provided what was almost an emblem of the ideology of the new Bourbon regime. The legendary French warrior Bayard was famed for having spared the Italian city of Brescia from pillage, despite being himself gravely wounded, and was rewarded for his generosity by being tended in the city until he had recovered from his wounds. The scene of the recovering warrior is scattered with curious historical objects, a testament to the fact that Révoil himself was one of the first serious collectors of medieval materials. Items from his collection later entered the Louvre, and can be seen there today.

Every aspect of this painting is placed under the sign of ‘Restoration’ – the recovery of Bayard’s health, the recovery by the citizens of their cherished possessions, and of course the recovery by the Bourbon dynasty of their former throne. Yet Richard’s work had been about something rather different – not Restoration, but Resurrection: in other words, the absorption of the spectator in an imagined past. This strain of Troubadour painting was also very much alive in the 1820s, as one can see in Renoux’s painting of praying figures in a Gothic nave, painted in 1826 – the year after he portrayed Du Sommerard as ‘The Antiquary’. Du Sommerard was certainly a practitioner of ‘Restoration’, in the sense that he salvaged innumerable disregarded objects and gave them a new status in his collection. But he also inherited the different ideal anticipated by Richard, which could indeed be termed the ‘Resurrection’ of the past.

I conclude by mentioning an article from a magazine of 1837 that places under the category ‘France – Monuments’ an illustrated article on the ‘Tombs of St Denis’.²² By that time, of course,

the tombs that had spent the years of the Revolution and Empire safely stored in Lenoir's Monuments français were back in position at the Royal Abbey of St Denis, as if they had never been moved. The article itself is based on Lenoir's report concerning not just the removal of the sepulchral monuments, but the actual exhumation of the remains of the historical figures which had been laid to rest there over the ages. St Denis had, by and large, recovered its previous aspect, with the tombs and their contents being replaced mainly in the crypt and underground chapels of the abbey church. Yet the vivid memory of their period in the museum still gripped the imagination of some of the great French historians of the age – writers like Barante and Michelet who had visited them at different points of their youth. When he looked back at this childhood experience in the famous letter to Quinet, published in 1846, Michelet could see the intervening years of the development of the Romantic Movement very clearly, and he could define his own practice as a historian as a fitting role for the movement's culminating phase: 'Let it be my share in the future, to have, not attained, but defined the goal of history, to have named it with a name that no one had spoken. Thierry called it *narration*, and M. Guizot *analysis*. I called it *resurrection*, and this name will endure'.²³ Not only historical texts, but museums also, still bear witness to the intrinsic diversity of historical culture that the French experience of the early nineteenth century so effectively revealed.

Notes

- ¹ See Stephen Bann, 'Historical Text and Historical Object: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny', *History and Theory*, XVII, 3 (1978), pp. 251-66; Dominique Poulot, 'Modelli d'architettura in Francia all'epoca della Rivoluzione', *Lotus* 35 (1982), pp. 32-35; Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A study of the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 77-92; Dominique Poulot, 'Alexandre Lenoir ...', in Pierre Nora (ed), *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1986), Vol.2, pp.497-531.
- ² See Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, pp.8-31.
- ³ See *ibid.*, p.87.
- ⁴ The 13th century room as represented by Vauzelle is reproduced in the end-papers of Francis Haskell, *History and its images* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press: 1993).
- ⁵ See *ibid.*, pp.241-46.
- ⁶ Prosper de Barante, *Etudes littéraires et historiques* (Paris, 1858), Vol.2, p.421. All translations from the French are my own unless stated otherwise.
- ⁷ Bann, *Clothing of Clio*, p.83.
- ⁸ Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris, Hachette : 1846), p.xxvi. Translation by John P. McKay, in Jules Michelet, *The People* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 14.
- ⁹ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris : Gallimard, Pléiade, 1952), Vol. 2, p. 538.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Francis Salet and Geneviève Souchal, *Le Musée de Cluny* (Paris : Editions des Musées nationaux, 1972), p.18.
- ¹² Quoted in Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne, 1995), p.146.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.147.
- ¹⁵ Honoré de Balzac, *La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade: 1952), Vol.4, p.64.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁷ The comtesse d'Osmond was the sole heiress of a fabulously wealthy entrepreneur who had died in 1812. With the duchesse de Berry, wife of the Bourbon heir to the throne, she contributed to the fashion for the neo-gothic, especially in the redecoration of her Parisian hôtel, situated at 8 Rue Basse du Rempart.
- ¹⁸ Barante, *Études*, p.420.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p.425.
- ²⁰ See Stephen Bann, 'Two kinds of Historicism: Resurrection and Restoration in French Historical Painting', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, Vol.4, No.2 (2010), pp.154-71.
- ²¹ See Stephen Bann and Linda Whiteley, *Painting History: Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey* (London: National Gallery Company, 2010), pp.56-7.
- ²² Ernest Breton, 'France: Tombeaux de Saint-Denis', *Magasin universel*, Vol. 4 (March 1837), pp.169-71.
- ²³ Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p.xxxvii.



Nordiska museet and Skansen: Displays of Floating Nationalities

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Abstract

This article explores how national narratives were performed and displayed at Nordiska museet and Skansen from late 19th century until the end of the 20th century. It shows how the museum's national narratives were negotiated and transformed in the wake of new political orientations, from the utopia of "folkhemmet" to contemporary visions of the multi-cultural society. Nordiska museet and Skansen have strongly been associated with successful nation-making. This notion however tends to suppress a prevailing tension between the museum's Nordicness and its Swedishness. From very early on Artur Hazelius collected objects from an indecisive Nordic area, including Russia and Germany. After his death in 1901 efforts were made to nationalize Nordiska museet and Skansen. From time to time the museum's Nordic identity has been mobilized, a story that run parallel with tendencies to reject the museum's Scandinavianist legacy, a legacy dating back to a period when the contemporary Nordic nation-states were yet not politically or culturally defined.

Sweden in Miniature

In 1890 Artur Hazelius, the founder of Nordiska museet in Stockholm, received as a gift some houses and a garden named Framnäs at Djurgården, close to the building site of the present Nordiska museet. During the 19th century, Djurgården was transformed into a noble residential area, paired with the creation of several entertainment establishments and popular restaurants (Tjerneld 1980). Hazelius had rather spectacular plans for this small piece of land, as can be recognized from an etching dating back to the same year. Among the buildings on the etching were Ornäs Loft from Dalarna and Borgunds stave church from Norway (Hazelius 1900:282). According to a tradition, that was vividly reproduced by historians until the 20th century, the loft gave protection to the king-to-be, Gustav Vasa when he in 1521 was on the run from the Danes. In the mid 18th century the then owner Jacob Brandberg turned the upper level of the cottage into a Vasa-monument and museum. In 1896 the Ornäs loft was acquired by the state (Lagergren 1931). At the World's Fair in Paris 1867 a replica of Ornässtugan was set up. It was later rebuilt in the garden of Ulriksdal's castle in Stockholm as domicile for the king's personal physician (Sjöberg 1978).

Borgunds stave church was, and still is, one of the best preserved, well-known and most visited stave churches in Norway and considered a most remarkable Norwegian national monument. When a new church was built for the parish of Borgund in 1868 the stave church was purchased by the state; in 1877 sold to The Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments.

Artur Hazelius' vision for Framnäs is telling both of the historical contexts and national symbols: Sweden and Norway constituted one Kingdom until the dissolution of the union in 1905. Gustav Vasa hold a strong position both in old patriotic and newer nationalistic discourses being credited with establishing Sweden as a sovereign state. The stave churches were regarded as characteristic of Norwegian popular history and culture and most precious national treasures. Combining them in an outdoor exhibition can be interpreted as a grand show-off of the Swedish-Norwegian union including loyalty to the king of Sweden-Norway, who was appointed as protection master of the Society for Nordiska Museet, established in 1880. However, there is also another dimension: Before becoming a museum founder, Artur Hazelius was deeply involved in the Scandinavianist movement and the efforts to bring forth a future Scandinavian nation, the United States of Scandinavia.

The extraordinary plans for Framnäs were never realized. In March the year after Artur Hazelius acquired a hilly and picturesque piece of land at Djurgården called Upper Skansen. During the summer the earlier obtained Morastugan was rebuilt on this ground, together with a few other buildings: a picking-house from the parish of Orsa in Dalarna, a larger cottage from the parish of Kyrkhult in Blekinge, a replica of a stone cabin from Blekinge, a copy of a somerseth from the parish of Mörsil in Jämtland, two replicas of a charcoal burner's huts from Västmanland and Småland and a "Laplanders" camp (Upmark 1916:102-106). In October 1891 Skansen opened to the public. The years to follow witnessed the incorporation of new ground, increasing the size of Skansen and the further setting up of houses, farmsteads, paths, animal enclosures and plantations, ponds with water, mile posts, grave crosses and rune stones (Skansen 1906). "Artur Hazelius carried on his work with restless speed", as Bernhard Salin later phrased it (Salin 1906). The efforts to develop the open-air museum were many, as were the ideas for its future. Hazelius

dream of a copy of Borgsund stave church remained. In 1898 a Swedish architect travelled to Norway to carefully study the stave church (Upmark 1916:125). The dream was never realized, however another building from Norway, The Vastveit Storehouse from Telemark, dating back to the 14th century, was rebuilt at Skansen (Berg & Biörnstad 1980: 505-508).

Artur Hazelius was not without sources of inspiration for collecting and exhibiting buildings. An apparent and probably inspiring parallel was King Oscar II's collection of old Norwegian houses - including a stave church - placed in the garden of the king's summer residence at Bygdøy near Oslo, later integrated with Norsk Folkemuseum. Ancestors of open-air museums were the reconstructions of peasant cottages, ancient ruins, antique temples and "exotic" pavilions that often were to be found in parks and zoological gardens. Another source of inspiration was the many historical and "primitive" buildings that were shown at the international exhibitions in the second half of the 19th Century" (Rentzhog 2007).

What were the founding narratives of a collection of old houses and huts rebuilt in a park in Stockholm? How was visitors invited to experience history and folk-life? To start with, one must keep in mind that Skansen never has been a museum exclusively of peasant buildings and rural folk life. The "Laplanders" for example, were commonly in the dominant culture considered belonging to the groups of "primitive people". In 1898 a replica of a "Greenlanders" house was erected on Skansen, intended to picture the old winter life of "the Eskimos" (Hazelius 1900: 285). In 1896 Emanuel Svedenborg's summer house moved to Skansen from south of Stockholm and was made a small museum over the world famous theosophist (Upmark 1916:124). In 1897 the Scandinavian Art and Industry Exhibition was held at Djurgården in Stockholm. After its closure two exhibition pavillions were donated to Nordiska museet, including their original exhibitions. One of the buildings was renamed Skansens mining exhibition. This building contained several exhibitions: one of Scandinavian mining, a ship model and a model of Copenhagen freeport, and exhibition of boats and hunting and fishing gears from Finland, Norway and Sweden. The other building contained a reconstruction of a coal mine and a diorama of the limestone quarry of Limnhamn and a model of Visby (Hazelius 1900: 175-185). Artur Hazelius himself made a distinction between "ethnographic" objects and houses, including the peasant cottages, and buildings illustrative of cultural history. Today's Skansen shows for example the Town Quarter, picturing a non-specific but assumed "typical" Swedish town in the mid-19th century. Here one can visit among others buildings, the Pharmacy, the Bakery, The Engraver's Workshop, The Workman's home, The Hazelius Mansion (the birthplace of Artur Hazelius) and the noble estate of Jakobsberg (Blent 2005).

The prevailing image, that Skansen first and foremost presented Swedish folk life pre-supposes a certain strategic blindness. In order to re-create a homogenous vision of Artur Hazelius the obvious heterogeneity of Skansen has been suppressed, both by Artur Hazelius himself and by his many biographers. For instance, that fact that Skansen also was a zoological garden is regarded as an accidental addition to the real purposes, contrary to the fact that Hazelius himself was very conscious about that wild animals would attracted a larger public than old houses (Schmidt Galaaen 2005:84).

The heterogeneity of Skansen mirrors, among many things, floating ideas and ideals of what precisely the nation is, territorially, in terms of what people that nation consists of and what stories that should be told about that nation (Hillström 2010). Many scholars have put forward

that Skansen has successfully contributed to the shaping of the Swedish nation. Skansen was a place where the national community and culture were exhibited, narrated and performed. Artur Hazelius has been identified as a true nationalist, whose objectives were to rediscover, foster and protect the individuality of the national Swedish community (Bohman 1997; Sörlin 1998).

To interpret Skansen as an arena for performing national stories and national life it can be helpful to make use of metaphors from the theatre. Skansen can thus be viewed as a large scene. The scene is a small-scale Sweden, although with rather different contours when compared to the Swedish map. The main reason why Skansen was in the first place conceived as a minimized Sweden is that houses rebuilt or copied at Skansen were collected from different landscapes and “Sweden” was regarded as the sum of its many landscapes. Artur Hazelius’ vision was to create a living museum (Hazelius 1900: 288). At Skansen it was possible to attach “life” to material objects. Women and men – and in the very beginning mannequins – dressed in folk costumes, flower, trees and domestic animals added “life” to the houses. Thus Skansen appears like a stage with elaborated scenography, intended to create the impression of a real world that at the same time was lost and belonged to the past. It was a world made of well established perceptions of rural folk life to be viewed and experienced by a middle and upper class cosmopolitan audience.

What play then was set up? The major play took place in the fantasy of the public, adding meaning, feelings and value to the nostalgic scene. Bernhard Salin illustratively wrote:

The peasant’s old house, it is true, invites by itself the modern man on account of its divergences from what is usual now, it sets the fancy in motion, the worn furniture and household utensils elicit images from the many generations who lived, worked, suffered, and died there (Salin 1906).

Many other actual plays were set up by Artur Hazelius and the museum staff to attract the audience and to enhance the illusion of past life. Indeed, Skansen was a place, especially during spring and summer, for many celebrations, festivities and manifestations of different size and content. Historical events and persons were remembered; there were spring costumed festivals and royal Memorial Days, traditional celebrations of May Day Eve and Midsummer Eve, the latter with folk dances and folk music. In 1899, for example, the Memorial Day of the poet and composer Carl Michael Bellman was celebrated with a costume parade picturing Bellman himself and famous characters from his songs: Fredman, the clockmaker; Mowitz, the drunkard, Fader Berg, the musician and Ulla Winblad, the prostitute, on an outing in the country side. The 6th of November, the Memorial Day Gustaf II Adolf, was commemorated with a speech of from the bishop: a procession of cavaliers dressed in 17th century costumes; patriotic hymns performed by pupils from Girl’s Schools; and parades by the Garrison Regiment of Stockholm. The 30th of November, the Memorial Day of Karl XII, was honored with flagging, cannon salutes and patriotic hymns conducted by pupils from public schools (Böttiger 1902: 114).

Skansen did not tell a cohesive and teleological story of Sweden starting with identifying a pre-historical genesis and then moving further along the axis of pre-historical and historical developments. It did not tell a political story of the nation, although well-known events in Swedish history and royal Memorial Days were not neglected. The narrative was made up of a compilation of national symbols and traditions, a colorful bouquet of “the best” that Sweden can show: cultural and political heroes, picturesque folk life, “exotic” inhabitants in the north, beautiful nature scenarios, traditional music and dances, military music, to mention some of its

content. Skansen created a utopian national whole that harmoniously integrated regional and social diversity, ordered to be most appetizing for the eye of viewer. Much was told about an idealized peasant life, nothing however was told about the growing working class and social conflicts of the time.

In fact, what is most striking is the absence of the chronological dimension. Skansen presents a timeless past in which the social classes live in harmony and mutual respect. In defining the common national identity and heritage Skansen is clearly contributing to a construction of the past as a “foreign country” (Lowenthal 1985). Hence, the distance between now and then, between a traditional way of life and a modern life was emphasized. The experience of an unstable and rapidly changing present was posed against a stable and slowly changed past (Eriksen 1993). Against the plurality of modern times was posed the clear normative framework of a society built up of the four estates (*fyra stånd*). The individualism of the new society was contrasted with the collectivist peasant culture and an organic and natural social hierarchy. To sum, the social tensions of industrial society was juxtaposed to the homogeneity and harmony of past times. Skansen appears to be an expression of a middle-class mythology – a narrative about the natural and authentic life of pre-industrial society. Skansen can be understood as a bourgeois Eden, saturated with national symbols of various kinds, a space of harmony, order and beauty. In this Eden, there was one easy identified “other”, the Sami. The interest in the Sami culture at this time did not include all its different aspects, but was mainly directed towards the culture of the reindeer-herding nomads (*fjällsamer*). These were argued to be the most authentic and primitive “Laplanders”. It was also “*fjällsamer*” that inhabited the Sami camp at Skansen during summertime. The process of construction of the Sami camp is worth recalling. It was preceded by expeditions of male explorers whose adventures were described in public letters published in the newspapers. The “explorers” were not alone, but had company with Sami people to guide them. They nevertheless described their travels as heroic quests for survival, portraying themselves as “alone with nature in an unknown land”. In these and other stories the Saami were presented as wild, uncivilized and close to nature. They became popular objects of exoticism and curiosity. In late 19th century politics of identity, they seem to have served as a popular “other” against which the identity of emerging modern subjects was confirmed (Hillström 1997).

Looking upon the museum mission of Artur Hazelius one finds a striking occupation with things, clothes and occupations associated with women. In presenting the past, the domestic sphere played a dominant role. The many women that worked at Skansen, preferably from Dalarna, who were dressed in folk costumes and often depicted in company with goats, enhance the impression that the past was also feminized. Hazelius’ vision of a “living past” presupposed the idea that it was possible to transcend the border between representation and life “as it was”. The Darlacarian women were chosen to embody this idea. To conclude, the national narrative told and performed at Skansen is built up of different national symbols and is intertwined with discourses of modernity, civilization and gender. Metaphorically, Skansen is a large scale tableau vivant, incorporating the visitors in the national spectacle.

Skansen - a proper museum?

The idea of the open-air museum was successfully spread. However to many museum professionals during the turn of the twentieth century Skansen appeared less a museum than

something else more indefinable. Success in terms of numbers of visitors was not necessarily an achievement in the eyes of self-conscious museum professionals, who strongly argued, that a museum primarily served scientific purposes and that professional competence was made visible through the science based ordering and preserving of authentic objects, collected in the main purpose of knowledge production. The museum, according to many professionals, was an institution of science. After Artur Hazelius death, some argued that Skansen should be separated from Nordiska museet, as it was *not* a museum. Those who defended that they should be kept together, explicitly argued that Skansen loose the risk of becoming pure entertainment. The intimate relation to Nordiska museet guaranteed that Skansen transcended the less decent sphere of public amusement (Hillström 2006) The critique of the open-air museum stood for long and when the divorce actually took place in 1963, the arguments were very much resembling those articulated 60 years before (Eklund Nyström 1998). In 1933 Gösta Berg published a biography of Artur Hazelius (Berg 1933). One of his aims was to correct an earlier biography written by the then famous Swedish literature critics Fredrik Böök (Böök 1923). Böök characterized Hazelius as a grand director of theatre, who managed to mobilise the masses to appraisal of Sweden and Swedishness. Berg on the other hand underlined that Hazelius main purpose was *not* to foster patriotic feelings with festivities and themed masquerades but to contribute to the development of science. Obviously, Berg was deeply involved in museum politics. He tried hard to make the past of Skansen proper in order to legitimize the museum in the present – as well as contributing to a retouched history of its founder, Artur Hazelius. Mimetic display, costumed staff, music, folk dance, theatre, spectacular festivities, restaurants, cafes, living domestic and exotic animals, contributed strongly to the popularity of Skansen but the right way of seeing it was as a national collection of building types, showing regional varieties and historical development characteristic of Swedish architecture, Berg argued. If the visitor did not understand the proper purpose and preferred the various amusements that were offered this should not be taken as an indication of the real value of exhibiting houses nor the deepest intentions of the museum founder (Hillström 2005).

Berg's critique of Böök illustrates conflicting museum ideals and shows that the relation between nation building and museums that are characterized as national is not without complications. How should the nation be presented accurately within a museum? What purposes did museums serve? Did they serve the purpose of shaping nationalized individuals and collectives, if so, in what ways? In fact, Berg argued that patriotic manifestations were not an essential part of museum practice but rather a result of compromises with the public's taste.

Nationalizing Nordiska museet and Skansen

Nordiska museet opened in Stockholm in 1873. It was initially named the Scandinavian-Ethnographic Collection (Skandinavisk-etnografiska samlingen), reflecting Artur Hazelius Scandinavianist commitments. The name was changed in 1880 when the museum was turned into a private foundation, formerly it was owned by Hazelius himself. Until 1905 the museum was located in central Stockholm. In June 1907 the new monumental building for Nordiska museet opened to the public.

Initially, the Scandinavian-Ethnographic collection was presented as a permanent exhibition of mannequins dressed in national costumes. Soon Hazelius' collections expanded in various

directions. They continually became both bigger and more diverse. The public, the press, the admirers as well as the critics were amazed, but also puzzled. What kind of museum was this? What, more precisely, were the ambitions of Artur Hazelius? A single and well-articulated official meaning of the museum was never established. On the contrary, the floating meanings formed a substantial part of the achievements of Nordiska museet in terms of rapidly growing collections and of public endorsement. Artur Hazelius' main strategy was to allow as many actors as possible to contribute to the museum. According to Artur Hazelius' rhetoric, the museum was built by the people and in line with the people's will, opinion and taste in terms of the items collected. One of the many aspects of diversity was the indecisive geographical boundaries of the collections. From the very beginning Artur Hazelius collected objects from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Estonia, Russia and Germany (and from other areas). This circumstance contributed to uncertainties among both admirers and critics of the museum. Through which lenses should the museum be viewed: Was it a museum representing Sweden and the union neighbour Norway or a Scandinavian (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and perhaps Finnish) museum? Was it a museum of the old Swedish Empire? A museum of Northern Europe? What kind of "nation" or "people" was assumed in the collecting and exhibiting practices? (Hillström 2006).

The setting for cultural museum-building in Scandinavia in the late 19th century was deeply saturated by attracting and repelling forces of countries complexly connected together in political history. Up until 1809 Finland was part of Sweden; in 1814 Denmark and Norway parted and Norway entered into a union with Sweden. Up to the last quarter of that century Scandinavianists sought to establish a pan-Scandinavian nation-state, and celebrated the cultural unity of the Scandinavian people (Finland was often included). The Scandinavian movement represented a nationalism that, in retrospect, has been described as a romantic illusion of a Nordic community upheld by naive students. In its historical context, Scandinavianism was an important political and cultural force. Artur Hazelius was mobilising a well-established Scandinavian network when starting his new career as a collector and museum builder. These political and historical circumstances formed the contexts of museum-building in the North.

The founder and director of Nordiska museet, Artur Hazelius, died in 1901. After his death the various meanings of the museum and its miscellaneous collections were regarded with suspicion by many museum professionals. Soon after a committee was formed. Its chairman was Oscar Montelius, a renowned archaeologist and museum curator. The committee's purpose was to devise a programme for the internal design of the new museum building, including the layout of new exhibitions. The committee members disagreed in several important respects, including the meaning of the museum as a national institution. The committee's report was published in 1902 and strongly stressed Nordiska museet as a national Swedish institution. The report underlined that Nordiska museet was founded with the aim of strengthening national feelings and patriotic values. Despite the common knowledge that Artur Hazelius had been firmly rooted in Scandinavianism and a feeling of Nordic affinity and community, he was ascribed with the original intention to create a museum for the *Swedish* people (Nordiska museet 1902).

The heavy emphasis on the museum being a national Swedish museum can be understood as an effort to make the museum more consistent in terms of which people and nation it appealed to and represented. Stating that Nordiska museet was a museum for, above all, the Swedish

people solved an important problem. One reason to stress the Swedishness of Nordiska museet was the crisis of the union between Sweden and Norway. From around 1890 this union had entered a period of crisis that ended with its dissolution in 1905. It seems highly reasonable that the committee tried to adjust the identity of Nordiska museet to the actual political situation. Being sensitive to the political currents of the time, not least the Norwegian claim for self-government and independence, it was less sensible to emphasize the museum's Nordic identity, especially when the big Norwegian collection in the museum was repeatedly deplored in Norway. In the nationalizing process of Nordiska Museet the political downfall of Scandinavianism ran parallel to changes in principles of the rising museum profession. The politically convenient "de-Scandinavization" of Nordiska Museet after Hazelius' death in 1901 was therefore argued in terms of scientific and museological carefulness. Science demanded, Oscar Montelius argued, that Nordiska Museet should be transformed into a proper Swedish National Cultural History Museum.

In 1916 Gustaf Upmark, head of Nordiska museet, declared that the principle borders of Skansen coincided with Sweden's (Upmark 1916: 112). Upmark knew that the imagined territory of Skansen originally was not the borders of the Swedish nation state. He, for example, explicitly quoted Artur Hazelius, who had stated that he wished to 'reproduce also complete buildings which were typical for the Nordic countries during different epochs' (Upmark 1916:110)). In addition, Skansen was also a zoological garden with many species from distant parts of the world. Upmark, who found exotic birds and monkeys improper for Skansen, emphasized that Skansen no longer bought any of these but received them as gifts (Upmark 1916: 146). Obviously, Upmark preferred to hold back the heterogeneity of the open-air museum and contributed to Skansen's nationalization.

In September 1905 King Oscar II acknowledged Norway as an independent state. Prince Carl of Denmark ascended the Norwegian throne as Haakon VII in November of the same year. While the dissolution of the union was celebrated in Norway, many Swedish politicians and intellectuals considered it a great loss. The 1th of November 1905 thousands of blue-yellow flags were hoisted on public buildings in Sweden, replacing the earlier union flag. At Skansen the royal family participated in a manifestation aiming at demonstrate the importance of the blue and yellow colors (Nordiska museet 1905). Intentionally or not, this ceremony contributed to that Skansen more than ever before was identified as a national arena. The years to follow the dissolution can be characterized as a period of Swedish-national consolidation. Former Scandinavian co-operations ceased and Nordic festivities were replaced by Swedish patriotic manifestations (Hemstad 2008: 297-393). The efforts to "nationalize" Skansen were a step of rational adaption to the political realities, cultural tendencies and professional preferences after 1905. The Nordic framing of Artur Hazelius' museums was losing terrain. It was easier to "nationalize" Skansen than Nordiska museet, since the latter housed thousands of objects collected from a broad, geographically uncertain Nordic area, including Germany. Also the new museum building was itself reminding of the Scandinavianist legacy, since the Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Danish coat of arms were inserted on the façade. However, writing the history of Skansen, Upmark could not totally ignore the original Nordic theme although he rejected its contemporary relevance.

The new museum and the new exhibitions

The new museum building at Djurgården was designed by Isak Gustaf Clason, a leading Swedish architect who was devoted to the idea of a Nordic renaissance style. The building enclosed a great main hall encircled with galleries resembling the nave of a Gothic cathedral. According to the original but never realized plans, the museum should form a quadrangle, one of them, the now built, would be used for festivities (Mårtelius 1987). The visitor who ascended from the entrance hall confronted a heroic statue of Gustav Vasa, made by Carl Milles. It pictured the aged king, holding in his left hand a sword symbolizing the freedom he had won for the nation. The surrounding galleries of the ground floor contained objects and cottage interiors picturing peasant life of different landscapes of Sweden. Some of the interiors – also called dioramas - had originally been created by Artur Hazelius and helpful donors and were shown in the earlier locations of Nordiska museet. The exhibitions were arranged according to what museum professionals then described as a geographical principle. The objects were ordered and exhibited in different landscape rooms, for example “Skåne”, “Småland” and “Dalarna” (Hillström 2006: 377-380). Some of the museum personnel questioned the relevance of the geographical principle, arguing that it was a proper method of exhibition in a *Völkermuseum*, less convincing in a *Volksmuseum*, aiming to present the common identity of the folk. Since the geographical principle also was prevailing at Skansen, Nordiska museet run the risk of laying too much emphasis on the variations of the Nordic people, disregarding the national and ethnographic unity of “our” people, they argued. Both from the patriotic and the scientific viewpoint, it was more fruitful to accentuate the cultural uniformity of the people. If the collections of peasant objects were not exhibited systematically in informative groups, the “ethnographic” folk culture department of the museum would form a compilation of different province museums, gathered under one roof, they concluded. (Nordiska museet 1902). As a result of this critique displays of peasant objects were set up in rooms located at the basement of the building, illustrating for example “the use of fire”. In these exhibitions local provenience played a subordinated role and the nostalgic atmosphere that overshadowed the landscape interiors was gone. Instead, the visitor could view loads of items, sorted by kind.

The galleries of the first floor were filled with heterogeneous collections: Peasant objects from Finland, Denmark and Norway, musical instruments, toys, a collection of church ritual staves and other church objects, guild items from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Germany, tapestries, embroideries and jewelry, The gallery of the second floor was split up in small rooms displaying the upper-class collections. The department was arranged in successive periods from 1500 to 1900. The numerous exposed objects were displayed in interiors illustrating the dwellings of burghers and the upper classes and in rooms filled with museum cases. Several of them pictured rooms from royal castles and one of the interiors, the room of Oscar II, was designed by the architect Ferdinand Boberg for the World Fair in Paris in 1900. The different epochs of style were explicitly connected with different dynasties and the room series started illustratively with valuable (but few) objects from the period of Gustav Vasa (Hillström 2006: 377-380). The upper class division corresponded with the Royal Armory and represented an older kind of patriotism, typically articulated in splendid collections of weapons, armour and standards.

In fact, the Swedish Royal Armory was installed in Nordiska museet and placed in the main hall, a process that started in 1904 and ended in 1909 (Hillström 2006: 311-334). The precious

collections of the Royal Armory included, among many things, ceremonial and other weapons, and requisite items for parades, such as richly decorated saddles. In the 1850s the official costumes of Sweden's royals were incorporated into the Royal Armoury and in the end of the 19th century the royal carriages were moved there from the Royal Stables. Among the Royal Armory highlights were (and are) the elk-hide buff coat and the blood-stained shirts worn by Gustav II Adolf at the Battle of Lützen in 1632, Charles XII's dirty uniform from Fredriksten, the costume worn by Gustav III at that historic masked ball in 1792 and - the center of attention - Gustav II Adolf's horse Streiff, stuffed with straw, which he rode at the battle of Lützen (Livrustkammaren 2003).

What is the national narrative told in Nordiska museet after it's reopening in the new building? In the face of the great efforts to nationalize Nordiska museet it was obviously still a museum without distinct geographical borders and the wide heterogeneity of the collections is still characterizing the displays. If one, however, "forgets" the many items at the first floor, there is a national Swedish museum composed of two conceptions of the nation, the older patriotic and representative performance of the aristocracy and royal power, expressed at the top floor and in the great hall, and the newer romantic discourse of the folk, inspired by Hegel, Herder and Schelling, expressed in the galleries of the first floor. The museum was picturing a harmonious estate society. Peculiar is, that the upper-class division was ordered chronologically, showing historical changes. Similar to Skansen, the peasant division was organized without any attention to chronology. The peasants belong to a timeless past, well in tune with the Herderian concept of a metaphysical *folk*. One might draw the conclusion, that the upper-classes were represented as the true exponents of civilization. The idealized, timeless folk of the first floor was mirroring romantic ideals of the 19th century, while co-existing ideals of progressive civilization was articulated in the upper-class division. One of the perennial antinomies of the concept of culture is thus illustrated.

Nordiska museet and Skansen and the Utopia of "folkhemmet"

In 1928 Andreas Lindblom (1889-1977) succeeded Gustaf Upmark as director of Nordiska museet and Skansen. Lindblom was, similar to Upmark, an art historian. He directed Skansen and Nordiska museet for 26 years, until 1956. Lindblom came to a museum in crisis. The finances were bad and Skansen was rundown. The question of a separation between Nordiska museet and Skansen was once again debated (Medelius 1998: 313-317). Lindblom started his new museum career with formulating a new plan for Skansen, and in the 1930's a profound transformation took place. This was necessary, argued Lindblom, since Skansen was outdated as a public institution for modern times. Skansen was attractive to rural residents, to nostalgic townspeople with special interest in masquerade and play, and to children, who loved the animals, as he later, and deprecating formulated it. (Lindblom 1954: 29). Lindblom managed to enhance the popularity of Skansen. The courses of action were many and diverse. He found inspiration and legitimacy in looking backwards on the efforts of the founder, Artur Hazelius. Contrary to for example Gösta Berg, who tried hard to retouch the purposes of the founding father, Lindblom did not hesitate to characterize Artur Hazelius as an inventive business man with diffuse principles (Lindblom 1954: 25-62).

1930 was the year of the famous Stockholm Exhibition. The exhibition's slogan was: "Accept!" arguing for acceptance of architectural functionalism, standardization and modernization. It attracted more than four million visitors. At Skansen Lindblom initiated an international exhibition of photography, an exhibition of the drawings of the famous Swedish artist and cartoonist Albert Engström (who in addition made many caricatures of Skansen and Artur Hazelius), a calf elephant was hired from Germany (later replaced by the elephant Lunkentus) and a giant tortoise, that children could ride on, was purchased (Lindblom 1954: 33-35).

In the years to follow Skansen was given a new layout and many of the old buildings were moved within the area. New restaurants were built and the old cottages were complemented with additional houses to form larger farmsteads. Animal enclosures were separated from restaurants and the zoological garden was reconstructed. Old iron cages were replaced by for example a "beer mountain". Many birds, for example the eagles, were set free. The so called Reindeer Hill, associated with elevated patriotic speeches, was removed. The Town Quarters was established. It was intended to consist of old buildings from Stockholm and to represent a Town Quarter of Stockholm. Also Skogaholm Manor was rebuilt at Skansen, and a new entrance was erected. Lindblom's vision was to make Skansen more complete in terms of representation of the Estates. The Peasant and Clergy estates were adequately exhibited, the latter through one church (Seglora) and two belfries (Håsjö and Hällestad), the Nobility and the Burghers less so. The Skogaholm Manor, with principal building, wings and pavilions was reconstructed with the purpose to illustrate the buildings, homes and lives of the nobility in the 18th century. The Town Quarters should illustrate the buildings, homes and lives of the Burghers (Lindblom 1954: 37-73). Lindblom was visibly also following older trajectories when he modernized the public appeal of Skansen. He also, like Hazelius, favored to employ women from Darlecarlia. They both worked and lived at Skansen, some of them for decades (Lindblom 1954: 107-108).

The programme of activities was extended and evening dancing was organized - despite much resistance. The celebration of The Memorial Day of Karl XII ceased at Skansen in 1934, mirroring a weakened attention in Sweden to the king before and during the Second World War as he also functioned as symbol of pan germanism (Zander 274-275). Hero kings and the commemoration of famous battles associated with the Age of Greatness were generally losing ground after the Second World War (Zander 240-341). The celebration of the Memorial Day of Gustav VI Adolf ceased at Skansen in 1946 (Medelius 1998: 329).

The traditional Spring Feast that had attracted many visitors during Hazelius' lifetime came to an end and the many costume parades that had characterized the earlier programme were abandoned. Lindblom introduced instead so called Landscape Days, which attracted large audiences. The idea was that Local History Societies in co-operation with staff at Skansen should organize a festivity with a popular mixing of happenings, music and speeches. The local governor and the bishop were self-evident participants, and ideally a famous person coming from the chosen landscape but living in Stockholm should participate (Lindblom 1954: 37-60). The image of Skansen as a museum of all landscapes was also marked at the new entrance that was now colorfully decorated with landscape banners (Berg 1998: 355).

Since the beginning of the 20th century a patriotic, anti-socialist celebration was organized at Skansen on First of May, the International Workers' Day. This feast also disappeared from the programme. Contacts were instead now successfully taken with the labor organizations and the Social Democrat Party. The labor movement had earlier avoided Skansen, as it was associated with political conservatism and old-school non-democratic nationalism, not the least manifested by the anti-socialist First of May Feast. In 1930, a summer festivity for the Social Democrat Party was held at Skansen, indicating the beginning of a new era (Lindblom 1954: 37-60; Medelius 1998: 313-331). The party's choice of Skansen is also mirroring a new political orientation closely connected with Per Albin Hansson, Social Democratic statesman and leader of the party between 1925 and 1946. He formulated his vision of Folkhemmet (the People's Home) in 1928. In short, the programme included reformist, egalitarian, social policy reforms, reforms of unemployment policies and an active role for the state in promoting stability and growth of the economy. The traditional class war rhetoric of the Social Democrat Party was substituted for a vision of a national community marked by solidarity over old class barriers (Hirdman 1979).

Although Skansen in many ways was transformed in the 1930's, the major impression is still, that the past of the nation, as narrated at Skansen, is something that is not marked by time or change. The past is something distant from now; a paradise lost. The story told is not about a past society that is differentiated by social and political inequality; wealth and power for a few and misery and want for the many that is successfully replaced by modern times of democracy and raised standards of living. Contrary, Skansen is not telling a history, rather performing a past which is something like a happy and innocent childhood of modern society. The installation of a worker's home in the The Town Quarters in 1938 made no difference, although it was an important gesture towards the labors movement and the Social Democrat Party and a symbol of the "new" Skansen and its willingness to become a real people's park in the beginning of the *Folkhem* era, a time when the *folk* was invested with new meanings.

During the Second World War Skansen became an arena for national mobilization, large scale patriotic manifestations and military defence exhibitions in close collaboration with the royal family, leading politicians, the Swedish army and many voluntary defence organizations. Although Lindblom characterized Skansen as the native home of all Swedes, the Scandinavianist legacy of the institution was not ignored. Nordic events and exhibitions were set up both at Skansen and Nordiska museet during the war. The institution was obviously not only providing the proper symbolic space for national defence propaganda, but also for manifestations of solidarity with Sweden's Scandinavian neighbours (Bohman 1997; Berg 1998:347-357).

In his memoirs, written in 1954, Lindblom described Nordiska museet as a democratic institution conducting research on the whole of the Swedish society *samhället*, from the court to the old people's home. Skansen similarly now attracted all, both diplomats and workers. While Nordiska museet was a scientific institution, Skansen was a "cashbox" and a "shop window" of Nordiska museet, and a unique "complexio oppositorum" (Lindblom 1954: 214). While Lindblom accepted the heterogeneity and ambiguity of Skansen he initiated transformations of the exhibitions in Nordiska museet with the purpose to make them more in accordance with what was now considered modern principles of ethnology and functionalism. Whereas Landscape Days were introduced at Skansen, the landscape rooms were removed one by one, the last of them, Skåne, in 1955. The so called geographical principle was dismissed and provincial origin

was subordinated to arrangements that intended to show historical developments and the uses of different objects. Themed exhibitions with names such as “Hunt”, “Fishing” and “The Peasants Art of Furniture” replaced older interiors in the Peasant Division (Lindblom 1954: 91-101).

The Upper-Class division was also altered. The old exhibitions ordered in epochs of style were replaced by a themed exhibition named “Food and Drink” (today this exhibition is called “Table Setting”). The aim was to show, according to Lindblom, the complex cultural historical problems connected to food and cooking. Lindblom was, in fact, realizing the earlier proposed *Volksmuseum*, rejecting the older *Völkermuseum* (Lindblom 1954: 91-101).

The older national narrative based on provincial origin and romantic and picturesque illusion of the Peasants was thus exported to Skansen and succeeded by systematic ethnological exhibitions of various functional aspects of society like “eating” and “housing” Now, also the Peasant division was approached with a notion of time and change, suggesting that the people are not many, but one.

Still, the Royal Armory was installed in the main hall. The combination of a cultural history museum for the whole people with the Royal Armory seems to have been without frictions, pointing to an ongoing integration of national symbols.

Nordiska museet in the postmodern era

Both Skansen and Nordiska museet are institutions more than hundred years old. Since 1963 they are separated in two independent organizations. The Annual Report of Nordiska museet from 2010 tells that the museum is a national museum of cultural history. Its collections mirror the cultural history of *Sweden* from the 14th century until present. The collection contains about one and a half million of objects (most of them stored in magazines with restricted access). The foundation Nordiska museet is the owner of in sum 460 buildings, among them Tyresö Castle; The Julita Manor (including Sweden’s Museum of Agriculture, that holds gene banks for apples, pears and rhubarbs) and the Rococo-style Country Residence of Svindersvik. In 2010 the number of visitors to the museum was 229 813 (Nordiska museet 2010).

According to the Annual Report the museum is devoted to activities of cultural history in a national perspective. The motto set by Artur Hazelius, “Know thyself” expresses the purpose of the museum, to increase knowledge about our age to make it possible to actively meet the future. The post-modern impossibility of a conventional national rhetoric is evident in the present goal of the museum to be a museum for all people, regardless of age, gender, cultural background and national descent. Also evident is that the Swedishness of the museum is underlined. The fact that the collections incorporate objects from different Scandinavian countries, for example Denmark, is not mentioned. Only a few years ago the Norwegian and Icelandic collections were deposited in Norsk Folkemuseum and the National Museum of Iceland, a step towards the national homogenization of the collections. Noteworthy is that the former director of Nordiska museet, Lars Löfgren, as late as 1998 wrote the following:

Hazelius saw the Nordic countries as a cultural entity. Our museum has collections from the whole Nordic region and also from Estonia, unique because they were collected so early on. By linking up once more with the countries of the Baltic we wish to change and renew the image of a common Nordic culture (Löfgren 1998: 492).

A major tendency today is the gradual transformation of Nordiska museet into a national museum of fashion. In the beginning of the new millennium neither the national narrative of the early 20th century, nor the utopia of *folkhemmet* are providing useful foundations for museum identity and mission. A post-modern form of nationalism is not articulating the cultural or the political Swedishness but is rather marketing Sweden as a brand in the commercial venues of the expansive experience society.

Skansen – “enjoyed by all and accessible to everyone”

According to the document “Vision, mission and strategic objectives: Agreed by the Skansen Board on 19th February 2008 “ the mission of Skansen is to provide “insights into Sweden’s heritage and natural history relative to the present day and with an eye on the future” (Skansen 2008). The focus is on the visitors, which means that Skansen will “develop its position as a major attraction for a large and diverse public of all ages and from all nations”. Skansen should further “bring the past to life and “emphasize ethno-biological connections” (Skansen 2008). In addition, the historical settings shall be designed with the help of well-documented knowledge. In 2010, the number of visitors to Skansen was 1 285 122. Skansen is dependent on the incomes of the entrance fees, sale within the area, and the turnover of the tenants. The state subsidy is covering 39% of the costs (for Nordiska museet 70%) (Skansen 2010). When Artur Hazelius opened Skansen as an open-air department of Nordiska museet, one force was lack of money. Not many visited Nordiska museet; Skansen however attracted much larger audiences. For a long time Nordiska museet was financed by the income of Skansen, this regime prevailed until the separation of the institutions in 1963.

Today, Skansen is a major tourist attraction in Stockholm and a popular destination for families with small children. The explicit focus is on the visitor, so challenging for museum professionals in the beginning of the 20th century, is today a matter of course, a guarantee for further development and success. Skansen then and now is dependent on its visitors and their appreciation. In a time when “experiences” is a buzz word for museums, Skansen shows strong capacity to survive. Skansen was installed as a special genre of amusement park, and continues this tradition with even less hindrance from professional museological doctrines than before. Although still proclaimed to be a Sweden in miniature, the nationalist rhetoric is adjusted to post-modern times. For example this year (2011) the internet commercial for the traditional Midsummer festivities is illustrated by a photograph picturing a dark skinned woman dressed in a traditional Swedish folk costume signaling that traditional festivities at Skansen are for all people, regardless of ethnicity. The national narrative told at Skansen is in many ways still the same as hundred years ago; however, the meanings invested in the narrative are different. Skansen is not making Swedes in the old nationalistic sense. Now Skansen is telling that Sweden embraces every inhabitant of the country. All are welcome in the arms of the loving Skansen. This new Utopia of Skansen is ambiguously combining old nationalistic symbols with post-modern rhetorics and practices of integration, plurality and hybridization. For tourists, Skansen can offer both the “new” and the “old” Sweden. Harmony is still the hallmark.

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The National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini” in Rome: the Nation on Display

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Abstract

This paper explores Luigi Pigorini’s role in the creation and consolidation of *Museo Preistorico Etnografico*, established by the Italian government in 1875. Pigorini trained as both a naturalist and an antiquarian. Since the creation of the chair of *Paletnologia* in Rome in 1877, he was one of the first professionals in prehistoric archaeology in Europe. Taking into account Pigorini’s theoretical propositions, this paper aims to analyse his role in the creation of the national museum that still bears his name. In the rooms of a former *Collegio Romano*, Pigorini gathered a collection of prehistoric materials from different regions of Italy and ethnographic artifacts from all over the world. By displaying both the material evidence of *national* (pre) history and *universal* ethnographic materials, Pigorini created in the rooms of his museum, a national master narrative on the formation of the Italian people, measured against the evolution of mankind through stages of progress.

Introduction

This paper explores the history of the *Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico* named after its founder Luigi Pigorini, from the point of view of political history, cultural institutions, collections and museum narrative. The chronological frame will consider its origins in 1875, five years after the capital moved to Rome, and the Jubilee of National Unity in 1911. Furthermore, I will use the biography of Luigi Pigorini, his role as a scholar and a museum director as the points of reference from which I study the complexity of the institutional activities developed by him.

The museum was located in the premises of the *Collegio Romano*, in the centre of the capital city from 1875 to 1923. The building no longer exists in its original layout, but the collections are now on display in the *Palace of Science* at the outskirts of Rome. Between 1975 and 1977, the historical collection of the Collegio Romano was transferred to the EUR district; this was designed by the fascist regime for the 1942 *Esposizione Universale di Roma*. Although this museum constitutes the largest Italian collection of prehistoric and ethnographic objects, the new location has had a very negative effect on his image and availability because of the distance from the city centre. The rare photographic evidence and the writings of the founder have been used as a valuable basis for historical reconstruction aimed at exploring the beliefs of the scholar and the cultural environment of the time but also to shed light on the original museum project.

In Italy, the civic values were very strong after the unification. People have long identified municipal and regional identities more than any appeal to national values. Therefore, it is interesting to discover the circumstances that allowed the establishment of such an important museum, with thousands of objects coming from every district of Italy, and from all over the world, in the period 1875–1911.

Furthermore, the history of the museum is woven into the tension between central and local identities, and therefore it is possible to trace out two different threads running through the museum narrative, primarily the main national one and at a lesser level, the regional one.

As stated by Pigorini, in different areas of the kingdom, it was possible to observe the survival of primitive ways of life, providing comparative material, focused on arts and traditions among the populations living in Italy. According to Pigorini, prehistoric populations moved from the North to the South of the Italian Peninsula creating new settlements; in doing so, they established the cultural basis, which connected the territory and shaped Italy. In this interpretation, the present and the past were tightly connected to the freshly established Italian unity. Hence, the discovery of diversified artefacts from varying groups was used to demonstrate communalities between different groups.

In 1875 a central board was created to manage the archaeological excavations and museums of the kingdom. The director Giuseppe Fiorelli supported the requisition of archaeological remains from many villages for the prehistoric museum recently founded in Rome. Pigorini also believed the museum had a special role in providing a place for scholars where it was possible to examine different habits and make comparison that could help the progress of science. The characteristics of human beings were extrapolated as consistent elements of uniformity through the objects collected and presented in showcases.

This study is based on primary sources; I studied Pigorini's archival records in Rome, Padua and Parma, and I researched several kinds of sources: museum memorandums, private and official letters and documents concerning symposia and scientific publications. The consultation

of these sources seems to confirm the hypothesis that museums are *the* critical tool for cultural studies, the key institutions for the exploration of national identities construction in Europe, in the second part of the nineteenth century.

Luigi Pigorini: the Present as a Picture of the Past

In a newly United Italy, Luigi Pigorini was one of the pioneers of prehistory: starting from the documents of the archaeological excavation, he set out to collect and compare the testimonies of the “savages” and to investigate the first people who inhabited the Italian peninsula. The National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography was established in 1875 to present the results of this research and to shed light on: “how the Italian nation was born and raised.” (Pigorini, 1903: 69)

In the cultural context of late nineteenth century, the museum reflects the attitude of the scientists, who wished to analyse all aspects of mankind, from anatomy to psychology, from religious beliefs to lifestyles. In a similar way to flora and fauna, mankind was seen as a subject of scientific analysis and classification. Luigi Pigorini was an influential scientist of his time; who has been studied and critiqued. However, his contribution to the history of museography has not received enough attention; by establishing and organising a national museum he was indeed the father of an important cultural development and the co-author of a narrative about the origins of man. I will focus on the first stage of the museum’s history from its foundation to 1911, a date that marks a watershed in Italian cultural history, it was the year of the First Italian Congress of Ethnography, a unique opportunity for exchange among scholars of the disciplines that we now call “demo-ethno-anthropological”¹.

The evidence of prehistoric populations and the “living savages and barbarians” were collected in order to compare the different stages of cultures development. The model of reference was provided by the prestigious museums of Scandinavian prehistory, and at the time designated as “high antiquity”. In these museums a systematic method of classification and comparison of findings was put on display. Pigorini had a real admiration for the archaeological museums of Copenhagen and Stockholm. According to him:

The scholar of palaeoethnology, in its investigation, follows the method of the geologist, who keeps in his mind the image of the past. In order to understand the early stages of our civilization, the researcher studies those people who are still on the first rungs of the ladder of civilization, the savages. Actually, the collections of their works help us to outline the framework of their costumes and give us excellent materials to study. In fact, today there are people who live in the prehistoric stage and, at the same time, they are our contemporaries. [...]Well, central to the Prehistoric Museum, as a demonstration of this distant era, is the concept of putting everything including the collection of weapons and tools that are needed in the wild and in all aspects of their lives. And that is precisely what made the savants of Denmark and Sweden founders of the new science and masters for all of us (Pigorini, 1877: 3)².

The *Collegio Romano*, housed the *Institute of Education*, founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1550. It was best known for being the stage of the “Museum of the world”, and was designed by the Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher in 1651. It contained collections of Roman and Etruscan antiquities, and among them a fine collection of Etruscan bronze sculptures and bronze mirrors (now in the Villa Giulia), Egyptian antiquities including mummies and large collections of natural objects such as minerals, skeletons of exotic animals, precious stones and minerals. These

collections included, in addition to the original archaeological and numismatic collection, the objects of non-European peoples that Catholic missionaries had sent back to Rome: scientific and musical instruments, exotic curiosities and wonders of nature, reminiscent of the North European *Wunderkammern*.

Describing the newly established National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography in 1876, Luigi Pigorini proposed a paradigm of knowledge based on sense, experience and positive verification in accordance with the philosophy of science deriving from Enlightenment thinkers. Furthermore, he stressed the usefulness of the collections cohesively connected both methodologically and visually “to establish the most detailed comparisons between the primitive antiquities of every country but also between the prehistoric and contemporary artefacts of uncivilized populations, who Pigorini called ‘barbarian’.” (Pigorini, 1876: 33)

This concept explains the origin of the term “paleo-anthropology” which was officially adopted in La Spezia in 1865, when French and Italian scholars gathered at the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology. One of the leading voices of anthropology at the time, the French prehistorian Gabriel de Mortillet, argued for an historical continuity in France rooted in early prehistory leading towards the ulterior national unity (Richard, 2002: 182). Thus, the displays of prehistoric archaeology organized on the occasion of the Universal Exhibitions showed how the various nations interpreted the objects on display. As Nils Muller-Scheessel has pointed out, “much of the motivation for staging international exhibitions drew from the desire to outdo other nations”. (Müller-Scheessel, 2001: 400)

The “Pigorini theory” focuses on the study of migrations of Indo-European populations that established in Italy and founded Rome. Most of the attention was paid to local cultures all over the country, in order to provide elements for the new comparative science. Ideally, the motto of “unity in diversity” summarised the dominant political orientation, during the difficult construction of the Italian state. Those civic values that remained strong after unification, confirmed the uniqueness of the history of Italy in the European context. Municipal and regional identities remained more representative for the community than that of the Italian national identity. In order to represent the origins of man on the Italian peninsula he needed to show man in the context of all of his regional variants, giving special importance to similarities.



Figure 1: Prehistory Section . Photo Archives, Museo Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”.

The Project of a Lifetime

Born in Fontanellato in 1842, Luigi Pigorini spent his childhood in his hometown, which belonged to the Duchy of Parma. In 1856, when he was 14 years old, the passion for historical studies and interest in antiquities led him to collaborate with Michele Lopez, director of Parma’s Museum of Antiquities.

His scholarly qualities of curiosity for “various branches of knowledge” led him to dabble in epigraphy and to seek out resources in the area. In December 1860, Pigorini met Bartolomeo

Gastaldi, considered the forerunner of palaeontology. In the summer 1861, he collaborated with Pellegrino Strobel, professor at the University of Parma, achieving outstanding results.

Michele Lopez, Pigorini's patron, encouraged and supported him in study tours of other Italian regions and abroad. In addition, he put him in touch with friends and scholars in the field of humanities. Between 1863 and 1866, Pigorini had the opportunity to undertake study trips to Switzerland, Tuscany, Rome and Naples. In Papal Rome, the young scholar was tired of repetitive discussions about antiquities, and he recognised the urgent need to join and support the early practitioners of a science that was trying to challenge a well-established tradition. The battle between the proponents of archaeology as a science of history against the still influential antiquarians remained lively until the early twentieth century. Finally, the new generation of specialists and technicians, trained in the late nineteenth century with a scientific approach, became part of the new state administration.

The relationships established during his trips, helped Pigorini to keep in touch with the personalities involved in the archaeological field. The dense network of knowledge would prove extremely profitable when Pigorini had to gather information and materials to form the Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography. In Naples, he met Giuseppe Fiorelli, who was appointed Head of the Central Directorate of Ruins and Museums. In 1863 Fiorelli was appointed director of the Museum of Naples and *sopraintendente* of the excavations. He worked in the reorganization of the collections, elaborated catalogues and established a new museum in the Carthusian monastery of St. Martin, also started to give importance to the scientific publication of the *News of the Excavations*. Fiorelli shared with Pigorini the ideas that had influenced his reorganisation of the National Museum of Naples: the prehistoric materials had been clearly separated from Roman-Greek remains, following chronological and scientific criteria.

By the Royal Decree of 24 March 1867, Pigorini was appointed director of the Museum of Antiquities in Parma and excavation of Velleja. From 1867, when Pigorini took over the Museum of Parma, he implemented the positivist comparativism between ethnology and prehistory, modelled on the natural history museums. The ethnographic findings were presented as living fossils, and as such useful for providing information on paleoethnological cultures.

In 1869, visiting the Ethnographic Museum in Copenhagen, at the Fourth International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology, Pigorini gathered inspiration for designing the exhibition of the Museum of Parma and then for the Prehistoric Museum in Rome. In 1871, at the Fifth International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology of Bologna, Pigorini organized the National Exhibition of Prehistoric Antiquities, and requested the establishment of a national museum. In 1875, Pigorini left Parma to be part of the Directorate General of Museums and Archaeological Digs, just set up in the new capital of the *stato unitario*, Rome.

Before moving to Rome he founded, together with Gaetano Chierici and Pellegrino Strobel, the *Bulletin of Italian Palaeoethnology*, the first magazine in Europe dedicated to Italian prehistory.

In 1877 began the most successful period of his career. Pigorini enjoyed the esteem and support of prominent and influential people in Rome, including his wife's family, daughter of the famous naturalist Pier Paolo Martini, who had founded the Museum of Verona. Pigorini took care of his institute, but also received many donations from collectors, including Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, Guido Boggiani, explorers, including scientists from the ethnologist Lamberto Loria and

high politicians and even the crown prince and the king. His brilliant and rapid career was linked to important supporters, but also owed much to the fact that he was a passionate supporter of Italian unification. For half a century, he exerted complete control on prehistoric studies in Italy, through the leadership of the National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, but also through the *Bulletin of Italian Palaeoethnology*. Pigorini became a dreaded man, his behaviour gave rise to the nickname of *Squalus vorax* (voracious shark), and even his friends were impressed by his greed.

The publication, *Fifty years of Italian history* (1911) included Pigorini's short paper 'Prehistory', which traces the history of palaeoethnology in Italy from 1861 to 1910. He provided a summary of his activities as a founder of prehistoric studies in Italy as well as a comprehensive overview of studies and contributions of many scholars who influenced this new science. On October 1911, as part of the International Exhibition, the First Congress of Italian Ethnography was held in Rome, promoted by the Italian Society of Ethnology, which had been founded in 1910 by the ethnologist Lamberto Loria.

In 1912, Pigorini was appointed to the Senate of the Kingdom of Italy. By ordering the creation of a bronze bust, commissioned from the artist Ettore Ximenes, his pupils, friends and fans gave him a special tribute. It was placed at the headquarters of the Royal Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, inaugurated on the 11th of January 1914. On this occasion, Pigorini stated that to make "the most productive and meaningful scientific heritage" was important to give a "breath of life to those museums that are limited to preserving antiquities" by paying greater "attention to what survives of the past generations in the form of superstitions and folk songs". In this context, he intended to emphasize the importance of the studies and initiatives of Lamberto Loria, who died prematurely, pointing out that there was still much work to be done for this museum.

Luigi Pigorini died in April 1925 in Padua. In the following June, a solemn commemoration was held in the Hall of the Royal Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, renamed after him in tribute to his role in the creation of the museum.

Evolutionism and Positivism

First in the prehistoric and ethnographic section of the Archaeological Museum of Parma, and since 1875 in the National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography in Rome, Luigi Pigorini gathered and put on display the relics of prehistoric archaeology in a comparative scheme, along with non-European ethnographic objects to highlight elements that could help the understanding of the past predating the development of writing.

The Italian Renaissance saw the establishment of many collectors of antiques who were in fact the precursors of the prehistory. More particularly, developing out of the philosophical and political program of the Enlightenment, the comparative criterion began to interpret the history of human societies on the basis of an evolutionary model, and after the French Revolution, the museum as a scientific institution also began to assume the task of disseminating these results to a large and growing audience.

The *Société des Observateurs de l'Homme*, founded in Paris in 1799 had the aim of studying "man" in terms of his physical, moral and intellectual features. Thus bringing together all branches of knowledge in a single grand design. Comparative naturalists, doctors, philosophers, linguists, historians, scholars and explorers created museums of anthropology, using methods devised by

the natural sciences and mathematics. The establishment of the museum was the response to a double endeavour, firstly the need to base scientific research on the direct analysis of material data, secondly the social commitment to contribute to public education.

Denmark was the early laboratory of an innovative museological experience, providing the starting point for a scientific and cultural debate, which expanded throughout Europe with a decisive outcome on the formation of new disciplines. In the *Guide of the Museum of Northern Antiquities* (Copenhagen, 1836), Christian Jürgensen Thomsen explained the theory of three ages (stone, bronze, iron), which had been applied consistently in the renovation of the museum since 1832. The principle of comparison by analogy was chosen as the official criterion, guarantee of scientific observations, strengthened by the immediacy of visual communication.

At first, similarities between prehistory and ethnography were observed when the analysis of the habits and lifestyles of the first Scandinavian populations brought out elements comparable to those found related to the lives of primitive peoples. The Museum of Antiquities of the North used visual method: placement of objects with similar functions or similar shape to create comparison and connectivity between ancient and contemporary people. Moreover, the museum was connected to the cabinet that housed American artefacts from Greenland and the Americas. The *American Cabinet* also included the reconstruction of American environments and housing types.

Another privileged place for discussing new theories was the Ethnological Society founded in London in 1843. The Ethnological Society was a meeting place for scholars who were concerned with ethnology, prehistory and anthropology. Among the scientific purposes, the Ethnological Society was also promoting the collections of ethnographic material.

During the first World Exposition, held in London in 1851, the Ethnological Society prepared a section devoted specifically to ethnology. The whole plan was to gather evidence of material progress in many fields, an operation that led to stressing the importance of material remains such as tools in order to study and understand both the technological and cultural development of mankind. In the same year, Henry Christy, one of the most active members of the Ethnological Society, began a collection of ethnological objects focusing on habits of wild populations, while developing a growing interest in the prehistoric collections.

Since 1853, General Pitt Rivers had initially started a collection of weapons; and objects, with the intention of explaining the principles of evolution on the basis of material remains. Furthermore Edward Tylor emphasized the importance of Christy's Museum of Ethnography, in addition to the major contribution of General Pitt Rivers. With the completion of their museums, in the mid-nineteenth century, Christy and Pitt Rivers had laid the foundations for a systematic method of comparative analysis of archaeological and ethnological artefacts.

However, comparativism assumed the character of a real theoretical tool only in the 1860s, when the European scientific community officially recognized the scope of Darwinian theory. Some of the most influential members of the Ethnological Society, including John Edward Tylor and John Lubbock were declared Darwinists and greatly contributed to the systematization of the comparative method applied to prehistoric times. As indicated by the subtitle of his popular, *Prehistoric Times*, "as illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages", John Lubbock attached great importance to the comparison of antiquities and the customs of "wild" cultures arguing that the people most backward in terms of technology would

disappear while those more advanced would have a happier life. Luigi Pigorini personally knew John Lubbock, collaborating with him in 1869 to publish a paper on some important archaeological sites in the Lazio region.

Usually the archaeological and ethnographic museums in the nineteenth century showed artefacts in display cases named after the region where the objects were made or found. The information focused on the origin, the chronology, on the “analysis” of form and the technique of manufacture. The image of the civilization that was obtained in this way was inevitably fragmented.

As well as being partial, the image that the prehistoric-ethnographic museum offered was also heavily influenced by the selection of objects, highlighting an attitude of indifference to the values assigned to objects by their former users.

Search for Origins: “Waste of Activities of Daily Living”

The museum played a key role in the development of a “new science” that was the palaeoethnology / prehistory, emerging through a difficult and vital relationship with classical archaeology.

In the eyes of Pigorini, the archaeological museums of Copenhagen and Stockholm were models of the greatest rigor and scientific correctness. Pigorini’s admiration for Scandinavian museums also extended to the exhibition rooms: “nothing disturbs the mind, nothing is idle”, unlike what can be seen in Italy, where historic buildings were richly decorated and ill designed to accommodate collections of different ages and nature. The most famous and admired museums were that of Scandinavian Antiquities of the North in the Prince’s Palace in Copenhagen. The main purpose of the Museum of Antiquities of the North was to show “when and by whom Denmark has been inhabited”, therefore showing the gradual progress of civilization. The prehistoric collections were complemented with ethnographic ones near a Cabinet of Classical Archaeology. The focus remained, firstly the nation’s history and, secondly, the relationships with foreign influences.

The search for origins had come to take into account such unusual materials as “waste activities of daily living”. Although this must have appeared as a strange notion to the layman, Pigorini believed that “there is nothing in the world that cannot be fertilized by genius.” (Pigorini, 1886: 7)

In addition, as a researcher he believed that in pursuit of knowledge one could not let “a chapter be abolished as useless because it lacks the splendour of the creations of art.” The example of the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen was also considered important in the ‘history of positive studies’ for the variety and reputation of its components, experts in botany, zoology, geology and archaeology.

The Italian scholar had travelled with other scholars from different countries to examine the results of research and was markedly impressed by the methods. In the Museum of Northern Antiquities, art objects were displayed alongside other objects found in the same way replicating the original discovery to facilitate scientific analysis. Despite the fact that the economic and political conditions in Denmark were not conducive to devoting large sums to scientific research, thanks to public participation and visitation, collections were popularized and explained to a large

audience through the sale of written guidebooks translated into several languages, and also thanks to the activities of volunteers.

The dissemination work was also solid: lists of items sent or given away were placed in newspapers; writings on the antiquities and their importance were popular; conferences aimed at a wide audience were organized not only in Copenhagen but also in small towns. In addition, small collections were created in the provinces, in Episcopal cities, in schools of all levels; priests, teachers and farmers were versed in archaeological questions and could “keep watch on the findings”. Finally, the winners of Danish archaeological contests were those who showed a deeper involvement. Therefore, as Pigorini observed, the Museum of Northern Antiquities was born from a national sentiment.

In Italy, Pigorini argued, the first objective was to promote greater public interest in the collections of antiquities. He recognised the serious lack of instructions given to inspectors of excavations and monuments, “few of which are real archaeologists” and therefore would need guidance “to interpret what they see”. However, Pigorini admitted that after the establishment of the General Directorate of Antiquities in 1876, there was a significant improvement, despite the serious difficulties that had arisen from the overwhelming administrative work related to this scientific function. Writing in 1891, the scholar confirmed how strong his interest was in the growth of the Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography. In this report, the Director outlined the history of the museum and its principal conceptual guidelines: to look for evidence showing that the origins of the first peoples who inhabited Italy goes further back than what written history dictates.

The dwelling places and the tombs were the main sources of artefacts and information. As Pigorini stated, “It was necessary to find out and collect those antiquities for the museum, that would fill gaps in national history, to find in the most distant ages the features of our country when it was called for the first time Italy.” (Pigorini, 1891: 599)

To find out if “the primitive settlers arrived in the peninsula by way of the land or by the sea, from the East or the West” was necessary to conduct a “comparative study of the antiquities of every country”, for this reason, the new museum had to accommodate the archaeology of neighbouring countries “without regard to any geographical boundary”. It was through the knowledge of weapons and tools of early man that one could aspire to understanding his “way of life”. The possibility of observing the “wild man” still alive was considered of great help as he was very similar to the “first man”. He continues “they more or less resembled each other in all their acts. Therefore, investigating the habits and customs of the oldest people (observed through the wild people that had ‘survived’) one proceeds from the known to the unknown, up from what you see to what is lost in the mists of time [...]” (Pigorini, 1891: 604). Paleoethnology’s field of investigation limited itself to the periods prior to the development of writing, leaving room for classical archaeology.

Clearly outlining his procedure of how to study these new materials, Pigorini explained that in addition to geographical distribution, the paleoethnologist assigns scientific material to different periods, each of which receives a particular name. “It is then noted that in some places within the same country one can find “survivals” of the ancient times before “that country began a positive story” and these must continue to be addressed by the paleoethnologist rather than by the historian. Pigorini believed that a similar role was played by the scholar of folklore, who

“searches in the songs and popular prejudices the events that have been passed down to us about the ideas and religions of whole societies since disappeared, helping to establish more clearly the links between far removed ages and the following ages.” (Pigorini, 1891: 606)



Figure 2: Foreign Ethnography Section. Photo Archives, Museo Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”.

On Behalf of Patriotic Spirit

The establishment of the National Museum of Prehistory gave the Italian Kingdom a chance to compete with other modern European nations, and to celebrate Rome as its new capital, acquired in 1870 with the defeat of Papal State. In 1891, Pigorini recalled the remarkable short time that separated his set of proposals to the minister Bonghi made on the 4th of June 1875, and their approval on the 26th of July 1875. As Pigorini wrote to Bonghi on this occasion, it was “extremely important” to discover the hidden evidence which “prior to the historical age, held Italy together from one end to the other”.

The museum was inaugurated on the 14th of March 1876 on the birthday of both King Vittorio Emanuele II and Prince Umberto, who presided over the ceremony. Upon inauguration, the new museum was recognised as “a promise for the future”. The first visitors were however confronted with quite empty showcases, but there were labels for absent objects, proving the ambitions of its creators for its future. Thousands of objects and documents of exceptional value had been gathered in a very short time, Pigorini’s powerful position, and his museum idea aroused fierce controversy.

In 1877, one year after the opening of the museum, in the daily *La Nazione*, Paolo Mantegazza headed a lively debate. Mantegazza laid claims on the ethnographic collections from Rome. Arguing that Italy should have a one single national ethnographic museum and by underlining that there was a close link between anthropology and the study of ethnology, he claimed that its head office should coincide with the already existing Anthropological Museum in Florence. Pigorini retorted that “ethnology could not be born without paleoethnology ” and used the example of museum projects of many foreign countries in support his own.

An important aspect of the Museum’s early development was the decisive contribution of many *amateur* enthusiasts and collectors with whom Pigorini established profitable relationships, knowing that he could not count on any significant financial commitment from the state. Despite the lack of funding, Pigorini did everything possible to enrich the collections, and at the end of his leadership left a museum divided into 54 sections, with more than 170,000 objects, a specialised library with more than 5000 volumes, in addition to his own personal library, an invaluable documentary source for extracts received from around the world by his scientific correspondents.

His acquaintance with Giuseppe Fiorelli, whom he had met in Naples in 1865 during his first study trip and who had become general director of museums and excavation of antiquities, was crucial to the implementation of the initiatives undertaken by Luigi Pigorini. Fiorelli issued an official note throughout Italy to the inspectors of the individual provinces to request material for the creation of the new museum. His appeal was in turn extended to all individuals who were able to respond on behalf of patriotic spirit and the positive value of science. The official note, called *Circolare 458*, sent on the 8th of November 1875 was widely distributed. “Everyone” was invited to participate in the formation of the new Museum of Prehistory and to send material of scientific interest.

The response was overwhelming, activating an increasingly efficient movement that attracted people with the opportunity to acquire honours and titles of recognition. By the time of the opening of the museum, its goals were oriented to fulfil “the needs of science”, designed to help Rome become a “natural place for us to undertake all manner of archaeological studies” but also to provide a space for the study of “prehistory”. The interest was directed to the “origins” and “primitive stages of civilization”.

The method of classification used for the Prehistoric Museum was to allocate a section to each region of Italy and to every foreign nation to display their objects, and subsequently to make easy comparisons. He foresaw the need in relation to a fast-growing field of studies, because “every day” new discovery would continue to be made. This enriched the museum, and nations without discoveries to date still benefited from allocated space for future discoveries.

In the same official note, it was stressed that the study of prehistoric relics “should not be considered separately from that of the arts and customs of savages or barbarians living”, as these provide an opportunity to look back to “the dark ages of civilization”. The aspiration was to recover the lost past of contemporary Western societies, tracking evidence relevant to a scientifically reliable reconstruction. It is in the museum that a wide perspective of times and places could be produced for the benefit of scholars who could thus take advantage of the abundant material, organized according to a strict system of classification.

The Government, in turn, supported the progress of these studies but without enough financial resources, the need for concerted efforts was required in order to produce the “wonderful results that everyone should enjoy.” Giuseppe Fiorelli stressed the concept by saying that “the scholars travelling throughout Italy would find materials in their respective territories, and when in Rome, they could examine the same collections compared to the other”, this would clearly facilitate survey work. At the end of the note, Fiorelli declared himself “grateful” for the significant commitment, shown by the inspectors in each province, to the country and to science.



Figure 3: Italian Ethnography Section. Photo Archives, Museo Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”.

The Pigorini Reports: Museographical Materials for a National Master Narrative

A very precious source for research on the museum’s history and organisation are the reports that Pigorini periodically presented to the Minister of Education. In the First Report on the Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, prepared in March 1881, Luigi Pigorini remembered the inauguration on 14th March 1876 with the presence of a small amount of objects on display, and how subsequently, thanks to support of the ministry, “the scientific material grew a lot”. Pigorini described the method of classification based on the clear division into two classes: “prehistory”

and “ethnography”. The first section included prehistoric remains, both from Italy and other countries; the objects were arranged according to a chronological order, and then to their provenance. The ethnographical section included ancient and exotic materials from all over the world, compared with contemporary artefacts of 'uncivilized' populations.

This undertaking encompassed all of the theories that were dear to Pigorini, confident that the youth of the new science, which he called a “little science”, might benefit from some indulgence, until it was completely settled. The significant increase of material that was hoped-for would permit for more complete classification, favouring the “scientific conclusions” that the museum expected. The urgent need to collect in order to fill the showcases and, therefore, to classify objects, was presented as the positivist approach of the museum, although Pigorini realised and acknowledged that the “abundance” of material that was constantly coming into the museum made it difficult to maintain “diligent classification.” The main struggle was not to let the eclectic nature of the collections become subjects of “wonder” that had characterized the natural history collections in previous centuries but to present them according to the strongest sense of scientific rigor. To structure the paleontological studies, Luigi Pigorini related the museum to the university teaching for which he was responsible since 1876. Furthermore, from the very beginning, the museum was completed with a library that collected publications of paleoethnological interest, fewer publications on the subjects of ethnography, because of their high cost, but also contained many gifts from foreign scientists and texts that Pigorini purchased over decades of study.

In the same report, Pigorini also took the time to indicate what was to be most important in the collections of prehistoric and ethnographic, giving a brief description. In the detailed account of what has been achieved, he emphasized the relationships established with the managers of European museums, as well as with individual scholars. The collections constituted a map of such relationships, and the exciting possibility of the scientific vision of the world through objects traded, donated or purchased. This related with a typical kind of museum master narrative, giving an interpretation of history in terms of progress.

Furthermore he began to intensify relations with American museums, including the Archaeological Museum in Wisconsin, but also with the anthropological society of Washington. Meanwhile, the anthropological museum in Buenos Aires had sent some articles from Patagonia.

With regard to ethnographic objects, the first group was composed of items that came from the Kircherianum objects and from cabinets of geology and zoology of the Royal University of Rome, but also the Archaeological Museum of Parma and the National Museum of Naples. Other items had come from the Italian Geographic Society and the Arsenal of Venice, on behalf of the Ministry of the Navy. Finally, the American section was built from famous collections gathered in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from items shipped from the Catholic missions that had belonged to the collections Aldovrandi, Cospi, Vallisnieri, Institute of Sciences in Bologna and at the Collegio Romano.

Pigorini complained about lack of space, “room conditions have forced me to keep important material in a relatively narrow corridors, and in addition they had very badly lit, and here more than anywhere else I need to operate for the museum efficiency, thus shed light on its important collections.”

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the study of disciplines like archaeology and paleoethnology, matched the displaying practices in museums. In some European countries, as well as in Italy, the museum performs a role that is at the core of the national narrative. Luigi Pigorini was the mind behind a national museum, aimed to gather as many objects as possible in Rome to enhance national prestige through scientific work. At the same time, the Italian Parliament engaged a vivacious debate on the preservation of monuments and on the organisation of museums, libraries and archives. The museum, as well as having a role in the collecting and preservation of collections, became a place of negotiation between science production and dissemination.

Pigorini wanted to recompose into a “big picture” the pieces of many local Italian narratives. In 1881, he proposed to set up a new section of the museum devoted to peasant industries, tools, ornaments and clothes but this request did not succeed. However, a new branch of science inherited this mission, Italian Ethnographic studies that appeared at the First Italian Congress of Ethnology (1911). Pigorini often said the museum must constantly renew itself, as a “living organism”, following the definition of William Flower, the English naturalist and director of the Natural History Museum in London.

In 1911, many initiatives took place in the capital during the International Exhibition, held to celebrate the Jubilee of Italian unity. Many collections, also belonging to the Pigorini Museum, were put on display. After the exhibitions, the items were packaged for decades, waiting to find an exhibition space, some were moved, and others went missing. The rising fascist regime gave much attention to classical archaeology with its mythological content, thus neglecting the empirical methods of prehistory and ethnography. In 1937, more than a decade after the death of Luigi Pigorini, the director Piero Baroncelli published the first guide of the museum, complaining about lack of funds and staff.

However the individual voice of the founder can still be heard in the present museum, which is managed under the tutelage of the Superintendence of the National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography “Luigi Pigorini”. The main development lies in the existence of clearly separated sections of Ethnography and Palaeoethnology. The sources available for the analysis of the current narrative in the museum (programmes, disposition of objects, decors, lighting, scenography, guides, web texts and multimedia), allow us to assess the efforts to update the institution responsible for fostering two collections, two lines of research: an ethno-anthropological collection and a prehistoric heritage.

The museum's contemporary narrative attempts to bridge the gap between the times of the main, still appealing core collections brought together by Pigorini and the present museum, by providing an academic framework whose mission is to find a new master narrative, which could respect the development of both prehistory and ethnography as distinct disciplines. Actually, the old paradigm breakdown began with the crisis of the Evolutionary theory. The museum tries to present the information in a more neutral way that makes no claims about Italy as a geographical unity, meanwhile the museum as a district of the cultural heritage department is part of the national heritage management system. A critical reflexion about the museum has marked the eighties and nineties (Amore, 1993: 102-106). The reorganisation of the permanent exhibition rooms (Prehistory, Africa, Oceania and America) established clearly distinct display areas for

prehistory and ethnography, allowing them to coexist separately in the same institution. (Clemente, 2005: 7-8).

Notes

- ¹ The subject would require a specific treatment that is not possible to give here, so please refer Massari 2004: 27-155 for a detailed overview.
- ² L. Pigorini, 'Il Museo Preistorico Etnografico di Roma, Lettera al Senatore Mantegazza', *Diritto* 80, 1877, p.3: "Il cultore della paleontologia segue nelle sue indagini il metodo del geologo, che trova nel presente l'immagine del passato. Per intendere le prime fasi della civiltà nostra, importa indagare come esse si svolgano tra le popolazioni che trovansi tuttora sui primi gradini della scala e sono appunto i selvaggi, sono precisamente le collezioni delle opere loro, è il quadro dei loro costumi quello che può metterci sulla strada. Questa linea preistorica c'è ed è contemporanea alla nostra [...] ecco allora che accanto al Museo Preistorico, come dimostrazione di questa epoca lontanissima, sorge il concetto di mettere anche la raccolta delle armi e degli utensili che servivano e servono ai selvaggi in tutte le funzioni della vita loro. Ed è appunto ciò che fecero i dotti della Danimarca e della Svezia, fondatori della nuova scienza e maestri di tutti noi."

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Uses and Exploitation of History: Official History, Propaganda and Mythmaking in Bulgarian Museums

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Abstract

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a period in Bulgarian development described as ‘a fundamental rupture in the history of modern Bulgaria...as it led to the total repudiation of the political, social and economic system that had been developing in the country since the achievement of independence seventy years earlier’ (Dimitrov 2001:22). The new authorities imposed the requirements for museums to participate in the building of the socialist value system. This provoked the regulation of all museum activities and the introduction of a well-controlled administrative style of museum management. In all decisions of the Central Committee of the communist party the role of the focused ideological education amongst the population was constantly underlined. The approaches to museums inherited from previous governments were drastically reconstructed to meet the new requirements. Or as Iliev (in Dolapchieva 1985:11) underlines, in the years of communist governance ‘the meaning of the cultural – historical heritage reached new dimensions, it became part of the politics of the party and the socialist state. Even more, it became part of the whole ideological activity of the party’.

Introduction

In September 1944 a communist regime¹ was imposed in Bulgaria and the country's political, social and cultural structures were radically changed by the ideology of this regime. Bulgarian cultural life was dominated by communist ideas for 45 years. The Bulgarian museum system developed in a closed country where strict communist party directives had to be followed. After 1944 'the so called socialist museology was imposed ... The main characteristic of museums under this museology was that they were State museums, managed by different organs of the communist party' (Krasteva 2003:141). Rules relating to good and bad practice had to be closely followed in all walks of life, including museums. The most important task however was the 'ideological transformation of all museums. [Communist] ideology was also the guiding principle when building new ones' (Krasteva 2003: 181).

Museum organization

Krasteva (*ibid.*: 141) underlines that 'museological activities in Bulgaria were concentrated on building museums whose main aim was to collect materials concerning the process of building socialism'. This resulted in the appearance of a unified and centralized museum system. Bulgarian museums at the time turned into 'political' (Krasteva *ibid.*: 275) rather than historical institutions, which had been the situation in Bulgaria before World War II.

What did the 'communist museum' mean in practical terms? Pecheva and Raichev (1955) give an insight as to how communist ideas had to be incorporated into museum's work. In their 'guide book' the first essential for a good museum, is that:

(...) curators must create museums of a socialist type representing the role of the party, the heroic life of a communist hero or the workers building upon socialism and enjoying life under the guidance of the party.

In order to achieve these aims the first task to be undertaken when preparing a museum exhibition was the appointment of a Commission which consisted of the Head of the 'Culture' department of the local municipality, the museum director and two local members of the communist party (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 18). This combination immediately makes one doubt about the success of such a Commission. From the four members only one had a museum background, while the others, especially the members of the communist party, had little or nothing to do with museums.

The criteria for a good museum exhibition included the following principles:

- To demonstrate and underline the achievements of the communist party and to show the real face of the enemies of the working class
- To reflect the historical development of the local revolutionary movement with an emphasis on the difficult but heroic revolutionary struggles of the workers
- To reflect the leading role of the Bulgarian communist party and its role as a protector of workers' interests
- To demonstrate the difference between the socialist way of life and the difficult life of people living under hard economical and social conditions in the capitalist world (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 41).

In order to achieve the above all museums had to be transformed and transformation meant ‘eradicating all signs of the past by completely changing all museum content, essence and forms of previous activities – exhibitions, research and collecting’ (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 6). Furthermore exhibitions had to be structured as follows:

1. A historical section with areas devoted to:
 - Local life before Ottoman domination
 - Revolutionary activities of local people against the Ottomans
 - Workers’ revolutionary activities
2. A ‘Socialist building’ section including:
 - The local history of the development of socialism
 - Present day activities of the socialist people
3. ‘Natural history’ section – including elements of local natural history curiosities (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 7).

Thus, any museum, which had ethnographic or archaeological collection had to present these under the ‘History’ section of the exhibition. The meaning of such presentation was ‘to unify all Bulgarian museums... and to avoid isolated and formalistic exhibiting of materials and collections that museums may have’ (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 8).

Some museums have large archaeological or ethnographic collections, which indicate their biased character. It is intolerable that museums have exhibitions demonstrating only one archaeological or ethnographic collection which made them archaeological or ethnographic museums. Such museums must aim to create the abovementioned three - tiered exhibitions, including all three departments with the relevant sections (Pecheva and Raichev *ibid.*: 10).

Following such directives museums in Bulgaria were denied any opportunity for creativity, individuality or self-determination. All exhibitions were to be organized in a similar way, with the priority being to reveal the ‘glorious activities’ of the communist party. The strict division of museums according to their collections disappeared, giving way to museums whose only substantive difference was the name of the local communist hero used in the exhibition. School groups went into these museums with the sole purpose of studying the heroic acts of the communist activist whom they should be proud of and inspired by (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: School group in the museum of Georgi Dimitrov2 in Sofia. (Author's Personal archive)

This picture was taken in 1978 and shows children at the end of their first year at school. The ceremony, at which the children received their diplomas for successfully completing the year, was held in the house-museum of Georgi Dimitrov, the model for every person living under socialism in Bulgaria. These are seven - year old children but they had to be trained in communist principles from an early age.

Type of museums and museum collections

Gradually the number of artefacts in museums collections increased, and by 1958 Bulgarian museums had acquired 51,048 new objects. For the period 1960-1970 the new acquisitions averaged some 77,000 objects per year and by 1990 the estimation was for some 4,100,000 artefacts in possession of Bulgarian museums (Kissiov 2004: 25). However, it is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the number of acquisitions, as it is not known how many were held at the beginning of the communist period (Krasteva *ibid*: 278).

It is interesting to look at how museum objects were presented in line with strict party directives and how an object could be ideologically biased. When describing the theoretical structure of a successful socialist exhibition Silianovska (1972: 208) notes:

(...) The successful exhibition can use the method of contrast. This one is particularly useful when presenting class differences. So for example a weaving mill from the time before the socialist revolution in Bulgaria with its primitive machines can be juxtaposed to a modern textile mill using contemporary machines to demonstrate how the workers' life improved under the guidance of the party.

In other words a historical period in the development of the textile industry is not presented as such but serves to represent party success and advance. Isolated features are given a symbolic meaning. Objects, sites and landscapes are re-interpreted to provide new meaning, often different from what they meant in their original context. Bulgarian museums became a prime focus for such undertakings in order to achieve party directives.

The intensification of collecting activities provoked the expansion of the museum network. So for example one of the first new museums built after the communist party came into power was the Museum of the Revolution in Sofia, following a decision of the Central committee of the Bulgarian communist party in 1947. The Council of Sofia took the decision that the house of Dimitar Blagoev³ in Sofia should be converted into a house-museum (1948). A decision of the Council of Ministers (10.07.1949) also enabled the house of Georgi Dimitrov in Sofia to become a house-museum (Kissiov 2004: 18-19). These examples give an indication that decisions for new museums were taken exclusively by political bodies or more precisely by the leading communist party. In 1951 the ‘Museums’ department of the Committee for Arts and Culture prepared a strategic long-term program for museums building in Bulgaria until 1970. This was a period when a large number of memorial museums appeared. With a decision of the Central Committee of the communist party (16 July 1953) the Museum of Bulgarian – Soviet friendship in Sofia was created ‘to reflect the centuries long relations between Bulgarian people and the peoples of the Soviet Union’ (Kissiov *ibid*: 17). All these were State funded museums. Gradually their number increased significantly (Table 1) with one third being dedicated to communist heroes. By 1984 the number of such strictly memorial museums was 74 out of 227 (Kissiov 1984:17). This imbalance is a strong indicator of the ways in which Bulgarian museology had been appropriated by the state to achieve its political objectives.

Year	1956	1966	1972	1978	1981	1990
State funded Museums (including art galleries)	98	136	171	207	215	230

Table 1: State funded museums and art galleries. Source: Kissiov 2004: 21.

Representation of some historical events in Bulgarian museums

Religion

Religion played a significant role in Bulgarian history especially during the five centuries when the country was under Ottoman rule. So what were the implications of communist ideologies for the churches’ collections when ‘religion’ was regarded as taboo and anti-religious propaganda was rife?

The communist party ‘could tolerate no organization or institution that might possibly offer an alternative focus of loyalty’ (Sugar 1999: 45). In Bulgaria

(...) the Orthodox church was formally subordinated to the state, prohibited from engaging in education and charity work and deprived of its sources of finance....The Catholic and Protestant churches were all but destroyed because of their suspected links with the West (Dimitrov 2001: 24).

Although the communist regime recognized that ‘various churches could not be eliminated’ (Sugar *ibid.*: 45) the main task of communist activists was to eradicate all religious ‘delusions’. Church collections seem to have been deliberately avoided as was any interference with monastic collections. However ‘...the existence of such collections as well as their richness and diversity, could not be completely neglected’ (Krasteva *ibid.*: 280). In places such as the Museum of Rila monastery for example, the collections remained but the name of the museum had to be changed to ‘Museum of the History of Bulgarian Literature and Middle-ages and Revival Culture’ so avoiding all religious connotation and as if to underline that museums and religion were incompatible.

The Ottoman period

In the process of re-writing history in communist museums and re-shaping public memory and perception for historicism even more striking is the example of how the Ottoman period was represented in those museums. In the historical section of the required three-tiered exhibitions the revolutionary activities of local people against the Ottomans had to be demonstrated. The period was represented rather briefly but always emphasising how many Bulgarians lost their lives during the Ottoman occupation.⁴ Exhibits explicitly provoked hatred towards the Ottomans, which was transferred to the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria and neighbouring Turkey. This created serious social alienation, which culminated in the 1980s with the activities of the Bulgarian communist party, deporting from the country any Turks who refused to change their Muslim names to Bulgarian ones. The hatred was ‘visually’ implanted into museum visitors and especially aimed at children during their compulsory museum visits. The ultimate example for every museum of how to represent the Ottoman period was the depiction of an opened mass grave or an enormous pile of skulls.

The Communist period

Looking at the communist ‘past’ and its representations in museums also hints at a carefully orchestrated ‘history’, meant to serve party needs. Kaneff (2004) discusses specific features that characterised socialist history, while Verdery (1996) even talks about the appropriation of the notion of ‘time’ and its utilisation by communist governments. ‘Intentionally elaborated ideology’ and ‘state-approved rendition of the past’, are but a few of its components (Kaneff *ibid.*: 56-7). Socialist history relied greatly on textualisation (Fig. 2 and 3). The past, recorded in manuscripts of letters by communist heroes, photographs of dead communist heroes murdered by fascists, all exhibited in museums, made the past a knowledgeable past, a past that demonstrated the relationship between particular events and present phenomena. ‘Documentation provided ‘evidence’ of the legitimate position of the historical past at the same time allowing contemporary rendition of history to reinforce and build upon the old’ (Kaneff *ibid.*: 62). In this way, Bulgarian socialist history represented a road, which linked the past to the present in a particular way. ‘The road led away from one place – fascism-capitalism – and towards a particular destination – communism’ (Kaneff *ibid.*: 64).



Figure 2: Memorial museum Vela Peeva, Velingrad (© The Author).

Furthermore a local memorial museum at that time had an immensely important role with regards to the establishment of relations between the local community and the state. Being able to claim involvement in historical events in the fight against fascism meant being able to exercise power but also a means to attract state attention and the consequent benefits. Towns or villages which could prove involvement in the communist past were thriving places with significant funds allocated. Museums were the ultimate place to present such proof, gathering evidence of the involvement of a particular community in the 'communist past'.

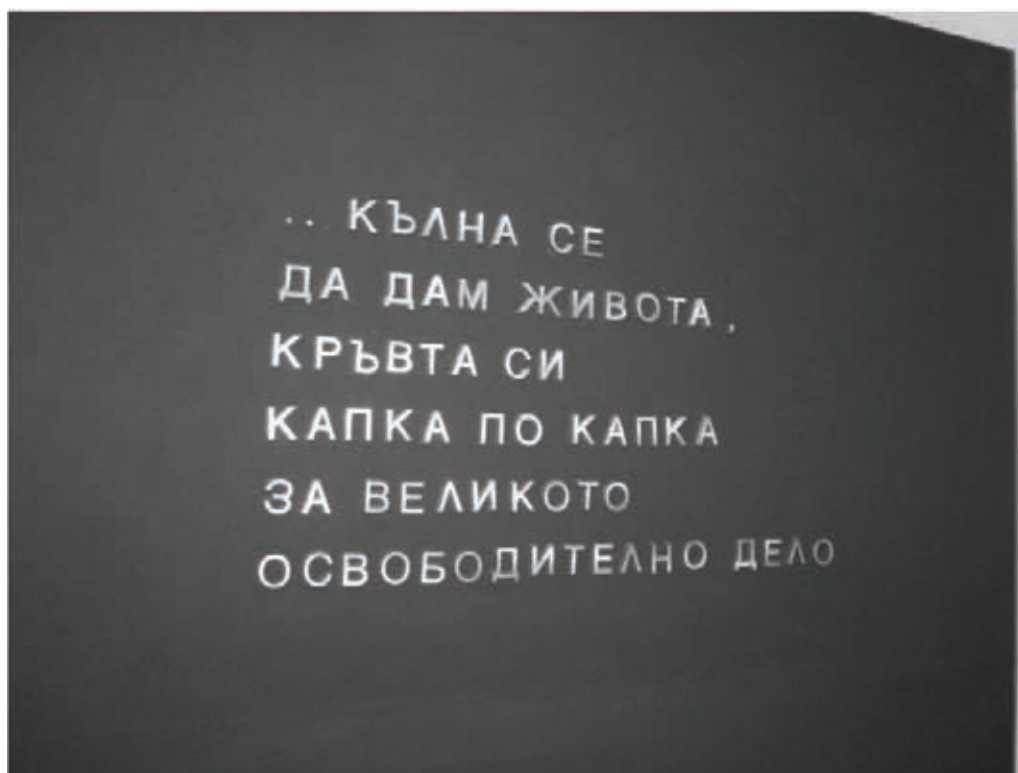


Figure 3: Memorial museum Vela Peeva, Velingrad, quote of a letter, written by V. Peeva. The text reads: ‘I swear I will give my live, drop of blood by drop of blood for the great liberation’; translation is mine (© The Author).

Therefore the appearance of so many memorial museums is far from surprising. Not only did they establish a link with the past and proof of the heroism of those who fought against fascism thus providing the basis for the claims of grandeur of the party. In this way museums contributed in the process of use of history as a political resource. They were places where ‘documentary evidence’ of participation of a community in historical events could be exhibited. Once in a museum such ‘evidence’ became legitimate and authoritative, which turned museums into means providing access to state resources (Kaneff *ibid*).

All of the above reveals that ‘the main task of Bulgarian museology in the communist period was building up a museum system that was socialist in spirit and content (Krasteva *ibid*: 278). The achievements of Bulgarian socialist museology are underlined by Kissiov (1984: 43):

(...) Without doubt the museum system in the years of communist regime achieved incredible heights. It was built under the guidance and with the help of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian communist party, which did what the bourgeois state before could not do.

This quotation glorifies the achievements of the communist party but cannot be substantiated – unless one considers the creation of a large number of identical museums, promulgating socialist ideology as a success. However if Kissiov wanted his texts published he had to conform to censorship rules. But from a contemporary point of view his comments can be seen in a very different light. It is true that the Bulgarian state before 1944 could not create what was done during the years of communist regime and arguably would not have wished to. What the communist regime created were museums where school children and workers were obliged to go to learn and be proud of the achievements of the communist party and its communist heroes. In

other words all cultural activities in the country were simply *in the service* of the leading party, enabling it to reach its target for political, economic or educational success (see Petkova-Campbell 2009 and 2010).

Notes

- ¹ The party governing in Bulgaria for the period 1946–1989 was a communist party. However pure communism remains theoretical and the state was a socialist one. In the present text both terms are used but the term of communism is used prevalently to demonstrate the ideology Bulgarian communist party tried to implement in museum functioning.
- ² Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949) – leader of the Bulgarian communist party (1944–1949), General secretary of Comintern, eminent representative of Bulgarian and international communist movement.
- ³ Dimitar Blagoev (1856–1924) - Bulgarian political leader, founder of the Social-Democratic party (1891).
- ⁴ Although to this day there is no precise and accurate statistics.

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The Importance of Place



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Intimating History: (re)-furnishing Versailles for Louis-Philippe's Musée d'Histoire de France (1834–1837)

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Abstract

The constitution and opening of the *Musée Historique de Versailles* counts as among the most important undertakings of nineteenth century French cultural policy. It appeared as an explicit manifesto for national reconciliation, in the context of the constitutional monarchy's desire to establish its historical place in the long line of princes and regimes that were considered as the builders of a millenary nation. It appeared also as the best way for the public authority to preserve the castle, since the end of the Revolutionary period had presented each changing regime with the difficulty of dealing with this exceptional monument both in symbolic terms and in relation to its maintenance.

Introduction

Versailles as a museum was inaugurated in June 1837 on the occasion of the Royal Prince's, the duke of Orléans', wedding. The event was thus an obvious way of associating of the story of the new dynasty with a recollection of France's history. The building had been the object of huge transformations and included spaces dedicated to a variety of topics. The *Galerie des Batailles* and representations celebrating the Empire period and the July Monarchy itself were located in the South wing. In the North wing, a collection of carved portraits of historical figures from the Middle Ages to the Modern history was represented, along with the *salles des Croisades*, while in the *corps central*, public access was granted in the State Apartments (*les Grands appartements*). Meanwhile, the private apartments (*appartements intérieurs du roi* and *appartements de la reine*) were reserved for the use of the king and queen as spaces for reception and display, establishing a more private museum accessible only on the basis of royal invitation. The museum hosted a collection mostly displaying cycles of paintings and sculpture of the different periods and fundamental episodes in France's national history in a narrative manner. This narrative approach reflected the political statement of the July Monarchy, eager to unite society in common praise for national pride despite the stark political divisions that marked the period.

If the art collection at Versailles has been the object of much research and numerous publications, beginning with the work by Charles Gavard in the very first decade of its opening, and up until more recent decades, from Thomas Gaehtgens and Claire Constans; yet the part played by the furniture in these rooms has obviously not yet enjoyed enough attention from historians or art historians. For the new museum, the furniture was principally provided according to orders from the Royal Household. Most of these pieces were public benches made by the habitual furniture deliverers to the French court. Other pieces were older items taken from the Royal Collection at the *Garde-Meuble*, but apart from these, Versailles, which had been an empty place for decades, appears as a completely new adventure in terms of refurbishment.

Furniture as a companion to the narrative of display

The most important type of furniture ordered were undoubtedly the benches and stools intended for the display galleries. Of these, the most common was a particular model of very strong and simple design.



Figure 1: Louis-Alexandre Bellangé, public bench, 1836, Versailles, musée national du château.

It is not clear how many of these were actually made, nor how many were displayed. According to the archives, Louis-Alexandre Bellangé delivered 392 benches, for public use, plus a set of 75 stools, intended for the museum guards, between September 1835 and September 1838. But this only concerns Bellangé, and we know today that many other benches displayed at Versailles bear the stamps or marks of other craftsmen such as Jacob, Munier, Leys, to mention only those with a signature of some kind. The very sober and simple design can easily be understood as adequate to the large number of pieces supplied, as well as to their purpose. These were to be used by the public as seating during the visit, therefore they had to be strong, numerous and of course as cheap as possible to acquire. It is also worth considering that these seats, which were also intended for painting and sculpture rooms, had to be aesthetically subdued and not disturb the visual experience of the narrative cycles of history paintings and sculptures. But there remains a puzzle. Some of the prints published by Gavard in his album of views of the new Versailles Museum show very clearly that some of the benches were not in fact on display for the public, but protected by iron balustrades¹. According to Gavard, the rooms in which one could see this were the rooms dedicated to the Napoleonic period, and a room called the “*salle des Résidences royales*”, displaying a choice of painting showing the different palaces and castles from the royal household under the *Ancien régime*. On the contrary, it is remarkable that such a disposition did not occur in the other parts of the castle, such as the rooms dedicated to the French Revolution and the revolution of 1830, nor for that matter in the Hall of mirrors. The very presence of balustrades gives the impression that the point of these benches was not only to provide possible points of rest to the visitors, but, despite their simplicity and lack of décor, they also seem to belong to the *mise en scène* of the interior itself.

The interpretation I give to this is that we are probably facing a late manifestation of the protocol rules within a French regal palace relative to the furnishing of a state apartment. In the 1830s, despite a certain simplification of protocol desired by Louis-Philippe, the proper rule appropriate to the furnishing of a royal palace still followed a Napoleonic organization dating from 1804. From this, it is clear that the benches were invested with the same importance as seats intended to furnish waiting rooms and antechambers; audience rooms, however more prestigious, were furnished by more courtly looking X-shaped stools.

Public benches, displayed in the museum, but in effect out of reach for the public, may therefore be interpreted as pure objects of protocol, intended to remind anyone that while a museum dedicated to the Nation, Versailles remained discretely but surely a royal residence, and that it was necessary to demonstrate this in some places within the palace. In a certain sense, we are confronted with the participation of furniture in a museographic narrative. By visiting the palace, the public of the 1830s and 1840s had access to a plethora of episodes from French history; yet by facing protocol furnishing, and being clearly prevented from using it, the people were also placed in the position of a distant spectator to the show of court, which in the context of Versailles appeared as a concept belonging to both the present and the past.

Today, there would be no sense in placing a simple looking and brand new bench, in theory intended for people to sit on it, within the museum, out of reach of the public; such a thing would look absurd, especially considering that it would appear to be a completely unnecessary expense. However, under Louis-Philippe, this display mechanism materialized a certain distance between the place and its new visitors, indicating that the public, while citizens of a common

history, still remained in the king's castle, and they were maintained at a different status from that of the courtiers. This notion also illustrates the interesting concept of the palatial space as an environment for public education in History during Orleanist France.

The display of furniture as part of the narration

Another aspect deserving development is the role given to furniture as a direct element for the museographic narration. From this point of view, the initial museography of Versailles was obviously designed to celebrate two concepts: decorative unity within some of the historical rooms, as well as the illusion of travelling into the past. Creating a decorative sense of unity was a clear motive for the delivery made by Bellangé in association with Pierre-Gaston Brion, of a suite of benches and stools in neo-Louis XIV style.



Figure 2: Louis-Alexandre Bellangé, public bench for the Hall of Mirrors, 1835, Versailles, musée national du château.

These were designed to fit the architecture of the Hall of Mirrors and the adjacent “*salons de la Paix*” and “*de la Guerre*”. Probably due to the location, the decision was first made to spend a little more money on their design than on the benches discussed above, and secondly, that their design shouldn't be modern but try to respect the spirit of the place and lend a coherence to the memory of the *Grand Siècle* so that the spectator would experience it as completely as possible. In the same spirit, two pier tables and one other clock stand were commissioned from Brion, produced in a curious personal reconceptualization of Rococo style.



Figure 3: Pierre-Gaston Brion, public stool or the Hall of Mirrors, 1835, Versailles, musée national du château.

Another cabinetmaker, Hurel, delivers in 1836 an armchair and a holy water fount intended for a room reconstituted and designed as the confessional cabinet of Louis XIV, and we see here the other purpose of furniture in the museum in a positive sense, which was to provide a restitution of historicity.

Relative to restitution, a pertinent presentation of the King's Bedchamber was crucially important for the general program of the *corps central* of the castle. As a consequence, the administration relied on Jacob-Desmalter in 1834 to deliver the wooden components for a regal bed, integrating an upholstery garniture dating from the late seventeenth century and thought to have belonged to the original bed of the Sun King.

Figure 4: Alphonse Jacob-Desmalter, bed for the King's bedchamber, 1834 (photographed in 1857), Versailles, musée national du château. Please see the image at the RMN website:
<http://www.photo.rmn.fr/cf/htm/CSearchZ.aspx?o=&Total=230&FP=23042160&E=2K1KTSG4QAA99&SID=2K1KTSG4QAA99&New=T&Pic=190&SubE=2C6NU09QO1DK>

The cabinetmaker here develops a sort of stylistic mixture between late Empire style and neo-baroque vocabulary made of scrolls and acanthus leaves with the iconic irradiated mask in the centre. Here we are facing an excellent example of nineteenth century reconstitution of a lost historical object. Considering the crucial importance of the Royal Bedchamber in the *Ancien régime* court ceremonial, its presence was necessary for the Versailles Museum to narrate the history of the French Monarchy in its décor.

In this context, it is no wonder that the public was not told about the modern making of such a bed. The critic Jules Janin, in describing his visit to Versailles for the museum's opening describes visitors as being seized by emotion confronted with the possibility of entering a 17th century regal space². That same day, the countess of Boigne is in the same state of mind, convinced that she is facing the bed in which the Sun king slept and died³. She described the experience of the bed as the keystone moment of her visit. It is interesting to notice that, again according to Janin, the State bedchamber was actually named "*chambre du Lit*" rather the "*chambre du roi*"⁴. The illusion of actual historicity of the new Jacob-Desmalter bed survives the July Monarchy as attested by its presence in history paintings from the Second Empire, such as a scene by Navlet from 1861 (Versailles, MV8559) and the famous *Molière breakfasting with Louis XIV* by Gérôme from 1862 (private collection, 1862).

Notes

¹ Especially visible in *Vue de la Salle de Marengo*, by J. Huguenet, in Ch. Gavard, *Versailles, Galeries Historiques, dédiées à S. M. le Reine des Français*, Paris, 1837–1848.

² J. Janin, *Fontainebleau, Versailles, Paris*, Paris, 1837, p. 149–158.

³ Adélaïde d'Osmond, comtesse de Boigne, *Mémoires, récits d'une tante*, Paris, 1999, pp. 507–508.

⁴ J. Janin, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

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National Museums as Memorial Places The Goethehaus Weimar and the Foundation of National Museums in 19th Century Germany

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between national museums and memorial places dedicated to individuals. Taking the Goethe National Museum in Weimar as a starting point, we try to develop a new approach in understanding the type of museum designated as a “national museum”. First, we show that the name “Goethe National Museum” referred initially to Goethe’s house and in particular his study as the most important memorial site. The Goethe National Museum adopts a new type of “individual memorial place” – known in German as a “Personengedenkstätte” – that is established in a former residential dwelling. It is the only individual memorial place that was called a national museum in 19th century Europe. Drawing on this special case, it can be shown that national museums in 19th century Germany follow the model of memorial places dedicated to individuals. Neither the Germanic National Museum (1852), the Bavarian National Museum (1855), the Goethe National Museum (1885) nor the Schiller National Museum (1903) were founded with the primary aim of creating collections as it would be usually expected from other museums. Their aim was rather to appropriate or create a central place to remember the national past as a historical continuum, to represent the life and the deeds of persons connected with the national identity. The Goethehaus Weimar is a special case insofar as a real commemorative site forms the basis of this national museum. Our considerations are framed by the theory of society developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, who saw a correlation between the rise of the semantics of the nation and the shift to modernity occurring in most European societies during the 18th century. We argue that these semantics are mapped to national museums in the form of memorial places.

The Goethehaus Weimar – an Individual Memorial Place as National Museum

In the 18th century, the rulers of Weimar contrived to shape the town as a cultural center of international importance. They achieved their aim mainly by inviting outstanding intellectuals to live and work in the town. In 1775, Johann Wolfgang Goethe came to Weimar, after accepting an invitation by the young duke Carl August. The duke appointed him as a privy councillor and he became a member of the highest governmental authority. At that time, the town of Weimar was the capital of the small Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, which was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Later, in 1815, the dukedom was raised to the rank of a grand duchy at the Congress of Vienna. It became part of the German Confederation, a union of German states that was founded after the Napoleonic Wars.



Figure 1: Goethe's house at the Frauenplan in Weimar, © Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Photo: Jens Hauspurg.

Goethe lived in the house at the Frauenplan for about 50 years, and it was there that he died in 1832. The house is remarkable as it can be considered as an expression of Goethe's personality. He transformed the interior of the baroque building according to his taste. The front house was re-styled in a classicist manner. The staircase, the Yellow room or the Juno room were admired and described by visitors in their letters and memoirs. But during Goethe's lifetime, visitors were not allowed to see his private rooms – his study, the bedroom and the library in the rear part of the house. But it is precisely these private rooms that have been given the most importance by posterity. Immediately after Goethe's death, the Chancellor of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Friedrich von Müller, sealed Goethe's study so that no one – not even the family – was able to enter it without his permission.

In 1842, 10 years after Goethe's death, the writer Melchior Meyr (1810-1871), largely forgotten today, came up with the proposal to transform the house into a *Deutsches Museum*, a German Museum, in short into a national museum. The Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, proposed the same idea to the German Confederation. The leaders of the Confederation then attempted to buy Goethe's house and found the first German national museum. Their efforts were unique in the spectrum of cultural undertakings and institutional creations across the Confederation in the 19th century: although there was no united German state, this national museum was initially planned as a federal project, financed and maintained equally by all members of the German Confederation (Kahl 2011).

The attempt failed due to a very significant point. The heirs to Goethe's estate were willing to sell Goethe's extensive collections of art and natural history *but not* the house. This was, however, precisely the sticking point that was met with disapproval by the leaders of the German Confederation. They refused to buy the collections *without* the house. The 24-year-old Prince Carl Alexander, grandchild of Carl August and heir to the grand duchy, wrote a letter to Goethe's grandson in 1843, explaining the reasons behind the Confederation's refusal:

You have to admit yourself that, far more than the collections of a man, who, like your grandfather, belongs to the common good, the key point of interest for everybody is the *place* from where he gave free reign to the workings of his mind, and where his soul finally left this earth. Besides your grandfather's collections, the *place* must be taken into consideration as the most important thing. Of the whole building and the treasures therein, most sacrosanct of all is the *place* where his immortal mind reigned, the *place* where recollections of him accumulate most of all, where, more than anywhere else, the character of his mind in all its greatness emerges from the simplicity of the surroundings. By this I refer primarily to his study and the adjacent bedroom. (Baerlocher & Rudnik 2010: 447-48 emphasis added)

We see that the word "place" abounds in Carl Alexander's letter. It is clear that the house was not supposed to serve as the most suitable place to store and exhibit Goethe's collections of art and natural history, but first and foremost as a memorial site dedicated to the person of Goethe who was unanimously considered as a representative of the German "nation".

We are all familiar with commemorative sites to individuals in religious contexts, such as tombs in churches and cemeteries. This continues to be the usual way to commemorate death, even today. But by the 19th century, a new type of commemoration site came into being: the houses of great men. These individual memorial sites are always connected to a place, no longer the burial place, but a place where these persons were either born, lived, worked or died. From the middle of the 19th century, these new kinds of memorial sites began gradually fulfilling the criteria usually applied to museums, such as permanence, public access etc. But they do not necessarily rely on a collection. One thing they definitely rely on, however, is place.

The transformation of the houses of famous individuals into public and permanent memorial sites and museums was something new at the time. Since the middle of the 19th century, the homes of writers, composers, artists, scholars, politicians etc. have been opened to the public in many European countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Hungary, and Italy. These institutions were a sign of the shift to modernity that took place in Europe from the middle of the 18th century onwards. The transformation of stratified societies into functionally differentiated ones was deeply connected with the rise of the semantics of the nation (Luhmann

1997: 1045). Against this background, it is not surprising that it was mainly writers' houses that were established as memorial sites, due to the increasing significance that national speech communities placed on the most creative achievements in their respective languages.



Figure 2: Goethe's study, © Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Photo: Jens Hauspurg.

As no agreement could be reached between Goethe's family and the leaders of the German Confederation, the first German writer's house to be founded as a memorial site was not the Goethehaus. Instead, it was Schiller's house in Weimar. The house where the most famous German playwright spent the last three years of his life was transformed into a public memorial site in 1847: the first German writer's house of this kind. The difference between it and Goethe's house, however, is that Goethe's is the only writer's house in Germany that ever became a national museum. When Goethe's last grandson Walther died childless, he left the estate to the grand duchy, ruled by Carl Alexander, whom he had felt attached to since his childhood.

This meant that Grand Duke Carl Alexander could finally found the Goethe National Museum in 1885, 53 years after Goethe's death. But by that time, the German Confederation no longer existed. It was dissolved in 1866, and was followed by the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. The Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach became a member of this federal empire. It may be interesting, incidentally, to note that Carl Alexander's sister, Augusta, was the wife of the German emperor, Wilhelm I. But for all that, the Goethe National Museum was not a museum supported and financed by the German Empire. The house was not officially raised to the status of a national museum by the emperor or the German state. When Grand Duke Carl Alexander decided to found a "Goethe National Museum", he acted independently, but with the certainty that no one would call that name into question. Once again, it seemed, the house was far more interesting than the collections. The original interior was reconstructed. Only the study had remained almost unchanged. What lies at the heart of the Goethe National Museum is not

the collection, but the inseparable *unity* of the collections with the house. Without this *real* place connected to a *real* person, the Goethe National Museum would have been unimaginable.



Figure 3: Goethe's bedroom, © Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Photo: Jens Hauspurg.

Today, it seems almost forgotten that the name “Goethe National Museum” once referred to Goethe's house alone. In 1935, a museum building was added to the Goethe National Museum and given financial support by Adolf Hitler (Kahl 2012). Ten years later, in 1945, its denomination changed and a distinction was introduced for the first time between “Goethe's house” and the “Goethe National Museum”, the latter name referring to the adjacent building of 1935. During the Socialist era, in the GDR, the denotation changed again. The “Goethe National Museum” comprised then almost all museums of Weimar, including Schiller's house. The confusion around the name is still ongoing, since the actual denotation of the name “Goethe National Museum” is hidden by the current usage, thereby also concealing the uniqueness of that museum among European national museums of the 19th century.

The Semantics of the Nation

It has been pointed out that Goethe's house was the only writer's house in 19th century Germany to be designated as a “National Museum”. In fact, we could expand that statement further. It was not just the only writer's house, but the only individual memorial place and only residential dwelling to be called a “National Museum” in the whole of Europe in the 19th century. This is all the more remarkable when we take into account the number of expensive monumental buildings typically erected to house national museums in the 19th century.

The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann has pointed out that “nation” is not to be apprehended in an ontological sense but rather as a semantic phenomenon, a „socially available

sense that is generalized on a higher level and relatively independent of specific situations“ (Moeller 2006: 51). In the middle of the 18th century, the semantics of the nation were profiled as a concept of the future. In European societies they were used to found or legitimate those societies as nations. The “nation” was one of the transitory concepts that mediated the transformation of stratified societies into functionally differentiated ones (Luhmann 1997: 1045-55). According to Luhmann, the nation takes the ancient Greek polis as its model. But since modern societies are much more complex than those towns, they must “substitute the topographical memory with a printed memory” and substitute “the personally known elite first with the court and then with an elite only known through the mass media” (Luhmann 1997: 1053). We agree with Luhmann that the printed memory is a necessary condition for modernization. However, the architecture, the interior design and the collections in national museums indicate that the topographical memory was not completely replaced by a printed memory. The thesis of the mass media seems to be correct if we consider national museums as an unusual form of mass media. In that case they indeed represent the past and present elite of a certain society. This is also supported by the boom of national monuments in public spaces during the 19th century. The breakup of old social structures called for the creation of symbolic markers of the national identity appealing to the masses. The new type of memorials to specific individuals and national museums are results of this process.

Above all, the exterior and interior design of national museums indicate their topographical and prosopographical character. This can be seen most clearly at the Goethe National Museum, as a real place and a real person are its only reference points. In the case of the Goethe National Museum, the semantics of the nation connect the national museum and the memorial in one. This finding raises the question if we can find the same connection in other German national museums as well.

National Museums as Memorial Places

The Schiller National Museum in Marbach am Neckar is a castle-like building with a Pantheon cupola. The cupola is an intentional allusion to the Pantheon in Rome as well as to the famous secular national memorial site in Paris. Although the Schiller National Museum was not founded on a real site linked with the person’s past, its founder nevertheless thought of it as a “hallowed memorial site” (Güntter 1948: 49). A collection of relics was the basis of the museum, objects that once belonged to Schiller, who, in the 19th century, assumed the status of a national saint. In 1909, “Schiller’s Room” was inaugurated, presenting original furnishings and belongings of Schiller and his family. This room looked like Schiller’s living room and remained in the museum for 50 years. The museum clearly aimed to simulate the new type of memorial site. In fact, the whole museum was thought of as an “ideal dwelling for Friedrich Schiller” (Kamzelak 2009: 17).

After the foundation of the Goethe National Museum failed in 1842, the Germanic National Museum was founded in 1852 at a conference in Dresden and was, as such, the first German national museum. It moved into an abandoned Carthusian monastery at the heart of Nuremberg. According to the intentions of its founder, Baron Hans von und zu Aufseß, the museum was supposed to serve as a general register of all sources concerning German history reaching back to the Middle Ages. In a hall, many tombs and sepulchral monuments were put on display, evoking the old type of memorials. For the chapel a large wall painting was commissioned from the

painter Wilhelm von Kaulbach, who specialized in historical subjects. The fresco that no longer survives was an imaginary depiction of the crypt of Charlemagne being opened by Emperor Otto III. Aufseß stated that no more accurate and beautiful allegory could ever have been bestowed on the Germanic Museum than this (Veit 1978: 23). Could this fresco already be considered as a kind of commemorative allegory concerning German history? The person who organized the large-scale memorial designs for the museum was August von Essenwein, its first director. In 1870, referring to the Hall of Tombs, he wrote:

The tombs are at the same time historical monuments. They demonstrate the memory of the great men, in parts their outer appearance. In them we meet the names and representatives of the great and powerful families. [...]; they show us the generals, the artists and scholars who breathed greatness into the name of Germany. The centrepiece of the series is constituted by the German kings and emperors [...]. In this field, we cannot limit ourselves to trace the developments in cultural history; we have to go further. This collection has to become a Walhalla in which the history of Germany and its great men is mirrored. (Kahsnitz 1977: 163)

This last comment gives us an idea of how the relationship between a collection of cultural history and the public memorial of private individuals shifted in favour of the latter, as far as the construction of the memory of important figures was concerned. The notion of “Walhalla” refers to a mythological place, the “hall of slain warriors, who live blissfully under the leadership of the god Odin” (The New Ency. Brit. 1998: 245). But “Walhalla” also refers to the impressive memorial site in Donaustauf near Regensburg that was first planned by the Bavarian King Ludwig I in 1807 and finally erected in 1842. It contained a collection of busts of famous historical figures who were believed to have played an important role in German cultural and general history.

The Germanic National Museum, however, was not only dedicated to the memory of the dead. The living also tried to create memorials for themselves. Noble donors mostly financed the construction of new buildings and their interior designs. They could thus immortalize themselves according to the “profane memoria” (Scheller 2004: 64) of medieval times. Large parts of the museum bore their names: the Ludwig’s cloister, Wilhelm’s Hall, the Wittelsbach Court, the Hohenzollern Hall etc. Donors were represented in those halls by means of their coat of arms or were portrayed, like Bismarck, in the “Bismarck window”. The Prussian king donated a window with a glass painting whose subject was the cornerstone ceremony for the monastery, attended by one of his forefathers (Bahns 1978: 367, 376). The museum became a site in which the glorious past of the Holy Roman Empire was remembered, but also a site in which the living, mainly members of the nobility, could ensure their memory for the future generations.

By comparison, the Bavarian National Museum in Munich was founded in 1855 by King Maximilian II. It was modelled on the Musée d’histoire in Versailles and the Musée de Cluny in Paris. The museum contains an outstanding collection of historical artefacts, relics of Bavarian history. However, the core of the museum was not formed by this collection, but the *unity* of the collection with a Historical Gallery containing a series of 143 large frescoes showing scenes from Bavarian history (Glaser 1997). Ordered by the king himself, these frescoes were supposed to illustrate the great historical narrative of the Bavarian nation, constructing a memory of successful Bavarian regency over almost 1000 years. In an almost aggressive way, members of the

Bavarian dynasties were put at the center of the compositions (Glaser 1997: 43). The commemorative intention here clearly revolved around real people. This can also be seen in parts of the exterior design, in which statues of real historical figures served as allegories: Ferdinand Count Arco, for instance, stood for loyalty, and Georg Sebastian Plinganser for patriotism (Murr 2006: 20).

When the Bavarian National Museum moved to another site in 1900, the museum lost its huge commemorative narration of the national past. Of the four museums, the Bavarian National Museum is probably the one least related to the idea of a memorial dedicated to individuals. What they all have in common, though, is their role in constructing the memory of real historical figures.

Conclusion

In the four cases presented, national museums follow the model of memorial sites while other types of museums (e.i. museums of art or natural history) do not. This is due to the need that society felt to embody the semantics of the nation in persons and places. The difference between the Goethe National Museum and the other three museums is that the first represents the new type of memorial site to a real individual (“Personengedenkstätte” in a residential dwelling), and that the three others partially simulate memorial sites, either of the old or the new kind, or both. It seems that these museums, either right at their foundation or soon afterwards, put emphasis on the preservation or creation of a memorial site that represents the nation and displays memories of the national past, while the collections are related or even adjusted to this memorial intention. If there is some truth in this argument, then the next step would be to make a comparison on an international level.

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The New Acropolis Museum and the Dynamics of National Museum Development in Greece

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Abstract

In Greece, the history of archaeological museum and a consciousness of the cultural heritage of antiquity are as long as the independent nation-state. National museums were almost always connected to archaeology and the distant past provided material evidence for the country's master national narrative of cultural and biological continuity. The New Acropolis Museum, opened in 2009, replaces the first museum built in 1874; as a project it took over 60 years to be realized. A remarkably debated affair, the history of this project offers an insight into the way official policy has dealt with the development of museums and culture in Greece. Before and indeed since the opening of the New Acropolis Museum, multitudes of critical voices have made themselves present. An overview of the positions and ideas that they have expressed about the museum since its official inauguration will provide insight into the museum dynamics that have been at play in Greece over the last forty years. Official cultural and museum policy seems to have profited from the experience of handling such a controversial project.

Introduction

In Greece, the word ‘museum’ has generally been associated with the idea of archaeology, mainly classical and in some cases byzantine, and only to a much smaller extent to the notion of art or other categories of museum. This is largely the result of the origins, goals and intellectual affiliations that museums were connected to since the nineteenth century (Gazi, 2011). The establishment of the first Greek museum dates precisely back to the birth of the Greek State in 1830. Since then, the archaeological museum and its associations to classicism have attained a crucial role for the promotion of the national heritage, closely linked to ancient Greece’s classical period, as Despina Catapoti explains in her text. Museological choices have since continued to promote archaeology over other fields of inquiry, in various ways a dimension of Greek museums that has begun to receive some criticism over the last twenty years.

In this article, I will try to shed some light to the history and ideology of Greek museums in relation to archaeology as a context to understand the inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum in 2009. I will examine its impact on museum dynamics in Greece. The Acropolis Museum holds a central role in national imagery and since its opening is often considered as the most important museum, due to its connection to the Rock of the Acropolis and the Parthenon and its relation to Greek demands for the restitution of its archaeological heritage. Before its creation it aroused great debates concerning its location and its architectural style. Since its construction in the early 2000s, it has been a museum greatly advertised by the Greek State, as well as highly visited and commented by foreigners. I will examine the debates it has given rise to after its opening and add some insights into the new perspectives for Greek museums in general.

The Archaeological Museum in Greece

During the nineteenth century, looking back into the distant past was a common practice for young nations in their goal to consolidate a collective identity. The invocation of Antiquity which holds the adjective ‘national’ is common as well (*cf.* Loir, 2002: 36; Diaz-Andreu, 2007). Around the times of the independent state’s foundation (1830), Greece’s ideological connections with the remote past gained ground. The relation between the Greek State’s constitution and its ancient heritage, in particular the classical age’s heritage, is a topic widely discussed (Hamilakis & Yalouri, 1996; Jusdanis, 2001: 102-133; Voudouri, 2003; Liakos, 2008; Mackridge, 2008).

What is striking - even if the Greek case of affinity to its past is not an exceptional one (*cf.* Fowler, 2008: 93-119; Prendi, 2000: 281-286; Tsonos, 2009) -, is the insistence of the Greek State to identify itself with classical Greece and nourish the Nation, in terms of artistic production and ideas, appropriating an origin so distant in time. This reflection on Greece’s distant past takes place in the State’s effort to justify its contemporary existence and place in the Western world. The classical past is only an aspect of a threefold vision of Greek identity formed during the nineteenth century, which included the classical past, the Byzantine legacy and the folk culture (*cf.* Gazi, 2011: 363).

Despite the fact that ancient and modern Greek heritage is of major value, inadequacies in definition and legislation about the museum as an institution remained a recurrent issue (Ntaflou, 2011). Attention is mostly focused on questions of propriety, on the protection and the management of antiquities. On the other hand, the material heritage of Greece’s Ottoman period

(fifteenth-nineteenth centuries) has been greatly neglected until recent years. Moreover, recent heritage and contemporary creation did not officially come under the State's protection until 1950 with law 1469 '*On the protection of a special category of buildings and works of art posterior to 1830.*'

In terms of political initiatives and cultural policy, a ministry for Culture was created in 1971. The Ministry's organization reflects the priorities of the State, which is principally interested in the protection of antiquities. This is corollary to a lack of initiative in terms of the development and protection of modern heritage.

In the spirit of the last and actual heritage law of 2002, the Greek State defines, conceives and creates museums of all types. However, the law's reference to museums still mostly addresses national museums, which consequently means mainly those concerned with archaeological heritage of classical Antiquity and the Byzantine period. This absence of a general framework for every museum - whatever its juridical status or its type may be - poses yet unresolved questions about a global museum policy and a standardized denomination of museums.

In addition to this imbalance, the excessive lack of any clear distinction between a museum and a collection indicates the degree of legal and political inadequacy in this domain. For example, when the National Gallery was created in 1900 - the museum of fine arts *par excellence* - it was so with a law that established a museum without a building and only provided protection for the given collections. The National Gallery remained inexistent to the eyes of the public, except for a discontinuing exhibitions' program, until 1976, the date of its opening. Annie Malama provides significant information about this museum in her own text. A law describing its functions was issued in 1980.¹ After long discussions and a multitude of projects, the extension of its building is underway.

Priorities and discontinuities in cultural development enabled the archaeological museum to rapidly develop and, whether of public or rarer private status, to spread all across Greece (*cf.* Gazi, 2008: 67; Mouliou, 2008: 83-84). This phenomenon should be considered from a political and ideological perspective and studied along with other developments in the domain of the arts (Matthiopoulos, 2003: 437). For the most part, Greek museums, just like the archaeologists in charge of them, were dominated by the passion for antiquities.

To a greater or a lesser degree, the archaeological museum very often embrace or have embraced quite an ambitious ideological agenda considering the Nation's past, such as in the case of Greece (Papataxiarchis, 2005: 203-212; Toundassaki & Caftantzoglou, 2005: 229-242). These narrations concerning the ancient past and developed in museums, within intellectual circles or even across the country's population, are mainly responsible for the imbalance in the study and research on culture and civilization whose promotion has experienced a lack of diversity in geographical extension or even different cultural expressions.² This is due to the extreme importance given to Antiquity and to national history, which overrides the importance of integrating other cultures and civilizations into museums.

The Acropolis Museum

'I have always believed that Nations place themselves in history according to their cultural achievements. No nation has ever imposed itself in the world's conscience with material accomplishments. The nations who have imposed themselves were those who had created culture and with this culture they have created history. No country ever had in its possession greater cultural wealth than Greece and no other country has proved itself more incapable of

exploiting this wealth [than Greece]. I believe that we can reach high levels in the domain of culture. What we need is to deprive this domain from disputes and partisanship, to collaborate closely with each other and to elaborate our efforts'. Constantine Caramanlis (Tatouli & Zacharaki, 2004, s.p.)

The idealized and romantic portrayal of the Parthenon (*cf.* Kefallineou, 1999) is characteristic of how Greece perceives and uses cultural heritage. Developed by archaeologists, architects, politicians and intellectuals since the nineteenth century,³ reports on Parthenon have mostly described a 'monument' as if it had never changed since Antiquity. Evocations of the 'purified,' white Parthenon persisted for a long time, even as scientific evidence and data clearly showed the transformation of the building over time. Despite it being previously known that the monument had been subjected to different uses throughout the ages⁴ (*cf.* Soteriou, 1929: 24 & 35; Procopiou, 1943: 15; Mallouchou-Tufano, 1998: 276; Hurwit, 1999: 291-302; Loukaki, 2008: 235, et al.), for the large public this has only recently become evident. To a large extent this was due to the opening of the new Acropolis museum in 2009 and the discussions it aroused (*cf.* Hamilakis & Yalouri, 1996; Hamilakis, 2000; Hamilakis, 2001; Alcock, 2002: 4-5). Information about the monument became widely available and discussions sprang up many conflicting voices about the museum itself and the perceptions of heritage.

The new Acropolis museum, officially inaugurated in June 2009 after many years of delay (Loukaki, 2008: 284), has served - and continues to serve - as the main argument in support of the demands concerning the return of the 'Elgin marbles', or the 'Parthenon marbles' as they are commonly called in Greek. An important aspect of the museum is the binding of Greece with the classical past and therefore promoting the country's continuous history. Another important role of the Acropolis museum, in the Greek context, is the enlargement of the notion of heritage site. This includes long debates that concerned the potential destruction of buildings dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century located next to the museum. One of the two buildings concerned was a creation of the Greek architect Vassilis Kouremenos (1875-1957), graduate of the School of Beaux-Arts of Paris, who with his four-storey neoclassically inspired building of 1934 next to the museum has introduced many Art Deco elements in its facade, rendering it one of the few architectural examples of the capital that bears witness to the influences of this architectural and decorative style. Its destruction could open up the path for the demolition of another, similar building next to it. The potential destruction or choice of façadism that was discussed for the two buildings, in order to keep the view from the museum's cafeteria to the Parthenon and the Acropolis rock clearer, raised many protests from around the world and the buildings were finally saved. This way, the museum has after all contributed to the renewal of conceptions about museum architecture itself and mostly about built heritage's conservation, as supported by international heritage conventions.

The first Acropolis museum initially was constructed in 1874, according to the plans of Panagis Kalkos (1810-78) and housed archaeological monuments and findings from the Acropolis site. Soon, it became evident that the initially constructed museum was not sufficiently large to exhibit all objects. Subsequent arrangements were added to it at the end of the nineteenth century and a new building replaced the old one in 1953-56. This was built by Patroclus Karantinos (1903-76) and was inaugurated in 1956. Its permanent exhibition was completed in 1964, under the supervision of the archaeologist and responsible for the Acropolis Museum

Yannis Miliadis (1895-1975). But as early as the mid 1960s, Constantine Caramanlis (1907-98)⁵ began to defend the idea of creating afresh a new museum of the Acropolis, intended to house the sculptures of the Parthenon. Without any doubt, this museum project was to be directly related to the claims of restitution of the Elgin marbles that were occasionally already expressed.



Figure 1: The Acropolis Museum as seen from Acropolis rock (© the author, picture taken on 25.04.2009).

Caramanlis envisaged the construction of the museum in the district of Makriyiannis, laying on the edges of the Acropolis rock, to the block of the actual museum. As suggested by the citation in the beginning of this section he was a convinced advocate of the Nation's cultural achievements that he was dedicated to promoting. From 1971 onwards, the idea of the Makriyiannis placement was adopted by the majority of ministers of Culture, and from 1976 on, efforts for a new Acropolis museum started to gain increasing popularity. However, decisive motivation for the new museum was provided by the project concerning the restoration of the Parthenon and its surrounding space. This project received considerable support mostly after 1977 (Tatouli & Zacharaki, 2004: 14) when the Acropolis Conservation Committee was created.⁶ By 1980, protecting measures for the Makriyiannis' quarter area had significantly increased (*Ibid.*: 16) indicating a strong drive for the construction of the museum.

Efforts to build the Acropolis museum went on for more than 20 years. In 1976 and 1979, two national contests were announced without any winning results, due to the debates concerning the site of the construction of the museum that was criticized by archaeologists and architects. It was in 1985 that Melina Mercouri firmly established in an international context the

link between the construction of the museum and the demands for the return of the Elgin marbles to Greece. Mercouri turned the creation of the Acropolis' museum into a political issue raising international awareness: in 1987, the Parthenon entered the UNESCO's World Heritage List, partly due to her efforts. Mercouri also decided to organize an international contest for the building of the new museum in 1989⁷ (The New Acropolis Museum, 1991). In 1991, the results were issued; the contest was annulled because of the difficulty to apply the architectural plans to a site where many antiquities of the post-byzantine era were discovered, so in fact the winning project was never realized in order to conduct excavations.⁸ Finally, in 2000, the Organization for the construction of the new Acropolis museum launched an invitation for an international contest in accordance with European Union rules. The winners of this last contest were the Swiss Bernard Tschumi and the Greek Michalis Fotiadis, who have indeed seen the realization of their project.

The Acropolis museum is often considered as an extension of the Parthenon and a monument in its own right (figure 1). According to Argyro Loukaki, the new museum of the Acropolis functions as a multi-polar circuit between the Acropolis, the Greek contemporary society and its own existence, incarnating the physical and psychological dimensions on each one⁹ (Loukaki, 2008: 288-9). The Acropolis and its surrounding area are considered to form a large space of antiquities' remains, including the Elgin marbles, whose return should be negotiated in the frame of restitution policies as applied on an international level and agreements among states and international conventions about heritage (*Cf.* Apostolidis, 2006: 477).

The institution of the museum and the material culture of Antiquity hold a key-role in the continuing process of claiming of the marbles. The claim was initially used as a principal argument for the creation of the new Acropolis museum (Armaos, 2001: 107; Loukaki, 2008: 284). Throughout the years, the logic of argumentation was reversed: the return of the marbles is now valid because of the construction of the new Acropolis museum (Loukaki, 2008: 299).

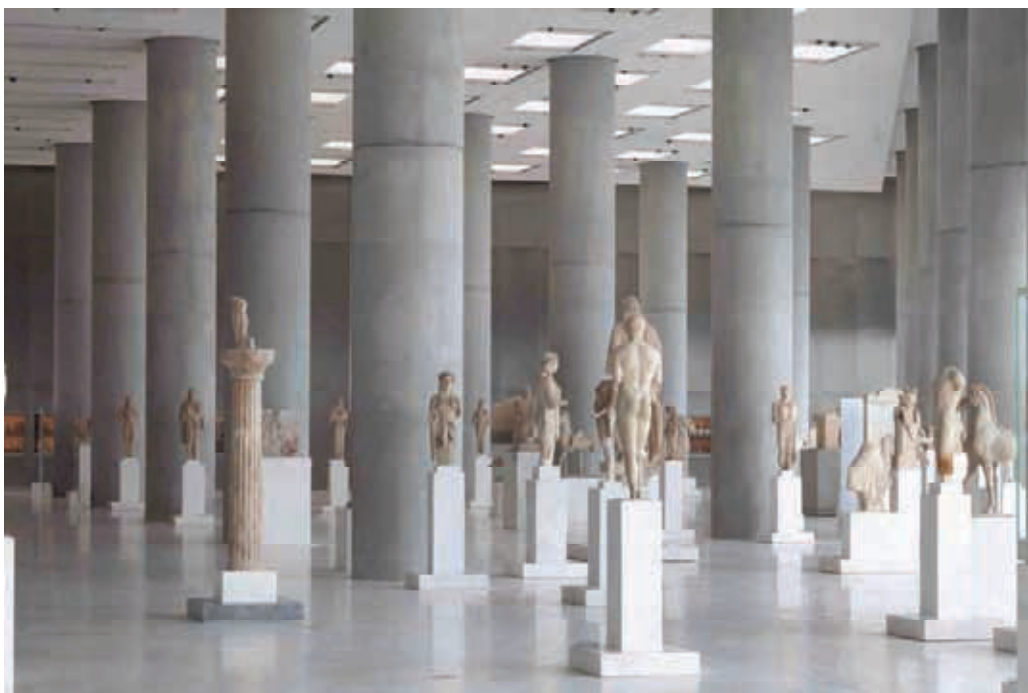


Figure 2: The Archaic Gallery, Acropolis Museum (with permission of the Acropolis Museum).

Aside from international questions of restitution politics and a large range of questions about heritage and museum politics, claims on the return of the Elgin marbles attempt to put forward a series of arguments related to the valorisation of Greek heritage. In Athens, the Greek State, desirous to establish the promotion of the national and international heritage, disposes of three means: the new Acropolis museum and its specific museological choices, a project concerning the unification of archaeological sites across the centre of Athens¹⁰ and a program concerning the restoration, conservation and study of the Acropolis and the Parthenon (Memorandum, [2000]: 3; Bouras & Zambas, 2002). These three directions are integrated in a national project, which along with consolidating it, it ‘promotes’ the classical identity of the Greek Nation and the global importance of classicism for art history and for culture in general (*cf.* Pandermalis, 2011: 39).

The Elgin marbles seem to naturally belong to ‘Classical Greece,’ an aspect of the country’s ancient history still promoted today, and an image of the historical past that the Greek State was built upon. This past finds its first and leading representative in archaeological museum, the most emblematic of which is the new Acropolis museum.

The Critical Reception of the New Acropolis Museum

Since the inauguration of the new Acropolis Museum, many critical voices have been raised regarding its architecture and museography, conceived with the objective of what was characterized as a ‘*context-free archaeology*’ (Plantzos, 2011; see also Plantzos, 2010) (figure 2). It was also criticized for its calculated view onto the hill of the Acropolis, and it has been asked whether this helped in the understanding of the existence of the Acropolis and the Parthenon (James, 2009: 1144 & 1150). Specialists questioned the supposed openness that the museum thus intends to provide to visitors, by enabling them to conceptualize the Acropolis more freely (*ibid.*: 1144). Opinions also pointed to the idea of the ‘*museum of absences*’ devoted only to the missing Parthenon marbles (*cf.* Pandermalis, 2011: 39). Similarly, articles referred to a museum of ‘*forgetting, of oblivion*’ (Hamilakis, 2011: 628) because emphasis is placed only on the classical era of the monument (figure 3). In addition to this, the museological choice of leaving a void space when the original piece of sculpture or architecture is exposed in another museum outside Greece is greeted with divided sentiments, as it is also noted that the choice of using cast copies for the pieces of the Parthenon frieze which belong to museums abroad highlights a political character of the exhibition program (figures 3 and 4). Finally, a discussion developed around the notions of the ‘*poetics of nationhood*,’ the ‘*sacralisation of objects of the Classical times*,’ the ‘*politics of vision*,’ due to the direct visual contact with the Acropolis rock (Hamilakis, 2011: 625-6).



Figure 3: The Caryatids of the Erechtheion, Acropolis Museum. A void space is kept for the one belonging to the British Museum (with permission of the Acropolis Museum).



Figure 4: The Parthenon Gallery, Acropolis Museum. Void space is kept for the lost fragments of the Parthenon and cast copies of pieces that are in museums abroad complete the image of the frieze (with permission of the Acropolis Museum).

Outside of these critical views, there are some interesting points that need to be made. The building of the museum has been constructed in a site where monuments of the Antiquity, Byzantium and of the modern era (nineteenth century) finally coexist after they had created long debates about distractions. Moreover, the historical Weiler building (nineteenth century)¹¹ has entered in a dialogue with the new museum. This happens in a surrounding enviroing urban space, which embraces or rather constrains the museum, and which the visitor cannot fail to be aware of. The new Acropolis museum participates in this manner in an effort to link the different layers of the past in Athens, until then combined with difficulty and with a kind of negation of cultural juxtaposition. This effort to bring the past to the forefront will be further reinforced with the opening for the public announced for June 2012 of the excavations' site laying in an open space under the ground level of the museum (figure 5).

Moreover, the fact that the Parthenon is actually visible from the interior of the museum is decidedly an innovative form of museographical perspective, making the visit to the museum distinctly different from the experience of viewing the Parthenon sculptures at the Louvre or the British museum. The city, the museum and the ongoing restoration project of the Parthenon are as much part of their present as of their history and the dense surrounding urban environment captures attention.

In short, the questions aroused by the new museum's building are related to questions of urbanism, architecture, heritage and museography, as well as of different points of view (Kimmelman, 2009). The critique is focused on the narrations about heritage from the point of view of presentation, interpretation and conservation of 'art objects' (James, 2009: 1149) and not as part of some material cultural objects, created within a specific historical time and having encountered many changes through the ages. This critique brings to the forefront discussions concerning the need for re-examining the exhibition of material culture in Greece.

At the same time, specialists and scholars, legal experts, architects, archaeologists, historians and others have long highlighted the desire to establish a legislative framework for all museums, be them public or private, archaeological or other, that would also include heritage sites belonging to all historical periods (*cf.* Kioussopoulou, 2008). The Acropolis museum has certainly contributed to the debate about modern museums in Greece and elsewhere, a debate that expresses the concern about open museums that are in harmony with their time and scientific developments of archaeology, history, museology and other disciplines.



Figure 5: Part of the excavation site, in front of the Acropolis Museum (© the author, picture taken on 10.11.2011)

Conclusions

In the Greek context, for a long time the protection of historical and monumental ‘heritage’ was related the authority of the State and ‘art’ to the domain of private initiative. From the point of view of museum policy, Greek governments have avoided dealing with the issue of the creation of a museum of contemporary art, a demand that dates back to the 1950s. Movements deriving from individual initiative are often completed and supplemented by the groups’ initiatives and municipalities’ efforts to support the arts, which have flourished since the 1980s (Ntaflou, 2011).

Notwithstanding, a development can be noted in the decisions of the Museum’s Council, the Archaeological Service and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, who are more concerned in proceeding with other museum projects of national and international breadth, which will protect and highlight Greece’s heritage. Some projects that have been recently approved by the authorities include: the project of valorization of industrial settings of the Piraeus’s port, which includes a series of museums (of sub-aquatic antiquities, of antiquities in provenance of Piraeus, a museum of the marine, of immigration, etc.) (Politistiki Akti Pirea, 2010). Similarly, in the centre of Athens, another project concerns the Loverdos’s house, which will be used by the Byzantine and Christian Museum. Finally, in 2011, two more projects were approved for the fine arts; the extension project of the National Gallery and the extensive restoration project of the building of the Fix factory (Kafetsi, 2011; Vatopoulos, 2011).¹² The later was designated in 2000 to become the National Museum of Contemporary art¹³. All these current and future projects could not have been promoted if the specialists and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism hadn’t faced the

difficulties and experienced the opening of the New Acropolis Museum, which was a project developed at an international level that provoked widespread controversy.

The Acropolis museum is today the most visited of Greek museums.¹⁴ Furthermore, the law that specifies its functions mentions clearly in its goals the claim of the Elgin marbles, which is a political position (l. 3711, art. 2, par. 2, 15). Its creation provided the opportunity for several debates to take place, especially for those concerning museological, scientific and ideological issues. Consequently, it became clear that archaeology holds without doubt a leading power in Greece's cultural and political affairs, as well as in the State's ideology. The project for the new museum in general can serve as an example for debates about the maintenance or destruction of visual and material evidence from the past lives of a museum's site. It also serves to illustrate the impact of political choices on heritage and national museums' narratives.

Since the nineteenth century, the Greek State has been accused of controlling every aspect of research of an archaeological, ethnological, historical and artistic character (Voudouri, 2003: 218) but has been clearly promoting archaeology above all else after World War II. The notion of heritage is gradually changing and diversifying with the contributions of scientific works on Byzantine art and history, on ethnography and folklore and, finally, on modern and contemporary art history. Annie Malama's text offers a welcome insight on the enriched notion of heritage with the inscription of modernity to the Greek State's cultural interests. Nevertheless, the importance of heritage is nourished with regard to certain aspects of the past it promotes, certain myths and, above all, national symbols. Museums and heritage are often attributed a symbolical role of national spread.

However, international museum projects, the dynamic and multifaceted activities of archaeologists, historians and art historians have contributed to the reconciliation of the notions of heritage and art along with that of the museum. This rejuvenates the museum as an institution, to innovate in contact with the public, who participates in the discussions concerning its status (*cf.* Voudouri, 2010: 556). Concurrently, discussion concerning the positioning of museums in their respective time frame, as the one provoked after the opening of the new Acropolis Museum, has an important impact on museological practices and on interpretations of them.

Cultural and political priorities are connected to arts, museum and national heritage, but also to economy and tourism, an activity taken in charge since 2009 by the Greek Ministry of Culture. Whatever the future developments will be in the maelstrom of economical, political and institutional crisis, the Acropolis Museum has contributed to the establishment of a series of discussions in Greece about heritage and museums' development regarding their status, communication, educative potentialities and protection. This is a beginning for new museum dynamics within the Greek context, even if the museum of the Acropolis itself examined above should reconsider some of its initiative aspects. This concerns mostly the way the exhibition of material culture which is inscribed in time and in space is organised. Besides the view of artistically 'beautiful' and 'elevated' objects, the museum's presentation should be more inviting for visitors to gain knowledge of a culture distant in time.

Notes

- ¹ Law 1079 *On the agency and functioning of the National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum* published in the official journal 239/A/14.10.1980.
- ² That is the case of Greece and Turkey, whose Byzantine material culture and heritage is ubiquitous. For the Turkish case, see Akyürek, 2010, 205-209.
- ³ The romantic and neoclassical ideal of the late nineteenth century demanded a purification of monuments from the remnants of the Middle Ages. The architect Lysandros Caftantzoglou (1811-85) was a great defender of the purification of the monument. There were, though, voices of protest against the destructions made.
- ⁴ The Muslim mosque of the Parthenon has remained until 1843 when it was destroyed and the Frankish tower at the Propylea until 1874. For a short idea of the 'lives' the Parthenon has experienced, it is interesting to watch a film by Costas Gavras, *Parthenon*, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGitmYl6U90>> (accessed 27 June 2011). The film was originally projected at the new Acropolis Museum, but it was soon outcast because of the depiction of proto-Christians destroying the nude sculptures, which have created a furious protestation from the part of the Greek Orthodox Church. It was decided by the Ministry of Culture to stop diffusing it in the museum.
- ⁵ Prime minister since the mid-1955 until the contested elections of 1956. And then prime minister from 1974 to 1980, with some interruptions due to political instability and often elections, from 1956 to 1963. He was President of the Greek Republic since the mid-1980 to 1985 and from 1990 to 1995.
- ⁶ In 1979, the five Caryatids of the Erechtheion have been transported in the ancient Acropolis museum (on the South-East side of the Parthenon) and on the monument, there were placed copies of plaster.
- ⁷ The first phase had come to an end in April 1990 and the second in November 1990.
- ⁸ The winners of this international contest were: first prize to Manfredi Nicoletti and Lucio Passarelli (Italy); the second prize to Tasos Biris, Dimitris Biris, Panos Kokkoris and Eleni Amerikakou (Greece). The third prize was attributed to Raimund Abraham (Austria-USA) (*The New Acropolis Museum*, 1991: 35-54).
- ⁹ It is a vision that, as Loukaki puts it, suggests three different Athens: the ancient(s) city (-ies), the imaginary city and the 'natural' city.
- ¹⁰ The project is managed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and by the Ministry of the Environment, Urbanization and Public Work (on February 2012, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climatic change). The project contains a series of interventions that have as target the reconstitution of the historical, cultural and natural landscape of the site around the Acropolis. A network of paths - some of which ancient - has been predicted, in order to connect the surrounding archaeological sites (the Olympeion (Temple of Zeus), the cemetery of Ceramicos, the Dionysus' theatre, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, the Pnyka, the Ancient Greek Agora) creating a 'park of open air museums' accessible by everyone. This park was promoted since 1945, especially by the architect Costas Biris (1899-1980), a plan which was not realized at that time.
- ¹¹ The Dekemvriana, an episode of the Greek civil war of 1944, have taken also place in the Weiler building, next to the Acropolis museum, then a gendarme's barracks. During the 1980s the Wilhelm von Weiler building became a center for the study of the Acropolis. Today it is standing always next to the new museum.
- ¹² A building of the architects Takis Zenetos (1926-77) and Margaritis Apostolidis (1921-2005), constructed between 1957 and 1963.
- ¹³ On the 15 November 2011, the director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Anna Kafetsi, has signed a deal with the construction company Aktor for the taking charge of the restoration and layouts of the Fix factory, the building which will host the museum. The final cost for the completion of the works to be done will be covered from financial aid of the European Union, through the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF).
- ¹⁴ The Acropolis Museum has welcomed more than one million three hundred visitors, Greeks and foreigners, since June 2010 until May 2011. It is a receding number comparing to the year 2009-2010. The museum's total size is 25,000 m², from which 14,000 m² are destined to the exhibition. It has ten times larger spaces than the ones of the former museum. See: <<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>> (accessed 23 November 2011). According to professor Dimitris Pandermalis, the museum has received more than three and a half millions of visitors since its opening in 2009.

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Traditions of National Identity Constructions

National History



Great Narratives or Isolated Statements? History in the Dutch National Museums (1800–1887)

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Summary

This essay asks why the Dutch national museums did not offer any coherent historical narratives in the nineteenth century, but only isolated objects that were not set into the context of a coherent narrative. After some preliminary remarks, I will give a summary of how the theme of history was approached in these museums. The historical dimension appeared as an explicit element of display only at the beginning and end of the century. In the interim period (1806-c. 1870) art and the aesthetic value of objects, was more important than history, a fact that may be observed by looking at both the acquisitions and their presentation. The development of funds available for the museum that may be observed after a long ‘period of national indifference’ (1830-c.1870) was accompanied by a new consideration for objects of historical interest. But even when the Netherlands Museum for History and Art, combining history and the applied arts, founded in The Hague in 1876 was transferred to Amsterdam and opened in 1887 as part of the new Rijksmuseum, history remained a subject of minor importance. Even during the rearrangement of the history sections in the 1930s in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam when a coherent story was finally displayed, art historians retained the upper hand.

This specificity of the Dutch museum world will be explicated by considering the contexts of dire economic circumstances, politics (liberalism) and religion (Protestants versus Roman Catholics), but also by relating it to the form of government (with the cities playing such an important role), the management of the museums and the education of academic historians. In general however after Louis Napoleon the national art (and history) museums were far removed from the interests of Dutch rulers, kings or politicians, some as King Willem II were even downright hostile towards them.

Preliminary remarks

It was only in the very first period (1800–1806) and again right at the end of the nineteenth century that Dutch national museums were thought to function as instruments for educating the general public. In the meantime both of the national art museums were mainly considered as schools for artists: the Rijksmuseum (1800–1808 in The Hague; after 1808 in Amsterdam) and the Royal Cabinet of Paintings (after 1816 in The Hague), later better known as the Mauritshuis (after its location from 1822 onwards). In the nineteenth century paintings were purchased for one of two reasons: as an example of the work of an important painter, or for historical motives. History was an afterthought: lists were drawn up of Dutch and Flemish painters that should be represented in the museum, but nobody ever thought of making one of important historical people or historical scenes. However that may be, acquisitions made for historical reasons were always much cheaper than the artistic ones.

A separate museum dedicated to Dutch history never came into existence. In the Netherlands, history found a place in museums mainly dedicated to other subjects and at best it was given a separate section with the same status as the art section. On most occasions however it was treated as inferior. Indeed, in order to get an overview of the great narrative of Dutch history in the nineteenth century one needs rather consider illustrated books or popular prints, like the one published by the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Foundation for Public Benefit), c. 1790.



Figure 1: *Vaderlandsche Mannen en Vrouwen* (National Men and Women), woodcut, 406 x 330 mm, print published by the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Foundation for Public Benefit), c. 1790, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. RP-P-OB-102.143.

This very widespread print (many editions are known) depicts two poets (Hubert Poot and Jacob Cats), two admirals (Michiel de Ruiter and Piet Hein), two painters (Jan Steen and Rubens – not Rembrandt!), one doctor (Herman Boerhaave), the only Dutch Pope (the sixteenth-century Adrian VI), one philosopher (Erasmus), and three famous women. The first, Anna Maria Schuurman, was an intellectual and a painter; the second was Kenau Simonsdochter Hasselaar who defended the city of Haarlem besieged by the Spanish during the Eighty Years' War; finally

there was the fifteenth-century Duchess Jacoba of Bavaria, who was at the time seen as an exemplary woman with various Enlightenment virtues. We will come across some of these figures later (Bergvelt 2010a).

The development of the theme of national history and great historical narratives can however be observed in the private enterprises of foundations (the Royal Antiquarian Society, which had collected and exhibited work since 1858; see: *Voor Nederland bewaard* 1995), or due to private individuals such as the Amsterdam collector Jacob de Vos, who formed a Historical Gallery with sketches (1850-1863; Carasso 1991), and exhibitions. In 1876 and 1925 two exhibitions were organized, the first on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the foundation of Amsterdam and the second on its 650th anniversary (Coucke 2002; Tibbe to be published). During this period no comparable exhibition was organized about the history of the country as a whole. It was a long time before Dutch cultural life, traditionally organized according to a municipal frame of reference, rather than a national one, started to look to national organizations and institutions.

The History of Dutch National Museums

The Batavian Republic (1795–1806)

The National Art Gallery, the predecessor of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, opened in The Hague in 1800. It was the time of the Batavian Republic, which was as enthusiastic an advocate of *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité* as its French sister republic. The French and the Dutch ‘Patriots’, as they called themselves, had put an end to the *ancien régime* of the Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces in 1795. Before that time the Dutch Republic had had a strange form of government: it was a republic, but with a Stadtholder, who had to be chosen from the House of Orange. Central government was very weak compared with the cities, especially Amsterdam. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were characterized by tensions between the Stadtholders, the cities and later the Patriots.

In 1795 the House of Orange, from which the Stadtholders were chosen as heads of state – in any case they were commanders-in-chief of the army and the fleet – fled to England and their most important collections were confiscated by the French armies and transported to the museums in Paris. The National Art Gallery was founded in 1798 on initiative of the Minister of Finance, who thought that it would look ‘barbaric’ if the Batavian government did not take care of the collections and the palaces that the Stadtholder had left behind. This art gallery was opened in the west wing of one of the former palaces of the Orange family, *Huis ten Bosch* (literally, House in the Wood), which was at the time located outside the municipal boundaries of The Hague. The National Art Gallery had to start with the remnants of the Orange collections, so initially the history of the Stadtholders and their family dominated this museum.

One was only allowed to visit the museum by following a tour lead by curator Jan Waldorp. He started in the rooms and cabinets with the historical and artistic displays and ended in the middle of the House in the Wood, in the Orange Room, dedicated to the memory of the seventeenth-century Stadtholder Frederic Henry. It was somewhat ironic that the main part of the museum was devoted to one of the predecessors of the hated tyrants of the *ancien régime*.

The Batavian Republic was comparatively poor, but it nevertheless tried to change the content of the museum and redress the balance of representation by purchasing portraits of adversaries

of the Orange family, like the *Threatened Swan*. This painting of a white swan by Jan Asselijn was at the time considered to be an allegory of Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt (*wit* is the Dutch word for white). De Witt was head of state in the middle of the seventeenth century, a period during which the Orange stadtholders were not in power. He was an outspoken enemy of the Orange family. The painting cost only a hundred guilders, a very small amount of money compared with other acquisitions, the prices of which could go up to more than three thousand guilders for a Rubens (Grijzenhout 1985; Bergvelt 1998: 28–54).

The swan was hung in the first room, one of two dedicated to Dutch history. The other three rooms and some cabinets were dedicated to art (Van Thiel 1981). This first room and cabinet also contained portraits of admirals like Michiel de Ruyter, of Stadtholder Willem III, who later became king of England, an Allegory of the struggle between Protestants and Roman Catholics at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Adriaan van de Venne, and a naval battle with the Spanish in 1602 by Hendrick Corneliszoon Vroom. A depiction of the bodies of the De Witt brothers, murdered by the mob in The Hague in 1672, and a portrait of Kenau Simonsdochter Hasselaer, whom we have already met in the popular print, were also among the works bought.

The Monument Room was the second room dedicated to Dutch history. Among other exhibits it included a chair supposed to have belonged to Duchess Jacoba of Bavaria, also known from the print. While the portraits of Jacoba and her husband, and her chair were displayed in the same room, a painting of one of her castles was hung in the corridor.

The Monument Room contained objects described as ‘national relics’. They had been part of the collection of the Stadtholder (Smeets 2010), and had been handed over by the French to the Batavian Republic.



Figure 2: Some ‘national relics’ being transported from the Cabinet of Stadtholder Willem V to the Assembly Hall of the States-General, 11 March 1795. Engraving, R. Vinkeles del. et sculps., Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, coll. F. Muller 5391.

Some of these national relics were thought to have belonged to Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, the most famous Dutch naval hero. The portrait of the admiral however was hung in the first room. In other words, to view all the objects related to one person – whether it was Michiel de Ruyter or Jacoba of Bavaria – one had to visit several rooms. Consistency was not the strong point of this presentation. It is likely that Waldorp would have explained the connections between these scattered objects during his tour. We can be certain that he was implementing the policies of the Batavian Republic and that his task was to educate the public by introducing them to figures such as Michiel de Ruyter, Kenau Simonsdochter Hasselaar or Jacoba of Bavaria as hero models from the national past for citizens of the contemporary Batavian Republic. He would have been unable

to provide a complete survey of Dutch history as there were too many gaps in the collection. There were not enough new historical acquisitions to ‘dethrone’ the House of Orange as it were and provide a more complete survey of Dutch history, even though half of the works added to the collection during this period were acquired for historical reasons and the other half for artistic ones.

The Kingdom of Holland (1806–1810)

This situation changed completely during the reign of Louis Napoleon, one of the emperor’s brothers, who was appointed King of Holland in 1806 (Grijzenhout 1999; Bergvelt 2007; Bergvelt 2010b). He moved the national collection to Amsterdam, where it has remained to this day. He turned the republican collection into a Royal Museum and located it on the third floor of the former Town Hall, a seventeenth-century monument, which he took over and used as his palace. By purchasing two major collections of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings – he considered the collection with foreign paintings which his disgraced brother Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Canino and Musignano, too expensive – the emphasis came to lie on the Dutch national artistic content of the museum. Moreover he ordered the city of Amsterdam’s seven most important paintings to be loaned to his Royal Museum. Some have remained there, as is the case with Rembrandt’s *Nightwatch*, which continues to be the Rijksmuseum’s supreme artistic masterpiece and the *Syndics*, also by Rembrandt. While the emphasis in the museum in The Hague had been on the House of Orange, in the Royal Museum of Louis Napoleon, the city of Amsterdam became the underlying theme.

The king’s instructions were that his Royal Museum should consist of an art section, a separate room for contemporary paintings and another for the national historical paintings. The historical paintings were hung in the museum’s large room, along with the biblical and mythological scenes, with the three-dimensional objects from the National Art Gallery presented in display cases. Altogether there were 199 paintings of battles, views, memorable events and famous men, including the seven Amsterdam paintings. In the words of museum director Cornelis Apostool in 1810:

Le grand Salon est entierement décoré de Pieces d’Histoire, la plus part concernant l’Histoire du Païs et representant plusieurs Batailles, événements mémorables, Portraits d’Hommes Illustres, Vues, Antiquités et Curiosités, au nombre de 199 Tableaux, des quels les sept le plus remarquables, appartiennent à la Ville d’Amsterdam’ (...) ‘Dans les autres appartements sont exposés le reste des Tableaux d’Histoire au nombre de 71 et 86 Tableaux de Genre, 95 Tableaux de Pajjsage, 16 Tableaux de Marine, 33 Tableaux de Gibier Mort, de Fleurs et de Fruits et 52 Tableaux modernes, ou de Maîtres encore vivans: le nombre total des Tableaux se monte à 552 Pieces (Bergvelt 1998: 68, n. 81 on p. 303).

If one judges by the number of historical works in the collection, the King must have considered history the most important subject. Most of the acquisitions however were made for artistic and not for historical reasons, just as was the case at a later period in the museum’s history (Bergvelt 1998, Appendix XIII, 393–416). The numerous paintings hung in the large room did not give a very clear picture of Dutch history and there was no longer a guided tour or a Waldorp to clarify matters. A catalogue was produced however with some comments on the pictures; and some of these comments are of a historical nature. Too many subjects were still not represented

by any works, so that there was no balanced overview of Dutch history in the museum galleries; moreover, many paintings were barely visible as they were hung high on the walls.

The museum's two most important paintings – Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* and Bartolomeus van der Helst's *Celebration of the Peace of Westphalia* – hung in this large room. Since the eighteenth century the latter work had been regarded as the city's most important historical painting, celebrating as it did the conclusion of the Eighty Years War in 1648 and the recognition of the Netherlands as an independent nation by the other European states. The *Nightwatch*, on the other hand, was considered to be a painting without any historical subject; it was merely a masterpiece by Rembrandt, something of artistic rather than historical importance.

Louis Napoleon's contribution to the history section of the Dutch national museum was much less substantial than his acquisitions for the art section. The seven masterpieces loaned by the city of Amsterdam combined with the architecture of the seventeenth-century town hall overshadowed the contribution of the House of Orange, which had been so overwhelming in *Huis ten Bosch*. The dominant image conveyed by Louis Napoleon's Royal Museum was that of the power of Amsterdam.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-)

The Orange family returned from exile in 1813. Two years later, the Congress of Vienna united the combined territories of the northern and southern Netherlands (the present Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg) into a single kingdom, with the aim of counterbalancing the power of France on its northern borders. The son of the last Stadtholder, Willem I was appointed king of this territory – the first to enjoy this title. He saw himself as the successor of Louis Napoleon and maintained all the bodies that the latter had set up, with almost all the civil servants retaining their posts.

The new king founded several new museums in existing buildings in Leiden and The Hague. Among them was a second national art museum in The Hague, which was dubbed the Royal Cabinet of Paintings, although it is better known to us as the Mauritshuis, as named after the building it has occupied since 1822 (at first only one floor and after 1875 both floors). The paintings that were housed in this building had constituted the collection of the Stadtholders, which had been expropriated by the Netherlands state before being transported to Paris. Part of this collection had now been brought back from the Louvre and restored to the nation. The king renamed Louis Napoleon's Royal Museum 's *Rijks* (or national) *Museum*. In 1817 this museum was given premises in the *Trippenhuys*, where it was combined with the National Print Room (Bergvelt 1992; Bergvelt 1998: 88–137). Whereas the Mauritshuis is a symbol of the stadtholder's power, the Amsterdam museum is representative of the successive enemies of Orange: the city of Amsterdam, the Batavian Republic and Louis Napoleon. During the reign of Willem I no one thought of combining the two museums in Amsterdam and The Hague, let alone merging them with the most important collections in the southern Netherlands, namely those in the municipal museums of Brussels and Antwerp. Although the king's policy, logically enough, was to do everything he could to unify his new kingdom, he did not deploy art and museums as instruments in this endeavor.

The *Trippenhuys* was at the time the largest mansion on the canals of Amsterdam, but it was also a seventeenth-century building. The largest room on the second floor was comparable to the large room in the Royal Palace, and it was designated to receive the paintings that represented the 'history of our homeland', including the seven large Amsterdam paintings. The large room on the upper floor contained the other historical pictures and those with biblical and mythological scenes. The antiquities and other curiosities were displayed in showcases. The smaller cabinet pictures were hung in the smaller rooms at the back, where they were classified by genre: still-lives, Italian or Italianate landscapes, Dutch landscapes, seascapes and interiors. This arrangement was adapted to the study needs of contemporary painters.

In 1825 the Ministry of the Interior decided that the national collections had to be reorganized. All three-dimensional objects were to be transported from the Rijksmuseum and sent to other national museums in The Hague or Leiden. In 1825 therefore all historical objects were moved from the Rijksmuseum to the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in The Hague. The director of the Rijksmuseum did not protest about the loss of the so-called 'national relics'; indeed he declared that they were not very important. In his view, they were only important if they were believed to be authentic and he clearly thought they were not (Bergvelt 2010a: 187).

Among other objects the sixteenth-century chair purported to have belonged to the fifteenth-century Jacoba of Bavaria, and the eighteenth-century weapons made in Sri Lanka, said to have been wielded by the seventeenth-century admiral Michiel de Ruyter, were sent to The Hague. These objects were allocated their place in the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities on the second floor of the Mauritshuis in The Hague.

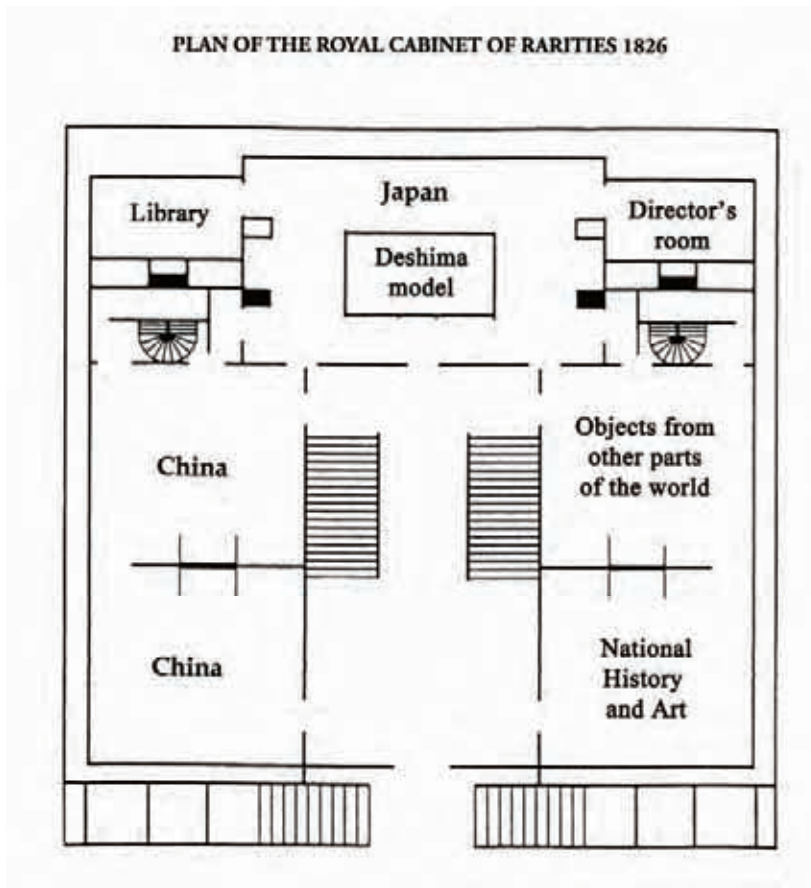


Figure 3: Ground plan of the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities on the second floor of the Mauritshuis, The Hague, 1826. From Effert 2011: 155.

This was a cabinet of curiosities in the old-fashioned sense, with the largest part dedicated to objects from China installed in two rooms (Effert 2011). The central attraction was a model of the island of Deshima in Japan, where the Dutch had had a trading post since the beginning of the seventeenth century. One might think that this would belong in a Dutch history section, but it was shown in the context of ethnological objects from distant lands. Dutch national history was confined to one small room on the right, and it had to share even that with applied arts objects.

As a consequence of these changes, the museum in the Trippenhuis ended up after 1825 solely as a painting gallery, except for the print room. The Rijksmuseum was reorganized. The still-lives, landscapes, seascapes, and interiors stayed in the same rooms, but the contents of the two larger rooms – that is, historical paintings of all sorts were divided into two categories: the historical paintings went into one room and the portraits into the other. The portraits were arranged like a sort of board room in the museum room, which indeed doubled as such for the Royal Dutch Institute for Arts and Sciences. No early depiction of that room exists. After 1825 the museum was increasingly given the function of a school for artists, since the portrait painters and history painters also now had their own rooms for making copies of artworks. This made it even less of a venue for educating the general public in Dutch history than it had been before.

In the other large room – the one with historical paintings – the pictures of subjects from Dutch history were distributed around the space, in between scenes from the Bible and Greek and Roman mythology. Those works by Rubens (*Cimon and Pero*), Scorel (*Mary Magdalen*), Van

Eyck (now: Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The holy kinship*) and the Allegory already seen to have been present in the gallery in The Hague were combined with large paintings by Lairese (Scenes from the story of Odysseus), Cornelis van Haarlem (*The fall of man*) and Caspar de Crayer (*The adoration of the shepherds* and *The descent from the cross*) (Bergvelt 1998, figs. V-VI and 52–53). Clearly this museum concentrated on art and not on history.

Most of the acquisitions were of paintings deemed artistically important and not of works of art intended in some way to inspire the viewers with a ‘feeling for the fatherland’. Since Louis Napoleon the historical aspect had been treated as secondary to the artistic merits of the paintings. The same was the case in the Mauritshuis. Both museum directors would have preferred an international collection, with paintings by Raphael, Domenichino, Guido Reni and Murillo, like other national art museums of Europe at the time. The few acquisitions of historical paintings made in the period before 1830 were lesser (and cheaper) works, mostly portraits. Instead of politicians, princes, and naval heroes as had been the case in the National Art Gallery, the director now favoured images of artists (including self-portraits), poets and other cultural heroes, which was very appropriate for the board room of the Royal Dutch Institute for Arts and Sciences: their predecessors looked down upon their meetings.

The ‘Period of National Indifference’ (1830– c. 1870)

1830 was a crucial date in Dutch museum history. It was the year of the Belgian Revolt, which signaled the emergence of Belgium as an independent state. From this year onwards almost no money was spent on the Dutch national museums. This ‘period of national indifference’, as it is known, lasted some forty years. In around 1870 the Dutch economy started to expand again and new museums were founded, including the new Rijksmuseum.

The year 1830 marked the end of almost all purchases by the national museums. The Rijksmuseum experienced a period of total inertia between 1830 and 1870. This was not merely due to the war with Belgium but also to the policy of the liberal governments of that period for whom culture was a matter for private individuals and not a task for the authorities. King Willem II (1840–1849) moreover, unlike his father Willem I, felt an aversion towards the national museums, preferring to concentrate on his own art collection for which he had built a beautiful Gothic Hall and a Marble Hall in The Hague (Bergvelt 2004; Hinterding/Horsch 1989).

In 1844 the famous Dutch author Everardus Potgieter wrote an article advocating a change in the content of the Rijksmuseum, suggesting that it should be reorganized according to the model of the *Musée historique* at Versailles, with the portrait room as its departure point. He describes exactly which scenes of Dutch history he would have liked to see in the museum rooms. While Versailles was a project dear to the heart of the French King himself, in the Netherlands nobody was interested in the museum, let alone in history in the museum, certainly not King Willem II. He preferred his Murillos and van Dycks. As a consequence the Rijksmuseum remained, as it was – a gallery of paintings, with the emphasis on the artistic achievements of Dutch and Flemish painters, intended primarily for contemporary artists to study. It was another thirty years before a serious concern for history in museums emerged once more. Potgieter also asked Willem II and private individuals for gifts and bequests to lay the foundations of his dreamed-of historical museum, but his plea met with no response, inside or outside the museum (Bergvelt 2010a).

In 1844 the director of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam died; he had been a salaried state employee since 1809, but after his death director and curators were supposed to run the museum unpaid, as the director of the Mauritshuis had done since 1816. It was only in 1875 that the new director of the Rijksmuseum, J.W. Kaiser, was given a part-time post. His other appointment was as professor of engraving at the National Art Academy (*Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten*; Bergvelt 1998: 209).

The directors were amateurs or, in the cases of Apostool and Kaiser, artists. It was only in the 1880s that art historians were given appointments in the museums, and throughout the nineteenth century no historians held posts as curators or directors. This may also have had to do with the fact that historians educated at the Dutch universities were mostly interested in documents, not images. A few amateur historians showed an interest in cultural history, for instance Conrad Busken Huet, author of the books *Het land van Rubens* (1879) and *Het land van Rembrandt* (1882–1884). The internationally renowned twentieth-century scholar Johan Huizinga was the first academic historian to incorporate the arts as a part of his field.

New initiatives and reorganizations (1870–1940)

In the 1870s the Dutch economy started to flower again. Funds became available and this period has even been called the Second Golden Age. With the liberals finally out of power, the decision was taken to build a new Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It opened in 1885. Attendance figures grew from about forty thousand a year in the *Trippenhuus* to 632,466 in the new building. No longer an institution catering mainly for artists (and tourists), it became a popular museum with Dutch people of all social classes, who visited the various sections – old masters, contemporary art, the print room, the rooms for the different epochs and the history sections. According to visitors' books, extant from 1844 until 1877, however, a large number of ordinary Amsterdam citizens paid a visit to the Rijksmuseum in the *Trippenhuus* in September, during the annual Amsterdam *kermiss* (fair). This was the only time they got a holiday (Bergvelt/Hörster 2010). The fact that they visited the Rijksmuseum indicates that the museum was at the time not regarded as a special preserve of the educated classes.

The architect of the new museum was Pierre Cuypers, famous for the many neo-Gothic churches he had built throughout the Netherlands. After 1853 the Catholic episcopate was recognized and Catholics were permitted to build their own churches. Before that time the churches of all denominations were designed by engineers of the Ministry of Public Works, often in a neo-classical style. The freedom to build their own churches led to an explosion of new Catholic churches in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Netherlands, mostly in a neo-Gothic style. Cuypers was one of the most important ecclesiastical architects. The fact that he was chosen to design the museum was a sign of Catholic emancipation in the Netherlands. Protestants were very critical of the style of the Rijksmuseum, as can be seen in the caricature comparing the museum with an episcopal palace.

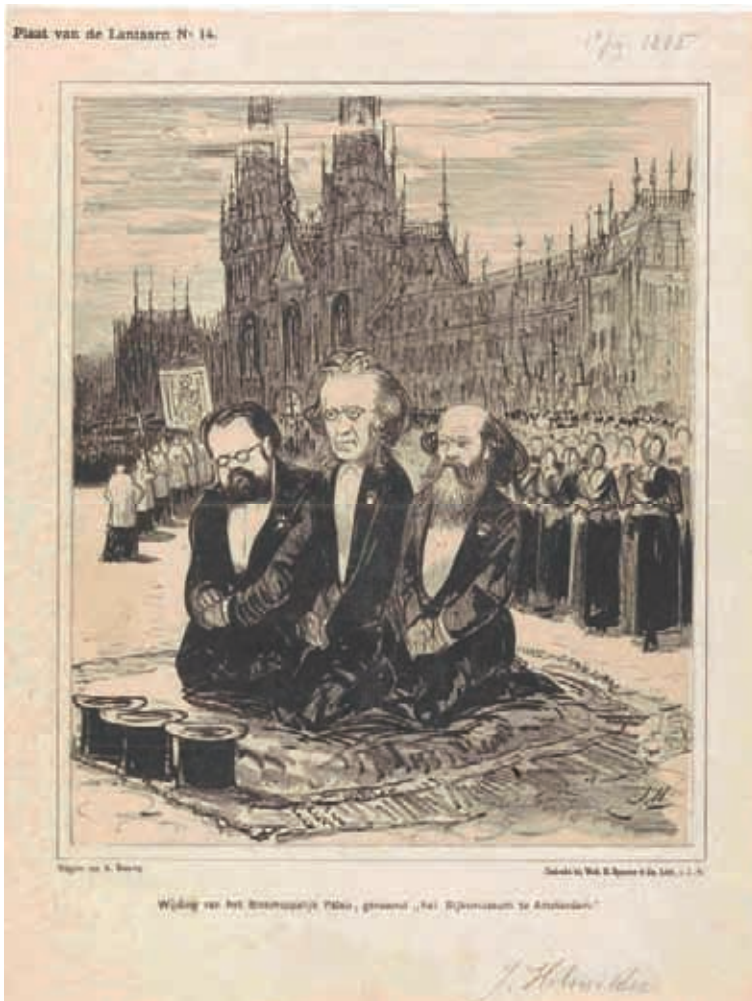


Figure 4: J.P. Holswilder, caricature ‘The consecration of the episcopal palace called “the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam”’. From left to right: Victor de Stuers, Joseph Alberdingk Thijm and Pierre Cuypers. From: *De Lantaarn* 1885.

Indeed all three men involved, the architect Cuypers on the right, his adviser J.A Alberdingk Thijm in the middle, and the civil servant of the Ministry of the Interior, Victor de Stuers, on the left, here depicted kneeling, were Catholics.

Before the Rijksmuseum was built, the same Victor de Stuers took the initiative to found the Netherlands Museum of History and Art in The Hague. This museum collected everything loosely related to Dutch history and the applied arts, although when he was putting forward the case for founding this museum, De Stuers had said that its purpose would be to illustrate the history of the fatherland by presenting material around its rulers and other famous figures. The annual reports however show a huge and widely divergent variety of objects: spectacles, metal fastenings, anything dug up during excavations or when rivers were dredged, horse-sleighs, anything remotely related to the guilds, but also Delftware, silver objects by the silversmiths Adam and Paulus van Vianen and historical paintings from government buildings. It seems that De Stuers was carrying out a rescue operation, without any specific list of historical or artistic objects. There was no system whatsoever in his selection and any objects that were acquired that may have had a nationalist import or celebrating the glory of the Netherlands were lost among the plethora of folk art objects and archaeological finds (Bergvelt 1998: 200–201). This is a good

example of the ‘rhetoric of cultural policy’: what was written in official documents bore no relation to the practice.

The paintings section in the Rijksmuseum was opened in 1885 on the second floor, with the *Nightwatch* as centrepiece, presented in such a way that it looked like a high altar in a Roman Catholic church; two years later extremely varied collections were on display on the first floor.

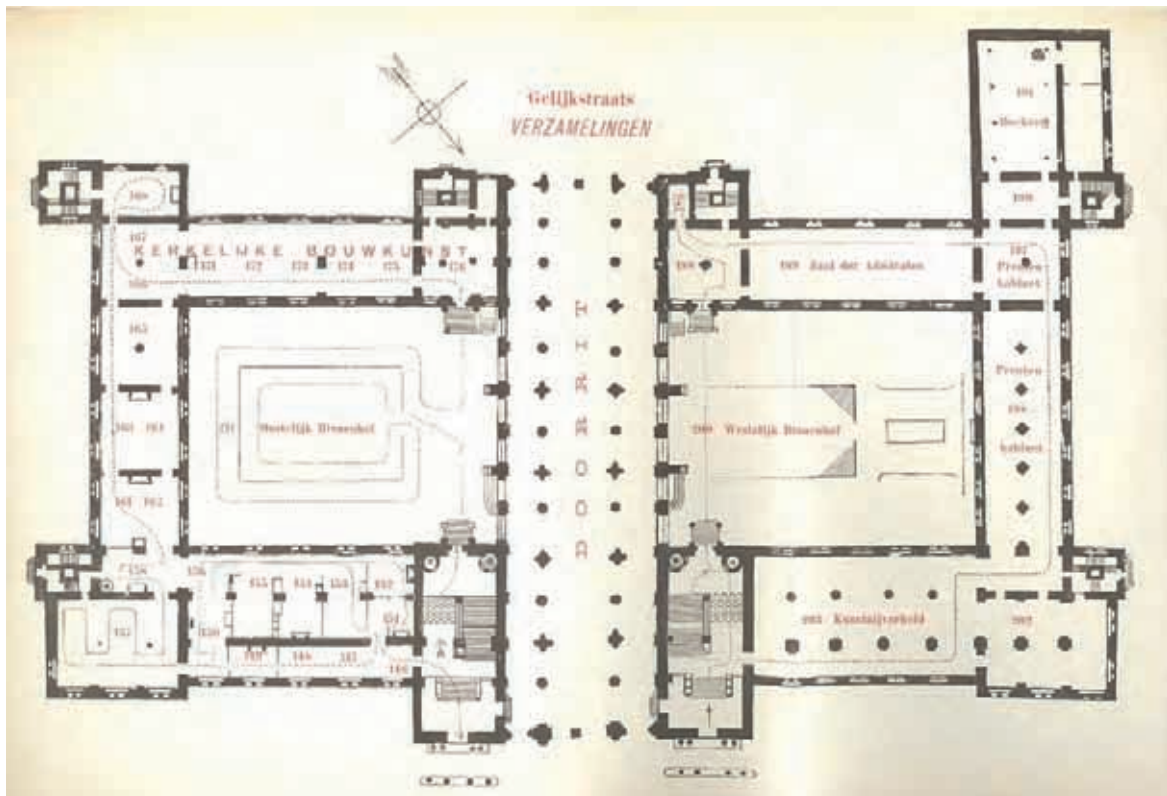


Figure 5: Plan of the ground floor of the Rijksmuseum in 1887. On the left the section, *Kerkelijke Bouwkunst* or church architecture (rooms 166–168, 171–176;), room no. 152 with historical objects; on the right the *Prentenkabinet* or print room (197 and 198), *Kunsthistorisch* or decorative arts (203) and the *Zaal der Admiralen* or Gallery of the Admirals (189). From: Obreen 1887: 86–7.

The largest sections were devoted to plaster casts in the western court and the print gallery with the library and the applied arts section in the rooms surrounding it. In the eastern court were some trophies, for instance the stern of the flagship, the Royal Charles captured from the British in 1667, during the second Anglo-Dutch War, when the Dutch sailed up the Medway and came close to taking London. But these important commemorative objects were not kept together but dispersed around the space and juxtaposed with objects of cultural history, devoid of explicit political content, such as carriages, and musical instruments. While these trophies did convey a sense of national pride, they were not forged into a great narrative, but appeared as isolated statements, weakened by the political insignificance of the surrounding objects.

The eastern court was boarded by period rooms with church architecture (*Kerkelijke bouwkunst*) designed by the architect, Pierre Cuyper. It seems that the museum thought that the representation of cultural history provided by these period rooms was more important than political or other kinds of history. The only rooms that had a classical historical content were the Gallery of the Admirals (no. 189) next to the western court and the room dedicated to historical objects (no. 152) next to the eastern court. The Gallery of the Admirals contained not only

portraits of admirals, but also of generals and battle scenes, military and naval – altogether some 130 paintings. Once again then one finds a presentation that was not coherent, probably because it had to be compiled in a very short period of time. The same applies to the art section. It was a case of a new and very expensive building, at the time the largest in the country, but which still had no time and money for the museum curators or directors to travel abroad in preparation of arranging the display. Also the interior and exterior decoration programmes showing the glory of Amsterdam (on the West side) and scenes of patronage of the arts in the Middle Ages (on the East), seem to have been designed haphazardly for each side of the building separately, with repetitions (Rembrandt appears five times on the exterior!) and without any strong relation with the contents of the museum (Bergvelt 2011), except for the original central scene on the South side (Rembrandt painting the *Syndics* surrounded by his pupils). What to think of the foundation of the castle of The Hague in 1258, Dürer visiting Bois-le-Duc in 1520, rulers offering the stained-glass windows to the church of St. John in Gouda or Jan van Eyck working in The Hague? (see for an overview of the most important scenes on the exterior and interior Bergvelt 2011; for the 82 names and medallions on the exterior, Bergvelt 1998, 387–388)

Some answers

The most important reason that the Rijksmuseum was unable or unwilling to provide a coherent survey of Dutch history was probably due to the underlying tensions between Catholics and Protestants and that explicitly came to the forefront after the reinstatement of the Catholic bishops in 1853. The result was the compartmentalization (or 'pillarization') of Dutch society into different religious and secular or political denominations between roughly 1900 and 1965. Each religious denomination or social group – Catholics, Protestants, liberals and social-democrats – had its own newspaper, political party, schools and, later on, broadcasting company. That also meant, for instance, that Protestant Dutch history was different from Catholic Dutch history: a national institution like a national museum had to be very circumspect when it offered a general survey of Dutch history. It seems that the Rijksmuseum postponed making any choices, or explicit historical statements at least throughout the nineteenth century.

It was only after a national debate in the 1910s and 1920s (Meijers 1978) that the Rijksmuseum sections were modernized and reorganized: the paintings section in the 1920s, the section of Dutch maritime history in 1931, and that of Dutch history in 1937 (Bos 1997). But even then the art historians had the upper hand (Luijten 1995).

Why did it take so long? There are several reasons that we have invoked throughout this article. Firstly there was the dire economic situation that only improved after 1870, coupled with the decline of liberalism occurring at around the same time. Secondly there was a change in the intended public of the museum: at first it was primarily meant for artists (although during the fair in September the people of Amsterdam overrun the museum in the Trippenhuys), but it was only in the new building that the target group of the museum really became the broad public. For them the two new sections with overviews of Dutch history were made in the 1930s. Then there were the length of time it took for cultural life to be organized on a national instead of a municipal level, the slow development of professionalized museum staff and the fact that historians only started taking an interest in artefacts, as opposed to textual evidence, in the twentieth century.

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A Nationalist Palimpsest: Authoring the History of the Greek Nation Through Alternative Museum Narratives

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Abstract

For the purposes of EUNAMUS/Work Package 3, three cases studies from Greece were examined in order to illuminate various aspects pertinent to the broader theme of the project: i.e. how national identity is built and reinforced through reference to the past as well as the use of this past in national museum exhibitions. The three cases considered were: the first exhibition hosted at the National Historical Museum of Athens in 1884. The full title was ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’ curated by the historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos. The second case study was the exhibition hosted at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens in 1964. The exhibition is commonly referred to as the ‘Sculptures Collection’, the curatorial work for this project was done by Christos Karouzos and his wife, Semni Karouzos. The ‘Neolithic Exhibition’ hosted at the Archaeological Museum of Volos, in Thessaly, Central Greece was also examined in detail. The exhibition opened in 1975 and the curator was Giorgos Chourmouziades, then Ephor (director) of the Greek Archaeological Service for the region of Magnesia in Thessaly. The main conclusion drawn from the investigation of the foregoing museum exhibitions is that the authoring of Greek national history cannot be perceived as a monolithic phenomenon or an all-embracing narrative but instead, a highly complex and diverse ideology consisting of various, heterogeneous (and in certain respects, even incompatible) readings of ‘nationhood’. In an attempt to further substantiate this point, the present project has accorded a surplus of analytical weight to the exploration of the historical programme of each museum, to the in-depth examination of the disciplinary and museographic types adopted by the exhibitions’ curators to enhance their vision of national history and identity and finally, to the collection of information concerning the strategies of display and methods of visualization of all three programmes (i.e. disposition of objects, decors, lighting, guides, texts and other pedagogical material).

Introduction

There now exists a substantial body of literature in the broader field of humanities, which bears out explicitly that nationalism (both as a concept as well as an historical phenomenon), was neither spatially nor temporally homogeneous (*cf.* Fotiadis 2004; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Kedourie 1960; Kohn 1946). Furthermore, several writings have underlined that any analytical attempt to specify the causes of its emergence or classify its defining elements and/or manifestations, ought to be sensitive to its inherently complex and dynamic character (*cf.* Anderson 1991; Debray 1977; Foucault 1984; Hroch 1985; Kitromilides 1989; Smith 1986). However, behind this image of conspicuous diversity lies a common ‘denominator’ of fundamental importance: nationalism ought to be perceived as inextricably connected with the philosophical elaboration of a series of ideas, values and concepts, brought to the fore by the *modernist* paradigm (Kuhn 1962), a pattern of thought which dominated Western thought from the early Renaissance period until the early stages of the 20th century.

Modernity constitutes an ontological framework firmly associated with the decline of religious conviction and the simultaneous deification of human *logos*. From the very onset of the Renaissance, human agency began to be painted as the driving force behind social, political and historical development. Largely drawing upon Aristotle and Plato “as models of intellectual achievement” (Thomas 2004: 5), humans began to perceive themselves as masters of their own destiny “as opposed to simply putting their faith in the creator” (Thomas 2004: 6). By the end of the 17th century, the glorification of ‘humanism’ provided the necessary impetus for the “universalizing intellectual project of the Enlightenment” (Thomas 2004: 4). The main ontological quest became the tracing of the route to certitude and firmly grounded truth while the means to achieve this aim was “conceptual purification’ (Thomas 1996: 13), i.e. the ordering of the world and the separation of its complex morphology into a definable set of elements (Latour 1993: 7). This principle applied equally to the natural world and human societies (Jordanova 1989: 9): in particular, society was thought to represent a distinct, bounded system, that could be broken down into a series of separate institutions and/or groups of people; these sub-systems were interconnected and influenced one another like the organs of biological organism. Under this conceptual scheme, scientific discourse could guarantee not only the drawing of rigid analytical boundaries but also the valorization of separate entities; put simply, one unit/entity could be held “to be more solid than another, or to underlie another or to give rise to another, or to be more fundamental than another” (Thomas 1996: 12-3).

The tendency to compartmentalize human societies, soon gave way to yet another vital development of the 19th century, namely the historicized understanding of humanity (Thomas 2004: 4; *see also* Dyson 2006; Gran-Aymerich 1998). Herbert Spencer offered a sociological twist to Darwinian evolution by advancing the premise that natural and societal changes were analogous phenomena (*cf.* Trigger 1998), which had essentially involved a morphological/functional change leading from simple homogeneous beginnings to increasingly differentiated wholes. Societies which were more complex and better integrated, were able to “prosper at the expense of less complex ones”, just as biological organisms and/or species that “were better adapted to the environment, supplanted those who were less well adapted” (Trigger 1998: 57). The concept of social evolution became prominent in 19th and early 20th century Western thought, with examples involving the comparison of societies but also legal institutions,

kinship systems and/or belief systems (Outram 1995; Trigger 1998). Underlying all these evolutionary sequences was not only the adherence to truth and the “universal law” (inherent in the so-called “organic analogy”), but also the firm belief in *progress*, with greater complexity being equated with progress towards *civilization* (Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b):

Civilization was a new word, for it had only been incorporated into the French and English Language in the mid eighteenth century... It indicated the level of perfection of a society... (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 67).

Boundaries, order and progress were pivotal characteristics of the modernist world-view and as such, also established the paradigmatic foundations for the subsequent development of nationalism. “To be in a nation” was “an achievement that only the most civilized states could accomplish” (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 67). It is indicative in that respect that early nation-states of the 16th and 17th century combined a territorially bounded national community which included institutions and agencies (i.e. courts of law, systems of taxation and duty, police, standing armies and fleets) that were primarily concerned with maintaining societal and political order (Gellner 1983: 4):

Nationalism holds that the freedom and autonomy of nations (or a particular nation) must be the overriding principle around which the world should be *ordered*. To achieve their liberty, the modern individual must belong to a nation, and that nation must be granted self-determination (Thomas 2004: 108).

The concept of the *nation* was used widely throughout the 18th century but always in conjunction with monarchy. With the French Revolution however, a radical sociopolitical transformation took place in Europe, signaling the transition from the Ancien Régime to the *state* (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 63). More specifically, the French Revolution accorded a new political meaning to the term *nation*, by associating the latter with *civil society*. With the emergence of ideals such as truth, freedom and equality, royalty could no longer sustain itself as the basis of the state; the monarchical regime thus had to be abolished and replaced by a new form of socio-political construct, i.e. civic sovereignty (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 64). Roughly until the 1870s, nation-states were mainly located in Western and Northern Europe (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 79-82; Livianos 2008: 253). The Greek Revolution of 1821 was one of the few 19th century revolutions that resulted in the formation and concretization of a new nation-state despite its peripheral position (both politically and geographically) (Fotiadis 2004: 88; Liakos 2008: 205). This newly emerging type of nationalism relied far more on the common history and culture of the nation's members and less on civic sovereignty (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 80). If, for ‘older’ states like France, the nationalist ‘version’ constituted a celebration of the present and of progress (signaling the end of the monarchy), the connection with a noble, glorious and instructive past was a symbolic ‘restoration’ of superiority and achievement allowing the legitimation and reverence of newly founded states like Greece (Hamilakis 2007: 78-85; Mouritsen 2009).

Any investigation of the striking success of the Greek ‘national project’ ought to take into serious account its full dependence upon the construction of a viable historical model. As Liakos has rightly observed, in Greece’s case, “the history is identified with the nation’s mission” and, as a consequence, it is the ‘sacralization’ of origins and providence “that attributes a certain meaning to it” (Liakos 2008: 207). This discussion brings inevitably to the fore the phenomenon of *philhellenism* (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 82-86; Kitromilides 1994; Koundoura 2007: 43-77; Marchand

1996; Most 2008; Tsigakou 1981). At its most basic level, the term implies that the ideas and ideals that prepared the ground for the Greek revolution as well the subsequent emergence of the Greek state were essentially of both local *and* European origin. From the Renaissance onwards, ancient Greece was perceived as the origin of civilization and by extension, the birthplace of Western civilization and Western nations (Thomas 2004: 5). *Philhellenism* thus served “as a link in the triadic nexus of ancient Greece-Europe-modern Greece” and ‘Hellenization’ was “tantamount to Europeanization” (Augustinos 2008: 170; *see also* Liakos 2008: 207; Shannan-Peckham 2001: 115-36; St Clair 1972). Secondly, modern Greeks themselves were increasingly seen as the direct descendants of ancient Greece; as Augustinos claims, their “vision of the classical past” became “a mirror” in which they could contemplate “their imagined self” (Augustinos 2008: 170). In view of the above, it should not come as a surprise that a sound nationalist conviction soon began to crystallize, bringing forcefully to the fore that it was no longer acceptable for Greece to be under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (Diaz-Andreu 2007; Güthenke 2008).

Subsequent socio-economic and political developments gave these ideas further impetus (Clogg 1996; Hamilakis 2007; Livianos 2008). More specifically, the second half of the 18th century witnessed considerable changes in the social structure of Greek territory under Ottoman rule, with the most important being the increase in maritime trade activity around Europe, the conscious intellectual orientation towards Western European models by the influential educated classes of Greek (or more broadly Balkan) society (i.e. the so-called *Neo-Hellenic* Enlightenment) and also the socio-economic development and cultural flourishing of Greek communities outside the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire. “Through their contacts with the West”, the emergent Greek mercantile middle classes and contemporary Greek intellectuals “realized the respect with which Western elites regarded ancient Greece” (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 82; *see also* Augustinos 2008: 170). It is noteworthy that during the late 18th century and the early stages of the 19th century, the “new economic elite in Greece subsidized schoolteachers to study in the West” where they became more familiarized with Western *philhellenism* (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 82). At the same time, ‘Europeanized’ Greek intellectuals began to imitate antiquity with the ultimate purpose being its very ‘revival’: texts were written in ancient Greek, the use of ancient names for the new generations was promoted, and on occasions it was even commonplace to dress in ancient Greek ‘style’ (Clogg 1992: 28; Diaz-Andreu 2007: 82-3; St Clair 1972: 20).

Equally notable is that many Greek intellectuals “experienced the French Revolution first-hand and became greatly inspired by its philosophical background”; even more importantly, they rapidly came to apprehend the potential of “the new ideas of popular freedom and sovereignty for their own struggle” (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 83; *see also* Kitromilides 1994: 61). Amongst the most famous and well-known figures of the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment (*cf.* Dimaras 1985; Henderson 1970; Kitromilides 1983) was the intellectual Adamantios Korais, who urged his compatriots to revive ancient Greece by imitating political events in France, “the nation which most resembled it”. In addition, Korais tried vigorously to convince Greeks “to draw upon the wisdom of the ancient world” and proposed the adoption and regeneration of a ‘purified’ language (i.e. a blend of ancient and modern Greek), “in order to be prepared for freedom” (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 2003; *see also* Augustinos 2008: 192; Fotiadis 2003: 83; Kitromilides 1994: 62):

For Korais, enlightened nations were those with a consciousness of their linguistic heritage. Greece could only be liberated if the language was rejuvenated first (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 18).

Korais' understanding of Greek antiquity and its relation to the present acknowledged the chasm separating the ancestral from the modern terrain but also insinuated "the will to bridge it" (Augustinos 2008: 169). For Korais, this relationship presupposed both "cognitive distance" and "affective proximity" (Augustinos 2008: 169) and it is precisely through this conceptual amalgamation that the temporal divide could be overcome and ultimately lead to the emulation of "ancient ideals" for the moral awakening of modern Greeks (Philips 2003: 444, 447).

The process of 'translating' the principles and ideals of the Enlightenment into the social and cultural context of the Ottoman Empire also necessitates that we take into consideration the serious conflicts that ensued between 'Europeans' and the Orthodox Church; after all, as Hamilakis alleges, for the vast majority of people in Greece, "Christianity was still the organizing canon of the world" (Hamilakis 2007: 84). Numerous examples of confrontation, censorship, control, and persecution are reported from the 18th as well as the early 19th centuries (Skopetea 1988), all of which are particularly revealing of the clerical efforts to control the circulation of 'new ideas' (*cf.* Livianos 2008). Such tensions were the result of various factors, including Russian pressure, the priorities of Greek domestic and foreign policy and the multidimensional engagement of Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and the pagan tradition. Amidst these developments, a considerable amount of intellectual effort was put into finding ways to reconcile reason and faith, innovation with tradition, and individual freedom of thought with theological determinism. In fact, many ecclesiastical thinkers advanced an Orthodox perspective on the Enlightenment that developed an (admittedly selective) interest in new ontological and political conceptualizations. On the other hand, the impact of Protestant values promoting the ideal of a reformed and self-conscious Christianity, on the works of prominent figures as, for instance, Adamantios Korais, should not be underestimated.

The struggle for Greek independence began in 1821 and "leaders of the revolution implored other nations for help", with "manifestos" (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 84) like the one that follows:

Reduced to a condition so pitiable, deprived of every right, we have, with unanimous voice, resolved to take up arms, and struggle against the tyrants... In one word, we are unanimously resolved on Liberty or Death. Thus determined, we earnestly invite the united aid of all civilized nations to promote the attainment of our holy and legitimate purpose, the recovery of our rights and the revival of our happy nation (St Clair 1972: 13).

Eventually, European powers decided that "it was worth providing military assistance", legitimizing this change of position by referring "to the widely recognized status of Greece as the cradle of civilization and as a Christian nation under the rule of a Muslim Empire" (Diaz-Andreu 2007: 84). In 1827, Ottoman troops were defeated in the Battle of Navarino by a coalition force formed by France, England, and Russia.

When Greece gained independence in 1830, tensions related to issues of identity and national consciousness had to be resolved for the new 'nation-state' to be able to guarantee its 'survival'. There were two especially important means by which this was accomplished and both made explicit reference to the symbolic roots of the Greek Revolution: Classical antiquity and orthodox Christianity (Liakos 2008; Livianos 2008):

[This was the period] that saw the first sighting expressions of nationalism in the modern sense of the word' both as a political programme (aiming at the establishment of a nation-state) and as an ideology (commonality based on a "Hellenic", pre-Byzantine lineage and Greek language). It also witnessed the resurfacing of terms such as ("Hellenes") that had been buried, although never entirely forgotten, under a thick layer of Christianity during the period of Ottoman rule (Livianos 2008: 254).

From a very early stage and through a process of acculturation that emphasized the Hellenic as opposed to the *Romeic* (i.e. Byzantine) dimension of Greek identity, Greeks began to internalize deeply a Hellenic national identity that coexisted with but took precedence over the *Romeic* one (Clogg 1992: 50; Gallant 2001: 69; Livianos 2008: 242, 258). The strong appeal of the past played a decisive role in the objectification of the state while Athens (i.e. the ancient Greek metropolis where democracy was deemed to have been born), was reinstated as the capital of Greece in 1833, a year after the establishment of the modern Greek state (Bastea 2000; *see also* Clogg 1992: 50; Koundoura 2007: 85). The juxtaposition of past and present manifested by the very selection of Athens as capital of the Greek state is tellingly described by Lamartine in an entry to *Voyage en Orient* dated 18 August 1837:

When [Lamartine] reported... that the contemporary city of Athens was "desolate and entirely barren", he was not documenting a demonstrable fact but creating the scenery for revelation. His literary account discursively prepared Athens' supposedly desolate modern surface to reveal only its most eternal layers. The deepest of these, the Acropolis, arose apocalyptically out of present cursed barrenness to reach great physical heights (Leontis 1995: 53).

A symbolic restoration of the Parthenon, the temple of the goddess Athena at the Athenian Acropolis also began at the time, and it was there that the coronation of King Otto took place in 1835 with "an impressive public ritual, rife with symbolism and political significance" (Fotiadis 2004: 85; *see also* Bastea 2000: 102-3; Diaz-Andreu 2007: 85; Tsigakou 1981: 63; Yalouri 2001: 35-6). As Fotiadis rightly claims, in retrospect, this ritual stands as "an archetypal nationalist performance" which "brought together in one act the king, antiquities, the nation, its past and future, ancient Greece and modern Europe" (Fotiadis 2004: 85).

In unison, Orthodoxy was appropriated by the Greek state in such a way that its ecumenical religious aspect was downplayed and eventually transformed into a purely nationalist index (Gallant 2001: 69; *see also* Livianos 2008; Shannan-Pechham 2001: 8-9). For this purpose, in 1833, the Kingdom of Greece declared the Greek Orthodox Church to be independent of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and this was the first step toward the "Church be[coming] an accomplice of the state in its mission to spread the cohesive nationalist creed" (Gallant 2001: 69). In subsequent years, further initiatives were underway to incorporate religion into a national identity. For instance, in 1838 the government selected the 25th of March as the national holiday commemorating the war of liberation. That this was the day on which Archbishop Germanos "raised the banner of rebellion is a perfect example of an invented tradition", since both his actions and their actual timing "remain open historical questions" (Gallant 2001: 69). By associating the celebration of the birth of the nation with the Christian festival of the Annunciation, the bond between religion and nationalism was further reinforced. "The day on which the announcement of the coming of Christ was made" became also the day on which "the birth of the new nation was foretold" (Gallant 2001: 69).

The convoluted relationship between Classical antiquity, orthodox Christianity and Greek nationalism persevered also in the following decades (Liakos 2008). In the name of restoring the Orthodox Empire of the Middle Ages, religious secret societies provided crucial support to the nationalist revolt against King Otto and the movement to enforce a constitution in 1843 (Calotychos 2003: 66; Clogg 1992: 51; Diaz-Andreu 2007: 86). The relationship between national identity and Orthodoxy became once again a topic of cardinal importance, as evidenced by the ardent declaration that the next king of Greece *had to* be Orthodox (Clogg 1992: 51; Gallant 2001: 70). The connection however is best exemplified by the speech of Ioannis Kolettis on the *Megali Idea* ('Great Idea'), given before the Constituent Assembly (1844) (Calotychos 2003; Leontis 1995):

In his fateful speech of 1844, Kolettis, a Hellenized Vlachos, powerful politician, and influential member of Parliament in the independent Hellenic Kingdom, argued for the expansion of political boundaries to fit a territory he associated with Byzantine Hellenism and its capital city, Constantinople: "The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece. [Greece] constitutes only one part, the smallest and poorest. A Greek is not only a man who lives within this kingdom, but also one who lives in Jannina, in Salonica, in Serres, in Adrianople, in Constantinople, in Smyrna, in Trebizond, in Crete, in Samos, and in any land associated with Greek history or the Greek race... There are two main centers of Hellenism: Athens, the capital of the Greek kingdom, [and] 'The City' [Constantinople], the dream and hope of all Greeks"... During the nineteenth [century] ... the recovery of both ancient and Byzantine Hellenism remained for Greeks a precondition for the rebirth and development of their modern nation (Leontis 1995: 74-5).

In the early stages of the 1870s, a series of events aimed for the further solidification/concretization of a Hellenic national identity, with the most representative restored the city of Athens as the very centre of Hellenism (*cf.* Bastea 2000). The jubilee year of the Greek kingdom was celebrated in 1871; the festivities planned for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the start of the Revolution were to commemorate the war but yet another central element of the celebration was the transportation and burial in Athens of the body of Gregory V, the Patriarch in power at the beginning of the Revolution. As historian Alexander Kitroeff observes, 'to associate the Patriarch with the commemoration of the revolution was a decision laden in irony, because the Patriarch had excommunicated the leaders of the revolution in the Peloponnesus upon hearing of the revolt in 1821' (*cited in* Gallant 2001: 71, *my translation; see also* Livianos 2008: 253-4). Notwithstanding this obvious irony, the decision was made a year earlier, in 1870, to use the re-interment of the cleric's body in Athens as a central element of the jubilee. The entire ceremony was fully imbued with symbolism: the Patriarch was transported to Greece "in a Greek warship named *Byzantium*, the casket was greeted at Piraeus by the Church hierarchy who conveyed it to Athens where it was received by King George and Queen Olga and huge crowds" (Gallant 2001: 71). The following year in the course of another public ceremony, a statue of Gregory V was unveiled at the University of Athens and placed next to a statue of Rigas Velestinlis. In 1875, a statue of Adamantios Korais was also added. This was essentially the "holy' trinity of the Hellenic Revolution and revival": one (i.e. Rigas Velestinlis) that "had espoused an ecumenical, secular new Greece", another (i.e. Adamantios Korais) that "believed in secular Greece" with origins in the Classical age, and a third (i.e. Gregory V) that "opposed the Greek Revolution" (Gallant 2001: 71). Despite their marked differences all these figures became

united as symbols of Hellenic liberation and assimilated as integral elements of Greek national identity.

However, even until the onset of the twentieth century, significant battles persisted between those making reference to the classical past and those in favour of orthodoxy. For instance in 1901, Argyris Eftaliotis published a *History of Romiosyni* and the reaction of the “Hellenists” to this publication was instant: University Professor G. Sotiriades noted that *Romeic* meant “nothing more than “a cheap and vulgar man”, while the folklorist N.Politis, adding to the debate the perspective of his discipline (i.e. folk studies), also opted for the “Hellene”, for it symbolized the unbroken continuity of the Greek Nation” (Livianos 2008: 268). Others supported enthusiastically the term *Romeic* and argued that the latter, “may not come ‘straight from the age of Pericles”, but smelled “thyme and gun-powder” (Livianos 2008: 268; *see also* Tziovas 1986: 77-87); the general feeling of this circle was aptly summed up by Psycharis who claimed that “Acropolis, with all its ancient glory, is ready to fall upon us and trample us” (*cited in* Livianos 2008: 268; *see also* Yalouri 2001). Notwithstanding all aforementioned tensions concerning the content of Greek nationalism, we could nevertheless take the conflict between the two main conceptual/ideological ‘rivals’ to have reached a formal end with S. Zambelios’ and most importantly, K. Paparrigopoulos’ efforts for the historical ‘rehabilitation’ of the Byzantine Empire and its subsequent incorporation within the Greek nationalist narrative. It is precisely within this socio-historical context that the foundation of the first case study of this project, i.e. the National Historical Museum, actually took place.

The National Historical Museum, Athens

The National Historical Museum belongs to the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece (HESG), which was an idea inspired by N. G. Politis and founded as an institution in 1882 for the purpose of collecting, saving and presenting relics and documentary evidence relating to modern Greek history. From 1883 onwards, the HESG also began to publish a scientific journal (*Deltion tis Istorikis kai Ethnologikis Etaireias tis Elladas*), comprising studies and articles on Greek history and folklore. Apart from N. G. Politis, the first members to be registered in HESG were N. Papadopoulos (publisher), A. P. Kourtidis (author and publisher), I. D. Tzetzis (historian and ethnographer), S. Lambros (historian and subsequently Greek prime minister between years 1916-17), T. Ambelas (lawyer and poet), A. Miliarakis (historian and geographer), T. Philemon (journalist and philologist), A. Papageorgiou (historian and ethnographer), G. Kambouroglou (historian and ethnographer), D. Marinos (historian), N. Axelos (historian), G. Drosinis (writer and poet), A. Raggavis (poet/author and Professor of Archaeology, University of Athens), G. Kasdonis (author and publisher), G. Vroutos (artist), K. Zisiou (philologist) and T. Kozakis (philologist).

According to the founding statutes of the HESG (composed and signed by all its founding members in 1882), the main aim of the *Etaireia* was the “collection of historical and ethnological written sources and material culture contributing to the 'illumination' of the middle and late stages of Greek history, philology, folklore and language through the establishment of a museum and an archive that would encompass all foregoing monuments of national life (*ethnikou vion*)” (*cited in* Lappas 1982: 6, translation by the author). The goals as defined by the HESG's statutes were of fundamental importance for what was essentially the first time that a museum was

exclusively devoted to the visualization and display of *Neo-Hellenism*, thus bringing to the fore, the history of the late medieval period, the Ottoman Occupation as well as the early years of the Greek State.

The HESG's founding statutes mentions that the National Historical Museum had to be envisaged as a project following contemporary European examples, like the *Kensington Museum* in London, the *Hotel de Cluny* in Paris, the *Museo Civico* in Venice, the *Germanisches Museum* and the *Kunst-Gewerbe Museum* in Germany (Lappas 1982: 12). This effort was supported from its very outset by a large number of historians, intellectuals, artists, scientists, journalists and publishers as well as governmental officials and the municipality of Athens (Lappas 1982: 6). Support was either financial or realized through the generous provision of relics and manuscripts (considered to be of 'historical/national importance') that could subsequently be used as exhibits (Lappas 1982: 13). 'Subsequently' refers to the fact that initially, the collection had to be accommodated in the houses of several members of HESG; however, as the collection increased in quantity, it became imperative to transfer all items to a basement room of the Greek Parliament (Lappas 1982: 14).

In 1883, the historian S. Lambros (founding member of the HESG) took the initiative to propose to the mayor of Athens, D. S. Soutsos, the transfer of the collection from the basements of the Greek Parliament to the *Polytechnion* (i.e. the National Technical University of Athens). The transfer coincided with the first (temporary) exhibition of the collection to the public. The success of the event triggered a series of actions on behalf of the HESG (particularly T. Philemon) aiming at the permanent (as opposed to temporary) display of the collection and the obtainment of a building that would serve precisely for this purpose (Lappas 1982: 18). In August 1884, the Prime Minister Harilaos Trikoupis bestowed Hall 24 in the *Polytechnion* while the Ministries of Military, Maritime and Religious Affairs granted portraits and weapons of heroes of the Revolution, which were previously stored in the Acropolis Museum (Lappas 1982: 20). However, the capacity of Hall 24 was disproportionate to the (steadily) increasing number of exhibits (and visitors) so the need for a more spacious environment continued to be an issue of great concern (Lappas 1982: 20-21). It is highly indicative that on March the 25th 1889, two thousand people visited the museum and that during the celebrations of Konstantinos the Crown Prince's coming of age (date?), ten thousand visitors were reported. In July 1895, the Greek Minister of Education, Aggelos Vlahos, granted a larger hall of the *Polytechnion* to the HESG. An exhibition was organized and its opening coincided with the first Olympic Games, which were hosted in Athens in 1896. In subsequent decades, much effort was invested in guaranteeing a permanent basis for the collection and amongst the suggested *loci* were the old buildings of the Ministries of Finance and that of Military Affairs, the *Donkissis Plakentias* Megaron and *Zappeion*. In 1935, the possibility of using the Old Parliament building was advanced for the first time; however, this was only materialized 25 years later, in 1960. During the Second World War, all exhibition items were packed and stored, hidden in basement rooms of the university building as well as private houses (Lappas 1982: 34).

With the end of the war in Greece, the HESG rented temporarily *Stegi Aporon Korassidon* (i.e. 'Shelter for Impoverished Young Females'), a building located at the city centre (Vassilissis Amalias Street) (Lappas 1982: 34) where a "cursory exhibition", "in the form of an accessible storage room rather than museum" was set up (Lappas 1982: 36-38).

In 1960, the official decision was made to transfer the HESG collection in the Old Parliament Megaron (*Palaia Voulī*) in Stadiou Street. The construction of the Old Parliament had begun in 1854 on plans by French architect François Boulanger but was completed by 1871, with modifications by the Greek architect Panagiotis Kalkos. The Parliament remained in the building from 1875 until its transfer to its current location in the Old Palace in 1932. In 1961, the building underwent major restorations and from that period onwards, it has permanently accommodated the National Historical Museum.

With the actual members of the HESG sharing the consensus that the National Historical Museum (for most part of its early history), did not really operate as a museum but instead as a “visitable storage space” (Lappas 1982: 36, 38), no concise information can be found in the extant body of literature with regard to the strategic handling (organization, set up and management) of the collection for exhibition purposes. Nevertheless Lappas (1982) offers some informative details concerning the curators of the museum from 1884 to 1962. Apart from K. Paparrigopoulos, the principle coordinator of the first exhibition, ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’ (March 1884) (Lappas 1982: 14, 17), Lappas reports that in August 1884, the collection was transferred in Hall 24 of the *Polytechnion* and A. Meletopoulos took over as the museum's *Ephor* at the time (Lappas 1982: 20). During the period 1886-1887, T. Philadelphas is mentioned as the museum's *Ephor* (Lappas 1982: 21). Lappas also reports an exhibition in a 'larger hall' of the *Polytechnion* in spring 1896 during the time of the first Olympic Games (Lappas 1982: 22) but does not mention the name(s) of the curator(s). For the period 1899-1908, K. Rados acted as the museum's *Ephor* (Lappas 1982: 21) while for the same period, reference is made to C. Vlassopoulos, the guard of the museum, for whom Lappas employs the soubriquet *Argos*, the name of Odysseus' loyal dog (Lappas 1982: 26). In 1927, the first pictorial catalogue of the museum exhibits was published, edited by A. Nikaroussis (member of the HESG) still under the supervision of the president K. Rados (Lappas 1982: 30). In the preface, Rados mentions that the catalogue was composed under his direction, “by the curators of the museum C. Vlassopoulos... and the assistant curator C. Bazos, whose great knowledge of the collection was combined with the firm scientific background of the historian A. Nikaroussis” (*cited in* Lappas 1982: 30, *my translation*). C. Vlassopoulos, guard and curator of the HESG collection, worked in the museum from 1889 to 1934; he resigned only two months before he died (September 24th, 1934) (Lappas 1982: 34). All efforts made to protect the museum's exhibits during the Second World War are reported to have been conducted under the supervision of the guard, G. Georgiadis (Lappas 1982: 34). During the period 1960-1962, which coincides with the transfer of the collection to the Old Parliament and the organization of the first exhibition within the confines of the Megaron, the *Ephor* was I. Meletopoulos and the 'scientific personnel' D. Motos and M. Ladda-Minotou (Lappas 1982: 37).

The most important exhibitions of the HESG collection were the following: The ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’, which took place at the *Polytechnion* in March 25th, 1884 (Lappas 1982: 14-17). During the spring of 1896, another important exhibition was held at the *Polytechnion*, only a few days before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games (Lappas 1982: 22). In 1899, a third exhibition is reported to have taken place again at the *Polytechnion* under the curatorial supervision of K. Rados (Lappas 1982: 25). Between the years 1905 and 1908, the *Polytechnion* remained closed for restoration purposes; in July 10th, 1908, a new exhibition of the

HESG collection took place (Lappas 1982: 26). In 1954, the collection was transferred to the *Stegi Aporon Korassidon* (i.e. 'Shelter for Impoverished Young Females'). In October 25th, the HESG published a one-page leaflet (and not a proper exhibition catalogue), which included a brief overview of the museum's history (Lappas 1982: 34-36). An exhibition opened two days later, i.e. in October 27th (Lappas 1982: 37). In 1962 the collection was transferred to the Old Parliament building. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the HESG (21/06/1962), the official opening of the 'ethnological museum' took place (Lappas 1982: 37); the new catalogue (80 pages in total) was edited by I. Meletopoulos and published in 1965 while its second, revised edition (108 pages in total) was launched ten years later, in 1975 (Lappas 1982: 38).

The 'Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle'

As already mentioned above, in 1883, S. Lambros proposed to the mayor of Athens the transferring of the HESG collection to the *Polytechnion*. What is particularly noteworthy is that he advanced the idea in conjunction with another proposal, namely the organization of an exhibition that would be based on the extant body of materials from the HESG collection. The main aim of the exhibition would be to illuminate different socio-historical aspects of the 'Greek *Paliggenesia*', in other words, the 're-birth' of the Greek Nation. The expectation also was that the organization of a formal exhibition of the collection would encourage (and thus potentially increase) further donations of relics and written documents from individuals and/or institutions (Lappas 1982: 16). It is noteworthy that Lambros suggested that the opening of this exhibition should take place on March the 25th of the following year (1884), i.e. the date officially recognized as the anniversary of the Greek Revolution (Lappas 1982: 14). His proposal was accepted with great enthusiasm and a committee was soon thereafter established (in co-operation with the Philological Society of 'Parnassos') for overseeing the exhibition's organization. The full title of the exhibition was 'Monuments of the Holy Struggle' (*Mnimeia tou Ierou Agonos*).

All individuals and/or families possessing relics from the War of Independence were invited to make offerings for the exhibition. Most of them replied to the HESG invitation "with trust and fervor" (Lappas 1982: 15). The exhibits (1100 in number) were divided into four main categories: (i) 'inscriptions, paintings and sculptures' (224 items), (ii) 'weapons' (246 items), (iii) 'manuscripts and documents' (423 items) and (iv) 'various' (246 items) (Lappas 1982: 16). A detailed catalogue of the exhibition was also composed (70 pages in total), in which all items were meticulously described while the 'exhibitors' (be that the HESG itself and/or private donors) were also acknowledged.

King George I presided over the exhibition's official opening. Although its catalogue was edited by the HESG and the *Parnassos* Philological Society, the welcoming speech during the museum's opening ceremony was delivered by the curator K. Paparrigopoulos (Lappas 1982: 17). Interestingly, a ticket worth five drachmas allowed visitors to attend the ceremony. Visits to the museum during regular opening hours were also charged but with a significantly lower amount of money (two and at times, one drachma). Free access to the exhibition was only allowed during school visits (for both teachers and pupils). The relics offered by families and/or individuals for the purposes of the exhibition remained in the hands of the HESG. Enthusiastic reports concerning the exhibition can be found in the press and for this reason, in the HESG General

Assembly that took place right after the opening of the exhibition, the president Philemon stressed the following:

This exhibition, visited by millions of Athenians brought profound enthusiasm to all Greeks, [but also] activated the memory of the pan-hellenic struggles and the honour of those who fought for the Greek Nation (*cited in Lappas 1982: 19, my translation*).

The Curator: Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815-1891) was born in Constantinople. He completed his school studies in Odessa and later moved to Greece to study in the ‘Central School’ (*Kentrikon Scholeion*) of Aegina, founded by the first Governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias. He acquired his university degrees in France and Germany and soon after that, returned to Greece where he worked temporarily for the Ministry of Justice. While he was still at the Ministry’s service, Paparrigopoulos published his first historical study *Skýthai, Slavoí, Alvanoí, paides choron ypervoreion* (‘Scythians, Slavs, Albanians, children of the northernmost countries’), which investigated the Slav presence in the Peloponnese (1843). This was essentially a reaction to a study published earlier, in 1830, by the German philologist Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790-1861), who basically claimed that modern Greeks were not racially descended from the ancient Greeks, but instead of Slav origin (Gourgouris 1996: 141; Livianos 2008: 259). The legacy of Classical antiquity was thus portrayed as belonging to the west, of which modern Greeks were not a part:

Fallmerayer’s claim... that massive Slavic invasions of the Byzantine Empire had led to the racial disappearance of the Greek population of the Peloponnese came as a stupendous shock to the newly minted Greek nationalism. His theories attacked many targets: by depicting the Greeks of his day as descendants from Slavs, he not only deprived modern Greeks of their foremost source of pride and equated them with ‘lesser breeds’ like the Slavs, but removed their European credentials, as well. For if they are not the linear descendants of ‘the Glory that was Greece’, then they had no real place in European civilizations. The entire ideological *credo* of both the Greeks and the European philhellenism seemed to be suddenly turning into a castle of mud, swept over by the Slavic tidal wave of the Middle Ages (Livianos 2008: 262).

Considering the unequaled impact of this work upon the development of Neohellenic national culture, the fact that it was not translated into Greek for 150 years testifies in itself to the practically hysterical resistance that greeted it. Indeed, within the traditional domain of modern Greek letters, the name *Fallmerayer* has achieved a virtually Satanic signification (Gourgouris 1996: 141).

For the next few decades, Greeks responded to the aforementioned ‘challenge’ in a number of ways. An immediate consequence of Fallmerayer’s execration was the “sudden flowering of folklore studies, history, philosophy and language studies, and ‘studies of character and customs’; all central to the institution of modern Greek national culture” (Koundoura 2007: 90). Scientists and intellectuals were thus called on to produce the ‘symbolic capital’ that would successfully demonstrate the link between the Greeks of ‘today’ and those of the distant past (Hamilakis & Yalouri 1999); as Livianos rightly points out, in this particular historical conjuncture, “the Greek national and historical imagination was accordingly recast, and embarked on a process that would transform the Bulgarians from harmless peasants and good Christians into blood-thirsty barbarians” (Livianos 2008: 259; *see also* Livianos 2003).

All foregoing efforts however, did not end up sufficiently bridging the gaps of recent and distant history. In 1852, the historian Spyridon Zampelios expressed the hope that the “scattered and torn pieces of our history” would eventually “be articulated and acquire completeness and unity” (*cited in* Livaniou 2008: 260, 264). In a similar vein, in 1872 the philosopher Petros Vrailas-Armenis claimed that for fully appreciating the historical past of Greece it would be necessary to examine “the ways Greece is related to its preceding Oriental World, the influence it exercised on the Romans, its relation to Christianity, what happened to Greece in the Middle Ages, in which ways Greece contributed to the Renaissance, how it contributed to contemporary civilization, how and why Greece survived till our times although it was enslaved, how it resurrected itself, what is its mission today” (Vrailas-Armenis 1972: 4).

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos embarked on the exploration of all these themes and question and he ultimately managed to accomplish the task of producing a ‘totalizing’ history (Gourgouris 1996: 253; *see also* Dimaras 1986). In 1851, he became Professor of History in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and almost a decade later, in 1860, published the monumental work *History of the Hellenic Nation from the Ancient Times Until the Modern*, in which he brought under a single narrative several chronological phases of the nation. Largely drawing upon the work of Spyridon Zampelios, Paparrigopoulos essentially argued that there was a direct and unbroken history of the Greek nation, or *ethnos*, divided into three phases, i.e. Classical, Byzantine and Modern, each of which built upon the other:

The constitution of the “unity” of Greek history also created its narrative form. The innovation in Paparrigopoulos’ work lies in the fact that it reifies Greek history, and organizes it around a main character, giving a different meaning to each period. He introduces the terms *First Hellenism*, *Macedonian Hellenism*, *Christian Hellenism*, *Medieval Hellenism*, *Modern Hellenism*. The First Hellenism was ancient Hellenism, that is the Classical Hellenism that declined after the Peloponnesian Wars. It was succeeded by Macedonian Hellenism, which was actually “a slight transformation of the first Hellenism”. This one was followed by Christian Hellenism, which was later replaced by Medieval Hellenism, which brought Modern Hellenism to life in the thirteenth century (Liakos 2008: 210).

How each Hellenism was defined and distinguished from other ‘versions’ related to the “historical order”, or as Liakos explains, the “mission” or the “final aim”. In effect, Paparrigopoulos had constructed a thoroughly modernist historical scheme, “a teleological sequence” for Greek national history “with long-term consequences”, the latter being the Greek nation’s “contribution to world history” (Liakos 2008: 210-11). Under this scheme, Greeks could profess to be both eastern and western, at once laying claim to the legacy of ancient Greece as well as the Byzantine Orthodox Christian tradition. And although “his predecessors” employed “the third-person in referring to their object”, Paparrigopoulos imposed and used extensively “we” and “us” in order to describe all ‘Greeks’ of the past; by doing so, he portrayed the readers (and also encouraged them to perceive themselves) as trans-historical national *subjects* (Liakos 2008: 208). His appropriation of Byzantine history changed the content of Greek national identity on yet another level: essentially, Paparrigopoulos transformed the narrative “from one that had been imported” by foreign scholars “into one that was produced locally” (Liakos 2008: 208):

This modification acquired the features of a “revolt” against a view of the national self that had been imposed on Greece by European classicism (Liakos 2008: 208).

The shift of the centre of the writing of national history from outside to inside the nation, as well as the move from intellectual elites to the ordinary people, is the attempt to romanticize and popularize national history (Liakos 2008: 209).

In view of the above, it could be argued that Paparrigopoulos outlined the modern Greek heritage: he created an image of unity for the Greek past and, of equal importance, a sense of unity amongst modern Greeks; for all these reasons he was honoured as “national historian” (Dimaras 1986; Koundoura 2007: 88-95; Liakos 2008: 208-9; Livianos 2008: 258). His curatorial work at the National Historical Museum forms yet another explicit manifestation of his greater nationalist vision.

The curatorial agenda

As Psycharis famously declared in *My Journey* (1888): “A nation in order to become a nation requires two things: to enlarge its frontiers and to create its own literature” (*cited in* Shannan-Peckham 2001: 52). At a symbolic level, it could be argued that both Paparrigopoulos and the HESG achieved this twofold aim through the organization of the ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’. On the one hand, the exhibition did indeed strive to extend the temporal frontiers and enlarge the ‘historical space’ of the Greek nation by broadening its scope so to include the period(s) prior and after the Revolution. On the other hand, by imbuing the nationalist narrative with additional stories, images, materials, memories and experiences “from periods between the Classical Age and the Greek revolt” (Liakos 2008: 208), the exhibition produced a novel visual narrative which further reinforced the public’s perception of the Greek past as a continuous, undisrupted and linear historical sequence.

Following the Greek confrontation of Fallmerayer’s theories and the awakening of a systematic interest in the history of Byzantium (both being by-products of Paparrigopoulos wider intellectual project), the study of ‘ordinary people’ and their lives (i.e. folkloric studies, *Laografia*) became a widely recognized and a highly promising research field in Greece at the time (Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1978: 52-57). The premises of this new discipline were basically “to prove that the Greeks of the nineteenth century were the direct descendants of the ancient Greeks” and to recognize “elements of such continuity in the modern Greek folk culture” (Livianos 2008: 263; *see also* Herzfeld 1982: 75-96, 97-122). Nikolaos Politis, founder of the HESG but, interestingly, also of modern Greek folk studies (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 69), considered as an issue of pivotal importance the search for “kinship between our own manners and customs and those of the ancient Hellenes” (*cited in* Herzfeld 1982: 101; *see also* Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1978: 127):

Within this framework, the role of the modern Greek customs became an issue of paramount importance in the second half of the nineteenth century, for they were treated primarily as “survivals” of ancient Greece offering “living proof” of the unbroken line that connected the “ancients” with the “moderns” (Livianos 2008: 263).

The object of the folklorist was to identify “certain elements of modern culture as fossilized relics of ancient Greek culture. In this sense, too, there was a link with geography and geology, which strove to uncover interred histories. Folklorists, no less than geologists who delved into the physical substrata, strove to disinter the remnants of the nation’s buried pre-history; what Politis termed “the continuation of a former life”. Folklore’s aim was to affirm what Drosinis, employing a geological metaphor, called “the granite-like foundations of [Greek] moral and spiritual authority”. Just as fossils were employed as a means of

reconstructing a geological history, so the study of folklore was conceived as a way of reconstructing an ancient cultural heritage (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 70).

Folklore thus [became] a truly national discipline, because it [told] the Nation: “Know Thyself”... In particular, Greek folklore [helped] our national philology and ethnography both ancient and modern, to demonstrate their continuity and similarity over the ages and strengthen in this manner, the reputation of our people and our Nation in the eyes of the international intellectual community (Loukatos 1978: 291-2).

The ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’ reflected many of the foregoing ideal(s). At the same time, it set as its aim that these ideals (as well as symbolisms and values) were fully apprehended (and appreciated) by a wide variety of target groups. Historical education constituted “a prerequisite” but also operated as a vehicle for the “nationalization of the masses” (Liakos 2008: 209). Accordingly, along with the Society’s obvious concern for the development of an archive of written sources, historical documents and publications (Lappas 1982: 54-56) aimed for academic/intellectual/scientific ‘consumption’, HESG also laid particular emphasis upon establishing sound communicative bridges with the wider public. From a very early stage, the Museum developed an explicit educational orientation and a wide spectrum of strategic actions (i.e. free access to the collection for teachers and pupils while at times, also to the whole body of visitors). Equally noteworthy is the emphasis laid on symbolic manifestations of the value accorded to education and accessibility, as exemplified by the decision made by the private tutors of Andreas and Christophoros, the children of King George, to bring the ‘royal heirs’ to the museum in order to further enhance their knowledge of Greek history (Lappas 1982: 25).

Of equal interest is that the *Etairia* sought to guarantee a more solid foundation for the relation developed between the collection and the wider public, through the construction of a profoundly sentimental narrative; the latter was based on the display of a wide array of materials and items that could somehow trigger emotional and affective reaction. *Estia*, an Athenian journal of the 19th century portrays this tendency very eloquently: '[in the museum, one may find] furniture touched by the hands of our great fathers...'; 'while [our great fathers] were preparing the conditions for the resurrection of Greece, [these furniture, these materialities] acted as humble but precious supporters of great thinkers and great ideas' (Lappas 1982: 16). These venerable relics implied “a moment of death, mourning and melancholy” but also gave “the beat for the successive renaissances, revivals, re-evolutions, re-formations”, in other words, all “concepts of a new beginning” (Liakos 2008: 208). Finally, another indicative example may be drawn from the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the museum. The author Z. Papantoniou delivered a speech at the *Stegi Aporon Korassidon*, arguing that the lack of space in this particular phase of the museum's history, brought to mind a storage area, a 'dark space' highly reminiscent of the ‘dark ages’ of the Ottoman rule. The need for a new building for the HESG collection constituted therefore a symbolic call for 'light and revolution'. The coming out of the dark of the collection was essential, like the revolution itself (Lappas 1982: 32-34).

Another issue of cardinal importance with regard to the ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’ is the conscious and explicit investment on behalf of the curator and the Society as a whole, in establishing a direct correlation between the HESG collection and Greek Orthodoxy. More specifically, the very vocabulary employed to describe the collection made obvious reference to a “national frame of meaning” which incorporated, essentially through a process of

cultural syncretism (Stewart 1994), dominant “religious notions”, foundational principles and ecclesiastic rituals of the Orthodox doctrine. Intrinsically, this constituted yet another strategy for bringing the public closer to the museum and the exhibition. For instance, as already mentioned earlier, when S. Lambros proposed to the Mayor of Athens the organization of the exhibition at the *Polytechnion*, he also claimed that the latter would lionize Greek *Paliggenesia* (i.e. regeneration-renaissance), a term which “evokes the Christian notion of Resurrection after the Fall” (Hamilakis 2007: 84). The notions of the “Fall” as well as “death and resurrection so common in Christian tradition”, occupied a prominent role in the Greek national narrative and were also addressed through the museum narrative: put simply, what the visitors of the HESG Collection could experience in full measure upon arrival in the area of the exhibition was how “after the Fall”, the Greek nation resurrected “itself in its former glory” (Hamilakis 2007: 84). Equally indicative is the use of the word ‘holy’ in the very title of the 1884 exhibition at the National History Museum, essentially implying that the ‘survival’ of the Greek Nation and its people through time constituted a sacred battle. Also noteworthy, is that at the centre of the main room of the exhibition, a large inscription was placed, inscribed with the words ‘Sanctum of the liberators of the Greek Nation’ (Lappas 1982: 16) in an obvious attempt to add further force to the ecclesiastic ‘aura’ of the museum collection. Finally, Lappas reports several interesting religious terms and/or expressions found in documents written by members of the HESG: in one of those it is mentioned that ‘by entering [the museum] visitors could breathe the air of freedom and experience a pure enthusiasm of patriotism, a feeling comparable to the holy communion (*iera metalipsi*)’ (Lappas 1982: 24). Lappas himself characterizes the HESG collection as the ‘immaculate treasure of the Greek Nation’ (*abrantos thisavros*) (Lappas 1982: 26). Moreover, the 1954 exhibition catalogue uses the term ‘the Holy of the Race’ (*ta Agia tis Fylis*) to describe the museum’s exhibits (Lappas 1982: 36) while in 1887, the Ephor, K. Rados calls the museum ‘a shrine’ (*iero proskynima*) (Lappas 1982: 21). All the above information indicates how the ceremonial elements of Orthodox Christianity were adopted by both the curators and the visitors of the collection while the actual exhibits of the HESG collection were supposed to be approached in a manner very similar to the “worshipping of Christian icons” (Hamilakis 2007: 84).

A final significant observation concerning the ‘Exhibition of the Monuments of the Holy Struggle’ stems from the surplus of emphasis accorded to the heroic image. During the late stages of the 19th century, ‘warriors’, ‘heroes’ and ‘frontiersmen’ living on turbulent borders were celebrated throughout Europe (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 49-61); only a few years earlier than the exhibition, Y. Sathas and E. Legrand published *Diyenis Akritis*, “the story of the eponymous Byzantine warrior”, “who fought to preserve the Hellenic Christian state of Byzantium from the ceaseless incursions, raids and oppression of harsh tyrants and brigands of another race, to uphold and extend freedom and justice for the people” (*cited in* Shannan-Peckham 2001: 51). For N. Politis, the Akritic epic was “the national epic of the modern Greeks” (*cited in* Shannan-Peckham 2001: 52) and stresses emphatically the following:

To put the matter in its appropriately proud context, in *Diyenis Akritis* the desires and ideals of the Hellenic nation reach their peak, because in this man the long centuries of ceaseless struggle by the Hellenic against the Islamic world are symbolized (*cited in* Shannan-Peckham 2001: 51).

From the 1880s, analogies were increasingly drawn between “Diyenis’ heroic exploits” and the “heroic deeds” of the War of Independence (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 52). The commemoration of 1820 and its heroes, “who against all odds” carved “an independent Greek Kingdom out of the Ottoman Empire”, merged with an idealization and more general affirmation of the values of “masculine bravery”:

The celebration of the... frontiersman as a protector of national Greek space was thus bound up with a nostalgia for the heroic struggle for independence and with a concomitant desire to regain the impetus for expansion. In this sense, the move to the frontier marked a journey back through temporal layers to an ‘original’ heroic history (Shannan-Peckham 2001: 53).

For the above reasons, the Society had exhibited a great degree of concern for the collection of weapons that became literally personified: for instance, the quest for all implements and weaponry setting up the complete armour of T. Kolokotronis, hero of the Greek Revolution, was a long-term project for the HESG (Lappas 1982, Fig. 5). At the same time, flags bearing the blood of heroes (Mazarakis-Ainian 2007), the heroes' weapons as well as weapons collected after the defeat of the enemy were popular targets for the HESG but also seemed to have acted as special poles of attraction for the public. The heroic image was further enhanced by individual portraits as well as paintings depicting scenes from the revolution.

The National Archaeological Museum, Athens

After the liberation and the founding of the modern Greek state, new legislation and novel institutions were instituted by the first Governor of Greece (between 1827-1831), Ioannis Kapodistrias to promote the protection and study of the past (Kaltsas 2007: 15):

[In 1829] just weeks before Kapodistrias decreed the creation of a National Museum (*Ethnikon Mouseion*), to be housed in an Orphanage in Aegina, we have a most remarkable document, signed by the Interim Commissioner of Elis, Panayiotis A. Anagnostopoulos, and addressed to the inhabitants of that prefecture. It is written in strong, unequivocal language. It begins by defining the word “Museum” (“the place where antiquities are deposited and safe-guarded”). It then offers an intensive definition of “antiquities” (“old things [*palaiotites*], those, that is, which are works of ancestral Greeks and were preserved below or above ground”) and continues with an extensive definition (a long list of things that constitute antiquities). Last, it identifies the significance of antiquities for the people and it specifies in 11 articles the duties of citizens and government vis-à-vis such antiquities. Article 6 absolutely prohibits the sale of antiquities, “only the Nation is the possessor and buyer of all antiquities” (Fotiadis 2004: 84).

In order to implement this new legislative regime, the Greek Archaeological Service was founded in 1834. For the first two years it was under the direction of a northern German archaeologist, Ludwig Ross (1806–59), who also held the chair of archaeology at the University of Athens until 1843. Ross was eventually cast out from the Archaeological Service because of his arrogant attitude towards his Greek colleagues, particularly towards his superior Alexander Rangavis, and his subordinate, Kyriakos Pittakis (1798–1863) (Diaz-Andreu 2007). Rangavis and Pittakis subsequently published the first official archaeological journal *Archaiologiki Ephimeris* while also founded the Archaeological Society in Athens, a city that attracted a surplus of interest ‘owing to its monuments’ (Gran-Aymerich 1998: 47). In September 1832, after the assassination of Kapodistrias (1831), the Administrative Committee, which had in the meantime, undertaken

state governance, assigned Stamatis Kleanthis and Edward Scaubert to draw a master plan of Athens, “which had to be comparable to the ancient glory and brilliance of this city and worthy of the century that we live in” (*cited in* Kaltsas 2007: 15). The restoration of ancient monuments in Athens “that proceeded through the remaining 19th century”, entailed “the meticulous removal from archaeological sites of almost every ruin deemed un-Hellenic” (Fotiadis 2004: 85). Along with this clearing, “neoclassicism was also implemented in architecture as a corrective means, a way of re-instilling into national character its long ago departed worth” (Fotiadis 2004: 88-9).

We should recall that 19th century Greeks were routinely compared (by themselves and by others) to their classical ancestors, only to be consistently found inferior, wanting in every respect, contaminated by shameful oriental manners. Classical antiquity thus came to be experienced much of the time as a *loss*, an *absence* amid present day life... [Neoclassicism] promised to offer what the present was thought to lack (Fotiadis 2004: 89).

In 1834, the first archaeological Law set out the establishment and construction of a *Central Public Museum* for antiquities in Athens and after a series of failed attempts to assign the museum design and building to various architects, the current location was proposed and the construction of the museum began in 1866 based on the plans designed by architects Ludwig Lange and Panagiotis Kalkos (Kaltsas 2007: 18). The cornerstone of the museum was laid on October 1866 in the presence of King George as well as numerous governmental and clerical officials. Subsequently, the museum underwent several architectural modifications; first, the architect Ernst Ziller used for the museum’s façade, a design he had created originally for the museum in Olympia (1899); between the years 1903-1906, the architect Anastasios Metaxas added three halls to the building; finally, another section with two internal courts was added by the architect G. Nomikos between 1932-1939, thus offering the museum enough space for additional exhibition venues, storage areas, offices and workshops (Kaltsas 2007: 20)..

Kaltsas describes quite eloquently the situation that was about to emerge in the following years, the period of the Second World War:

But when everything was ready for the great change and a new arrangement of the exhibits, World War II broke out. The antiquities were moved for security reasons, some to hiding places in caves in hills around Athens, the valuables to the underground vaults of the Bank of Greece and the remainder to the basement of the new building where they were covered with sand. To hide the large sculptures, the floors of many halls in the old building were dug up and underground hiding places were created in which the sculptures were buried (Kaltsas 2007: 20).

During the War, the spaces of the museum were occupied by various public services (i.e. State Orchestra, Post Office and Ministry of Health). During the subsequent period of the Civil War, space was provided within the museum for holding prisoners. At that time, bombings caused widespread damage and “when all these misfortunes of war had ended, virtually the entire building required general repairs” (Kaltsas 2007: 21). Meanwhile, the painstaking task of digging up the hidden antiquities for conservation and re-exhibition also began. In 1946, a small-scale exhibition was held in a restricted area of the museum, for the rest of the building was still undergoing major repairs. The post-war exhibition, a work bearing the curatorial signature of Christos and Semni Karouzos, was regarded as “almost pioneering, since it expressed a new viewpoint from the one hitherto applied by all museums” (Kaltsas 2007: 21; *see also* Demakopoulou 1997: 18-9).

The ‘Sculptures Collection’

The nucleus of the ‘Sculptures Collection’ was formed in 1874, when representative ancient Greek sculptures long based in temporary archaeological collections in Athens began to be transferred to the Archaeological Museum, which, at the time, was still under construction. A major contribution to the enrichment of ‘The ‘Sculptures Collection’, which includes approximately 16000 works dating from the 7th century BC to the 4th century AD, was made by the gradual acquisition of antiquities unearthed by excavations or purchased by the Archaeological Society of Athens but also through the transfer to the National Museum of numerous sculptures from the provinces of Greece (i.e. Attica, Central Greece, the Peloponnese, the Aegean islands, Thessaly, West Greece, Macedonia, Thrace and the island of Cyprus). The collection consisted of statues, funerary, votive, and legal reliefs, architectural elements, sarcophagi, busts, altars, statues of animals, Hermaic stelae etc. The display was arranged in chronological order to point up the curatorial ‘vision’, i.e. the stylistic developmental trajectory leading from the austere and conventional shapes of the Archaic period to the realistic and dramatic Hellenistic figures as well as the personalized facial features of Roman portraiture (Kaltsas 2007).

The first temporary exhibition in the National Archaeological Museum occupied only three rooms in the new wing. The openings took place on January the 14th, 1948 (Petraikos 1995: 109). By September 1950, six extra rooms were made accessible to the public. For the curators, large-scale and time-consuming repairs, which were still taking place within the architectural premises of the museum, formed the main criterion for deciding which areas could be used for exhibition purposes (Zervoudaki 1997: 31). Addressing all those who were impatient and anxious for the re-opening of the museum, S. Karouzou wrote:

Museums have always been works of patience and elaboration, because they are made also for future generations and not solely the present ones (*cited in Zervoudaki 1997: 31 my translation*).

On that basis, the first two rooms in the upper storey of the new wing were opened in 1955; in 1956, the hall accommodating 7th century and 6th century BC pottery was made accessible; in 1957, the Altar Room, the great central hall with the Mycenaean exhibits (along with the side halls housing the display of prehistoric finds) were also ready. The same year, the Stathatos Collection and five more rooms with archaic sculpture were also opened. In 1959, the opening of the Karapanos Hall is reported; in 1964 the halls of the Youth of Antikythera and the bronze hoards from the Acropolis and Olympia were put on display. Finally, in 1966, three halls with representative examples of Hellenistic sculpture were inaugurated (Petraikos 1995: 109-110).

To understand how Karouzou envisioned his curatorial work at the National Archaeological Museum (and particularly ancient Greek art) we need to take a closer look at one of his speeches:

‘Some would wonder which principles were adopted by those who made this museum for the exhibition and ordering of antiquities. The answer is that those responsible for the new museum have not read any books concerning what is commonly referred to today as “Museum Studies” for there existed no such texts. Therefore, they did not follow any *a priori* principle, apart from one: how to elevate in importance every single ancient art piece, how to unveil the beauty of each piece and let it speak, at times alone and at times along with its group, without being bothered [burdened?] by its environment, i.e. the architectural building or its ‘colouring’. A necessary precondition however for the success of the project is (a) [for

the curator] to have a thorough knowledge of the museum material (b) a deep understanding of the history of ancient art, within which the rich material of the museum occupies a very specific position and (c) to have a broader expertise in the history of modern art. The familiarization with the history of art allows the researcher to formulate the necessary aesthetic criterion, which will prevent him from unforgivable mistakes' (*cited in Petrakos 1995: 110, my translation*).

The Curators: Christos and Semni Karouzos

Christos Karouzos was born in Amphissa in 1900 while he completed his studies in philology and archaeology at the University of Athens. Already from childhood, he became actively involved with the Educational League (*Ekpaideftikos Omilos*), in which many leading figures of *demoticism* took part (i.e. Alexandros Delmouzos, Dimitris Glinos) (Petrakos 1995: 26). 'Demoticism' was a language movement of the early 20th century that was opposed to the use of *Katharevousa*, i.e. the archaistic idiom officially taught and spoken but little understood by the masses of the Greek population. At the University, Karouzos met his future wife Semni and his future rival, the archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos. Christos Tsountas, Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at the *Kapodistriakon* was his teacher, a person that he respected immensely (Petrakos 1995: 21). In 1919, Karouzos passed successfully the exams for the Archaeological Service and two years later also received his university degree. Initially he was transferred to the Ephorate of Thebes and later to Attica, Thessaly, Sparta and the Cyclades. It is noteworthy that while still in Thebes, he compiled a catalogue for the town's museum that was written in *dimotiki* as opposed to *katharevousa* (Petrakos 1995: 42-44). The ministry of Cultural Affairs literally sabotaged this initiative by not buying any copies of the museum guide (Petrakos 1995: 37)

Karouzos was greatly committed to the institutional mechanism of the Archaeological Service, despite the fact that he had become repeatedly involved in 'wars' and rivalries with his colleagues (Petrakos 1995). In one of his writings, he mentions:

I believe that archaeology in Greece (as in Italy) has –not trivially- allowed the tight and inextricable connection between scientific research and the continuous physical contact with the antiquities. Outside of this [relationship] there is no salvation for the Greek researcher... Even among the foreigners, the two truly big names, A. Furtwängler and E. Buschor,... also confirm this [statement]. There are of course also some foreigners who have to offer, even without this precondition, valuable insights to the science [of archaeology]. But those come first of all from an educational and cultural background entirely different from the Greek one; and after all, I still fear that their work still appears to be missing the 'optimum and primum' (*'mega kalon kai proton'*). This fundamental precondition for the [potential] contribution of the [work of the] Greek researcher, namely the unproblematic and continuous physical contact with antiquities, can be guaranteed only through his [sic] presence in the Archaeological Service.

Those who remain in the Service sacrifice, without doubt, both time and mental strength as well as their nerves in order to rise up to the challenge, namely to save, protect and praise the antiquities. For this purpose, that they consider sacred, they are obliged to be also an accountant or a bureaucrat (even though the Service made sure in the last few years to ease this burden in every possible way). [Archaeologists of the Service, however] do not feel that [in doing so], they manifest infidelity with respect to the mission that they chose as their destination, first of all because the price they have to pay is minute when weighted against the happiness which I developed above, and also because in reality, the obligations in the public sector never prevented those who wished to engage in science from fertilizing in full scientific spirit their work as public servants. Even the so-called 'rivalries' are not personal but instead a difference expressed at the level of intellect; above all, they are not 'internal'

affairs of the service, but instead artificially cultivated from outside' (cited in Petrakos 1995: 171-172, *author's translation*).

In 1928, both Christos Karouzos and his future wife Semni were awarded a Humboldt Fellowship to study Classical and Roman archaeology at the universities of Munich and Berlin. Additional courses on Western art, and their enthusiastic participation in the rich cultural life of these cities broadened their interpretations of ancient art. Among Karouzos' teachers were P. Wolters, K. Weickert, E. Schwartz and W. Pinder (Petrakos 1995: 32). As Semni puts it, through their acquaintance with the masterpieces of Renaissance and modern art in Germany and Rome, 'a new romantic passion' for Classical antiquities 'warmed' them (S.Karouzos 1984: 22 *cited in* Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 240).

The close association between Greek archaeologists of the Archaeological Service and the German academia was consciously cultivated by both sides. It is worth mentioning at this point that during the 1950s and 1960s, German scholarships for Greek archaeology students and graduates were literally controlled by Christos Karouzos (partly because of his close friendship with Emil Kunze, Director of the German Institute until 1967) (Petrakos 1995: 174).

On their return to Greece in 1930, Christos Karouzos and Semni got married. From 1928 to 1933, Karouzos devoted his attention to the study of the newly discovered statue of Poseidon of Artemision. The publication of the results in the *Archaeologikon Deltion* (1933) is considered to be 'an exemplary analytical study concerning the problem of the relationship between the statue, the artist and the viewer' (Petrakos 1995: 33). As opposed to his wife Semni, Karouzos was not considered very productive at the level of scientific publishing (Petrakos 1995: 177). His main concern however, appears to have been, every time, to meticulously analyse his object of study by combining information from various sources and scientific fields (history of art, ancient written sources, modern literature, philosophy etc).

The German influence in his work is more than evident. This is particularly the case as regards his analysis of Poseidon of Artemision but similar trends may also be detected in other writings.

[1] 'Perikalles agalma exepoiise ouk adais' (very rough translation: 'A statue of absolute beauty was not made by someone without an idea', *Περικαλλές Άγαλμα εξεποίησ'ουκ αδαής*). (1946). This article was a contribution to a *Festschrift* for Christos Tsountas. Here, Karouzos examines the 'aesthetics' of archaic Greece. For this purpose, he collected epigraphic and philological sources (ancient poetry and philosophy) and re-constructed a chronological sequence of stylistic and aesthetic development, illuminating "the ways of seeing and feeling of early Greeks" (*cited in* Petrakos 1995: 63). This was considered a pioneering study by many distinguished scholars, amongst them his teacher from the years in Germany, Ernst Buschor (Petrakos 1995: 64-65).

[2] 'Aristodikos' (1956). Karouzos began to study the statue from the time of its discovery in 1944. He completed the work in 1956. The full title of the publication is 'From the History of Attic Sculpture with a focus on late Archaic times and the funerary statues'. The work combines once again ancient texts, epigraphic material and archaeological data as in the case of the *Perikalles Agalma* (Petrakos 1995: 116-117). The publication was dedicated to Ernst Buschor (Petrakos 1995: 65)

[3] 'Tilavges mnima' (very rough translation: 'Bright monument', *Τηλαυγές μνήμα*). This is the last great publication of Karouzos and concerns the archaeological study of the funerary inscription of Myrrina, the first priestess of the Temple of Athena Niki (National Archaeological Museum, catalogue no: 3716) (Petrakos 1995: 173). Beginning with the detailed examination of

the fragmentary inscription, Karouzos proceeds with the identification of the artist (an underlying theme in most of his publications) and ends up with a complete interpretation of 4th century BC attic funerary relief sculpture.

Petrakos describes quite eloquently, Karouzos' principles and method as regards Greek classical art:

'For those who possess a knowledge of Greek archaeology and science, Karouzos' spirit [influence] is obvious in the ways [we] examine Greek monuments of art. This is put very well by Schefold: "First fundamental characteristic of his work is the Greek sense of the 'individual', a sense which is expressed in the themes he undertakes for analysis in his writings. Almost all stem from his encounter with a great piece of art". This has been the main criterion in his selection of themes of study as well as the ideology that he cultivated in his mind. Whether an isolated work of art or a group, there had to be within them what he called "an authentic meaning". This stance is developed in all of his studies but it is best exemplified, as Schefold stresses, in *Tilanges Mnima*. [Karouzos] seeks to understand in depth an important monument of art while through this description and interpretation he also illuminates many [other examples]' (Petrakos 1995: 173, *my translation*).

Even though he is not considered particularly productive in terms of scientific publications, Karouzos' presence was highly prominent in journals and newspapers of his time. Also important is the fact that many of his studies, even though not officially submitted for publication, could be considered as complete works, covering a wide spectrum of subjects (i.e. translations of ancient Greek texts, translations of philosophical works, commentaries on ancient texts etc) (for a complete overview of his work, *see* Petrakos 1995).

Amongst them, we find the translation of 'Ippias Meizon' (Ἰππίας Μείζων) by Plato, a work he considered highly intriguing, for it gave him the opportunity to study pre-Socratic aesthetics and to translate a rigorous ancient Greek text in modern Greek, *dimotiki*, "our national language" (Petrakos 1995: 71-72). Equally important is his commentary on Dimitris Glinos' translation in *dimotiki* of Platos' 'Sofistis' (Σοφιστής). This commentary is essentially a more general assessment of Glinos' work and in particular his Marxist understanding of social life and history. Glinos describes the philosophical foundations of his approach as 'dynamic realism' but Karouzos explains why it is more suitable to use the term 'dialectic materialism' (Petrakos 1995: 73). The commentary was published under the pseudonym Christos Logaris and therefore eluded the attention of the wider circle of archaeologists and government officials; this was an obvious attempt on Karouzos' behalf to conceal somehow his interest for (and adherence to?) Marxism.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1940, Karouzos and his wife Semni along with their colleague Ioanna Constantinou and the philhellenist Austrian scholar Otto Walter undertook the project of hiding the artefacts of the National Archaeological Museum. In fact, Karouzos participated in similar projects in the museums of Thebes, Kerameikos, Piraeus and Chalkis (Petrakos 1995: 58). When the Germans finally occupied Athens in 1941, both Christos and Semni Karouzos resigned from their membership of the German Archaeological Institute and this was considered a profoundly symbolic gesture (Petrakos 1995: 61-63).

In 1941, Karouzos was appointed Director of the National Archaeological Museum. This was his main dream and ambition from the very early stages of his career (for a detailed discussion *see* Petrakos 1995). During the subsequent year of the Civil War (1948), Karouzos had to resign from his position for repeatedly serious concerns were raised from several state officials and colleagues

as regards his political/ideological beliefs (Karouzos 1995: 80). Despite the attempts to link Karouzos (one way or another) with the communist party, he was eventually reappointed to the directorship of the museum to undertake, along with his wife, the rearrangement of the buried objects. With Yannis Miliadis, Nikolaos Zaphiropoulos and Marinos Kalligas, Karouzos published in 1946 a small book entitled *Zimiai ton Arhaiotiton* (i.e. 'Damages of Antiquities'), where all damages that the antiquities suffered during the war are described (Petraikos 1995: 79). Reinstallation of the exhibits was made possible through reference to and employment of the meticulous inventories of the museum's sculptures, bronzes and vases that Semni Karouzos had earlier compiled (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 243).

In an official letter which was addressed to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (November 1944), Karouzos stated that all our great museums (Athens, Delphi, Olympia, Delos, Herakleion) as well as the smaller ones were totally ruined and had to be re-made from scratch. This re-making however should not aim at the reconstruction of their older form; instead, it should be an enterprise that would ultimately satisfy the aesthetic and educational needs of contemporary people (Petraikos 1995: 77). Karouzos also stressed that archaeologists were "now obliged to produce serious intellectual work for ancient Greece for it to become for us [Greeks] a source of life, as it was and still is for the rest of Europe. The human values found within ancient Greek art [had] to fertilize the soul of our own people" (*cited in* Petraikos 1995: 78).

The complete reorganization of the National Museum, a long-term process was interrupted by the obligatory retirement of Semni in 1964 (Petraikos 1995: 50-52) (*see below*). Karouzos had another year to serve until his retirement. However, he was disqualified by the new bureaucracy within the Service and was moved from the post of museum director. Pressure and stress proved fatal for his health: he died from a heart attack in March 1967. A month later, on the 21st of April 1967, a military junta overthrew parliamentary democracy. Karouzos' rival, Spyridon Marinatos, who had been the General Director of Antiquities also during the Metaxas dictatorship before World War II, was reappointed by the junta, and was soon to fire all dissident archaeologists.

Semni Karouzos (1897-1994) was born in Tripolis and like Christos Karouzos, studied archaeology at the School of Philosophy, University of Athens (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 238-9). At the *Kapodistriakon*, Semni joined a group of 'young intellectuals including her future husband, Christos Karouzos' (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 239). Professor Christos Tsountas was a source of inspiration for Semni and a great influence as regards her decisions in archaeology. After her graduation, she acquired a curatorial position in the Archaeological Service and her first appointment as a curator was at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens in 1921 (Zervoudaki 1997: 26-7). The main research interest that she developed while holding this position was Attic pottery. Her connection and acquaintance with Ernst Buschor, the director of the German Archaeological Institute, Sir John Beazley, a prominent figure of ancient pottery studies, Gisela Richter, director of the Metropolitan Museum of New York and Emil Kunze, the excavator of Olympia in Peloponnese contributed greatly to the further enhancement of her research (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 240).

In 1928 Semni and Christos Karouzos were awarded a Humboldt Fellowship to study Classical and Roman archaeology at the universities of Munich and Berlin. Their enthusiastic participation in courses and seminars on topics pertinent to Western art but also the rich cultural life of these cities broadened their interpretative 'gaze' (Petraikos 1995: 32) As Semni states,

through her acquaintance with the masterpieces of the Renaissance as well as modern art in Germany and Rome, “a new romantic passion” for Classical antiquities “warmed” her heart (S. Karouzos 1984: 22, *cited in* Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 240). On their return to Greece, Semni Karouzos became Ephor of Antiquities and was appointed initially in Thessaly and then in the Argolid. In 1933, she returned to Athens and became head of the National Museum’s Pottery Collection (Zervoudaki 1997: 27), where she “devoted herself to the toilsome task of identifying, recording and displaying this vast material” while at the same time, “publishing extensively on ancient Greek ceramics” (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 241; *cf.* S.Karouzos 1954, 1956).

During Second World War, her main concern became the protection of the exhibits from the National Museum (Demakopoulou 1997: 18-9):

‘The moon was often still shining on the sky when I was leaving home to go to the Museum. When all the showcases were emptied we all gathered in the basement and there, Otto Walter came to comfort us. Some nice wives of guards were themselves wrapping objects, even the most valuable of them. It was with pride for our people that I was assured in the end of the war, when the boxes were opened and the antiquities received, that despite this fatally insufficient supervision not a single gold object, no precious gem was missing’ (S.Karouzos 1984: 32 *cited in* Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 241).

During the Civil War, she continued to work at the museum but Nikos Karouzos was forced to resign. Her husband eventually returned to his post and along with Semni they undertook the project of re-exhibiting the artefacts from the National Museum. This enterprise enjoyed international recognition and the couple was honoured by the universities of Lyon, Tübingen and Thessaloniki (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 243; *see also* Romiopoulou 1997). The complete re-organization of the National Museum was interrupted by the obligatory retirement of Semni in 1964, which was imposed by a new law concerning the age limit of civil servants (Petraikos 1995: 50). In 1967, during the military junta, Semni could not receive permission for access to the Museum’s study areas and her own research material and as a result, decided to leave the country. On her return to Greece, as Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou report:

‘[S]he was faced with the old accusation of being a communist and was refused the right of free movement. It was then that her British colleagues denounced this prohibition on the front page of the *Times* under the title “Passport refused”, where they stressed her and her husband’s scholarly and patriotic work. The military authorities were eventually forced to permit her departure’ (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 243).

With the end of junta and the subsequent re-establishment of democracy in 1974, Semni returned to her work and produced ‘some 20 monographs, more than 120 articles and numerous contributions in newspapers and literary magazines’ (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 243; *see also* Romiopoulou 1997: 44). As a retrospective comment as regards her life, she once claimed:

‘I cannot but consider it a good fortune, and be grateful to the benevolent fate that guided me to the study of ancient heritage...If some good instinct shows the way to the study of the ancient world, the reward is the strength that this study offers to people even at the hardest moments of life. Miserable are those colleagues who, not having anything to do at the end of their lives, become thirsty for honours and get lost in the pursuit of temporary and doubtful, superficial fame. There is one more thing that I learned from studying antiquity, that is, to value humanism’ (S.Karouzos 1984:51 *cited in* Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1998: 244).

The curatorial agenda

The work of both Christos and Semni Karouzos was deeply influenced by principles and ideals deriving from the German archaeological tradition. Johann Winckelmann in particular, seems to have played a highly significant role in the shaping of their image of antiquity (*cf.* Dyson 2006). With Winckelmann having contributed decisively to the shift of focus of classical archaeological research from Rome, where it had been positioned since the Renaissance, to Greece (Dyson 2006: 3-4), it comes as no surprise that the Karouzos ‘took advantage’ of this marked shift of perspective; this was essentially a strategic move exemplified both in their (regular) contact with German academia but also their work in the Archaeological Service (i.e. research, publications and curatorial work). At the same time, both supported vehemently the idea that the highest point in evolutionary art history had to be placed in classical Greece and its years of decline in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. This constituted a historical thesis and value judgment with a profound impact on the course of classical archaeology.

Echoes of Winckelmann’s work are traced first of all, in Karouzos’ attempt to synthesize and theorize the past by creating new frameworks for understanding ancient art. Like Winckelmann, they set as their prime aim the transformation of the study of classical art into a historical as well as evolutionary enterprise, examining ancient written sources in conjunction with the stylistic development of the Greek collections (for a detailed discussion, *see* Petrakos 1995). They also established the centrality of the Greek aesthetic and it is on that basis that they sought to reconstruct the historical trajectory/sequence of ancient art. This notion is confirmed by the fact that the National Archaeological Museum was primarily perceived as a ‘museum of art’, accommodating ‘artworks’ as opposed to mere ‘objects’.

Again in full accordance with the principles set by Winckelmann, the Karouzos were interested in far more than mere historical reconstruction; echoing the modernist paradigm (particularly as it became crystallized during the period of the Enlightenment), they sought truth in abstraction, in other words, in paradigms of absolute beauty that were embodied in ancient works like the statue of *Aristodikos*. Both Christos and Semni Karouzos’ efforts to find ideal beauty in high classical art reflected one of the ideological underpinnings of classical archaeology throughout its history. Already from the 18th century, Greek antiquity “receded beneath the exterior surface of things and the immediately perceptible, and had become an “inner reality”, hidden in the interior of things and people: a matter of (what the Enlightenment already called) *character*” (Fotiadis 2004: 89). After all, Winckelmann himself had argued that “authentic expression springs from inner sentiment” (*cited in* Fotiadis 2004: 89).

In order to be in a position to capture this “inimitable magic” (as once described by Humboldt) (Fotiadis 2004: 90), a new display strategy had to be introduced. In one of her writings, Semni Karouzos claims the following:

In order to rejoice the artwork itself, *in* itself, from every possible angle, as a work that happened once and thus impossible to be imitated, we want the [exhibit] to stand in front of our eyes in full honesty... Every medium of display aiming at the flaunting of a statue or a painting, as for instance... museum showcases filled to capacity, pompous statue bases, extensive use of gypsum etc. ought to be abandoned altogether. We need to focus on the artwork and not the media employed for its display. We enter a museum in order to learn but also be moved. From now on, the mind and the heart travel alongside each other” (*cited in* Zervoudakis 1997: 30).

To achieve this end, Christos and Semni Karouzou set as their main priority to liberate museum exhibits from the “ash-coloured Victorian sternness” that burdened them prior to the Second World War (*cited in Romiopoulou 1997: 41*). The symmetrical visual effect that the visitors encountered in earlier years as they entered the museum was essentially the product of the placing of exhibits in such fashion so as to resemble a totalizing setting; under such conditions however, the individuality of each art piece was thoroughly underrated. By way of contrast, the Karouzou’s vision was “asymmetrical” and yet, under this novel scheme, the exhibits managed to reclaim their original value; their details were highlighted and so was the personality of the artist and/or workshop that created them in the first place (*Romiopoulou 1997: 42*):

Ancient artworks, ought to be free-standing, self-contained, under diffused light, without furtive alternations and evocative shadings, honest, so as to appeal to (and also be understood by) the public (*cited in Zervoudakis 1997: 30*).

In practice, this agenda led to the following strategic actions: New showcases were ordered from England and Germany and similar ones were also fabricated in Athens while only a few of the imposing ‘heavy’ furniture of older times were kept (*Zervoudaki 1997: 33*). For the purposes of the ‘Sculptures Collection’, the high statue bases were placed by low ones (*Romiopoulou 1997: 42*). Finally, the captions of the exhibits were kept to a minimum; they were “brief, ripe and poetic texts” created by the museum artists, providing information on the corresponding chronological period, its “spirit”, its overall “contribution” and its “artistic achievements” (*Zervoudaki 1997: 35*). Additional comments were offered only in a limited number of cases, namely artworks that were considered of “extraordinary” importance (*Zervoudaki 1997: 35*).

For such an enterprise to be realized, the mastering of the “archaeological language”, the “deep knowledge of the archaeological material” and the “thorough understanding of affiliated fields” (Greek and Latin literature, philosophy, art history etc) were essential preconditions; Christos Karouzou had repeatedly stressed all foregoing parameters while both he and his wife provided vigorous support to the modernist vision of archaeology-as-science (for a detailed discussion *see Petrakos 1995*). More fundamentally, in projects like the ‘Sculptures Collection’, “the classical Greek accomplishment” was “posed as an ethical task in the present”; the Museum was not merely “a place where a nation safeguarded its ancestral achievements” but rather a “Temple of Aesthetic Education” (*Fotiadis 2004: 91*). Semni Karouzou repeatedly supported the premise that archaeological museums in Greece were “the main source of national and aesthetic education” while “our National Museum is something more: it is the School of our national education, a place where people realize that our classical ancestors are not a myth but a long surviving glory that fed and continues to shed light to the whole world” (*cited in Zervoudakis 1997: 32*).

“The sharing of “aesthetic education” its “continuing functioning, the functioning of civil community” and for that matter, the very “reproduction of the classical ideal” depended on archaeologists, who perceived of themselves as “a class of educated” (hence higher-order) “civil servants” (*Fotiadis 2004: 91*). The same holds true in the case of Christos and Semni Karouzou who were not only originating from upper to middle-class families but also constituted active members of various intellectual circles and Societies in Athens and beyond.

At the same time, the intention of the Karouzou to elevate in importance every single art piece in the exhibition and ‘let it speak for itself’ presupposed an “educated audience”. In general,

during the early stages of the 20th century, classical archaeology continued to appeal to the wider public, beyond the professors and antiquaries and this interest reflected the ongoing importance of Greece and Rome in the political/cultural ideologies of Europe; this ‘public’ however, essentially the bourgeois public, i.e. the newly emerging middle-class, had to be *knowledgeable* and *trained*. It is particularly noteworthy, in this respect, that Christos Karouzos’ first contact with education was in the context of the public seminar series at *Athinaion*, an event that took place at a private school, the College of Athens, with the aim of attracting very specific segments of the Athenian population (*cf.* Petrakos 1995). Highly illuminating is also the opinion expressed by Semni Karouzos, basically putting forward the premise that a visitor ought to enter the National Museum “prepared” for the experience: classical artworks are “full of sacredness” and characterized by “spiritual depth and creativity” (*cited in* Zervoudaki 1997: 35). For this reason, they cannot be approached and appreciated by a “tired visitor”, “who seeks to see all great artworks in a hurry”, and not “in a contemplative and ecstatic spirit”; instead, what they demand from the visitor is “time, persistence and focus” (*cited in* Zervoudaki 1997: 35). The contemplative, knowledgeable visitor was thus the target group of the ‘Sculptures Collection’; even if “modern man [sic] loaths *vita contemplative*, he has learnt to be an observer... [C]ontemplation may be more intriguing than knowledge but certainly not more interesting than observation” (*cited in* Zervoudaki 1997: 37).

Archaeological Museum of Volos, Thessaly

The Archaeological Museum of Volos (*Athanassakeion*) was built in 1909 with funds disposed by Alexis Athanassakis from the nearby village of Portaria, Pilion. The plans were drawn by the architects Skoutaris and Angelidis and the style of the building is neoclassical. The main reason for the undertaking of this project was the provision of a space for the storage and display of local finds, namely the district of Magnesia but also the broader Thessalian region. Initially the category of ‘local finds’ did not involve any prehistoric material whatsoever and concerned mainly (if not exclusively) items of the classical period. In fact, the famous funerary *stelae* from Dimitriada are taken to have triggered the establishment of a local museum at Volos along with Athanassakis’ own intention to request from the National Archaeological Museum of Athens the return of all (‘borrowed’) golden, silver and bronze artefacts to their place of origin, Thessaly (Chourmouziadi 2006: 49). By the late stages of the 1960s, the marked increase of archaeological finds coupled with the steadily growing body of empirical evidence (particularly from the Neolithic period), rendered necessary the spatial re-organization of the museum but this time, with a concern to also incorporate a section devoted to early prehistory. Since then, the *Athanassakeion* has been considered a provincial museum of fundamental archaeological importance, for the broader region of Thessaly remains, even until today, probably the most extensively investigated/ excavated area of Greece as regards Neolithic sites and corresponding material finds. Despite the fact that this is a museum which has never received any form of funding and/or financial support from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and/or *Archaeologiki Etaireia* (Chourmouziadi 2006: 49), it offers, nevertheless, a remarkable amount of empirical information of the highest value on early prehistoric life in the region.

The 'Neolithic Exhibition'

In 1968, shortly after Giorgos Chourmouziades was accorded a curatorial position at the Museum of Volos, he took the initiative of requesting from the Director of Antiquities to take over the organization of an exhibition concerning the archaeological material from the Thessalian sites of Sesklo, Soufli Magoula, Yediki and Achilleion. In an article submitted to the Greek archaeology journal *Archaeologikon Deltion*, he develops the problematique behind his decision to undertake this task:

The problems that had to be faced were not of aesthetic but rather of scientific nature...An effort was made to demonstrate... [that] the museum exhibits do not constitute a mere sum of excavation material, but instead representative elements of an important cultural/historical stage, in the course of which a transformation takes place from the human nomadic agony to the solidified conditions of a new 'political' life' (*cited in* Chourmouziadi 2006: 91, *my translation*).

Two years later, his highly innovative approach to museum exhibits is further exemplified by his decision to set up a 'special, large-scale museum case' in the *Athanassakeion* for the display of selected Neolithic figurines, with the selection being based upon purely educational ('didactic') criteria (Chourmouziadi 2006: 91). It is significant to mention at this point, that this was also the period during which Chourmouziades was conducting his research for his doctoral thesis, a pioneering reconfiguration of the role, function and socio-historical significance of Neolithic figurines. Right after the completion of his thesis and slightly before the publication of his book *To Neolithiko Dimini* (i.e. 'Neolithic Dimini', one of the most important –and extensively excavated– settlements in prehistoric Thessaly), the exhibition of the Neolithic finds at the *Athanassakeion* was also completed. Three years later, Chourmouziades published (in Greek) an article entitled 'An introduction to the ideologies of Greek Prehistory', raising explicitly and vigorously, his concerns on the most fundamental problem of traditional archaeological discourse: the lack of interest amongst his colleagues for an archaeology that would view critical analysis and interpretation as its essential epistemological foundation (Chourmouziadi 2006: 96). Both as an archaeologist and a museum curator, Chourmouziades thus sought to demonstrate, in every given opportunity, that past materialities ought to be viewed as the 'products of an essentially social activity' and not of 'individual sensitivity' (Chourmouziadi 2006: 96):

[Social relations] lead us to the identification of an ideological apparatus and [by extension] to ideology itself, for within these relationships objects become relativised (they acquire in other words, a historical character), they are relations 'on becoming', developing only through an ideology and for the sake of this ideology. These observations force me to believe that the material brought to light and at our disposal by excavation, cannot be assessed only with reference to its typological or chronological classification. When research stops at this point, it becomes arbitrarily indifferent in my opinion, to the possibilities offered from the prehistoric material itself and limits itself to monolithic empirical theorizations... This limitation does not bring research forward towards the direction of interpretation or the simple approach of the problems pertinent to the prehistoric community in its entirety...' (Chourmouziades 1978: 30-31).

By 1975, the room of the Neolithic finds at the *Athanassakeion* was completed along with the room of the reconstructions of ancient burials and funerary customs. The Neolithic exhibition occupied room 3, a spacious rectangular space at the right hand side of the main entrance. However, the realization of Chourmouziades' revisionist vision was limited to this space and no

further work was conducted in any other parts and/or collections of the museum (with the exception of the room of ‘funerary customs’). The remaining parts of *Athanasakeion* continued to operate along the lines of more standardized exhibition strategies, evidenced in the striking majority of museums of the post-world war era in Greece (Chourmouziadi 2006).

A reconstruction of the stratigraphic sequence from the excavation at Sesklo, which along with Dimini, constitutes one of the most important Neolithic settlements in Thessaly (and Greece for that matter), introduces the visitor to the complex stratigraphic narratives of the Greek Neolithic and concomitantly, the broader theme of the exhibition. A large-scale map of Thessaly, covering the north wall of the room in its entirety, depicts a distribution of Neolithic sites that have been either excavated or identified through surface survey.

Chourmouziades’ vision for the room’s spatial arrangement is particularly noteworthy (cf. Chourmouziadi 2006; Solomon 2008). Room 3 has not been treated as a neutral spatial canvas, a mere spatial container; the curator has intervened in the very shaping of the room by breaking its space into smaller sections and units through the employment of building materials that are of local origin. The construction of walls, platforms, benches and shelves at the *Athanasakeion* draws inspiration from Neolithic building techniques. The Neolithic ‘aesthetic’ is further exemplified by the use of wood, clay, textiles as well as subtle colours (like brown and ochre). In fact, the clay and stones used for the creation of the exhibition’s ‘setting’ originate from the Neolithic site of Sesklo itself. The exhibition is divided into themes, including architecture, diet and economy, tools and technology, pottery, religion and finally, the reconstruction of a burial context with its associated funerary paraphernalia.

The exhibited items are not placed in cases but instead on wall shelves, platforms as well as small niches opened upon the surface of the added walls. The conscious avoidance of technologies aiming at the protection of the exhibits (such as museum cases and the window glass ‘tactic’) is also worth mentioning at this point. Tools and pottery vessels of the Neolithic exhibition are displayed in conjunction with large-scale photos and drawings providing reconstructions of the original form and shape of the exhibited finds. The plethora of ‘images’ (be that the original artefacts or their visual reconstructions) is set in sharp contrast with the total lack of ‘words’. Throughout the exhibition, no captions were used as a means for providing (even minimal) explanatory comments hence some form of guidance to the visitor. In fact, by way of contrast to most Greek museums, the Neolithic exhibition at *Athanasakeion* does not ‘burden’ the visitor with any kind of archaeological terminology (chronological, typological or other). In order to prepare the museum audience for this unexpected shift from the norm, a text was thus placed at the entrance to room 3, indicating that the purpose of the exhibition was above all ‘didactic’ (educational) and thus stripped off the ‘symbolic language of archaeologists’.

The curator: Giorgos Chourmouziades

Giorgos Chourmouziades, was born in Thessaloniki in 1935. He conducted his university studies at the School of Philosophy in the *Aristoteleion* University of Thessaloniki between the years 1953 and 1958. Between 1961 and 1964, he was appointed as a philologist (i.e. teacher of history, Latin, as well as ancient and modern Greek) in secondary schools. In 1965 he became Curator of Antiquities in the *Ephoreia* of Thessaly. In 1973 he completed his doctoral dissertation on Neolithic figurines (School of Philosophy, *Aristoteleion* University of Thessaloniki). Right after

submission, he also completed the 'Neolithic Exhibition' at the *Athanasakeion*. In 1976-1978 he travelled to Heidelberg as an A. V. Humboldt scholar for a taught post-graduate programme in European History. In 1981, he became Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology in the History and Archaeology Department, School of Philosophy, *Aristoteleion* University of Thessaloniki. His research focuses on the Neolithic period in Greece with particular emphasis on Thessaly and Macedonia. He has excavated several important sites with the most recent being the Neolithic site of Dispilio in Kastoria, Northern Greece (since 1992). For the purposes of this project, he has also been involved in the establishment of the first eco-museum in the area of the lake of Kastoria based on the results from the Dispilio excavations. His daughter Anastasia Chourmouziadi, an architect with a PhD in Museum Studies (2006), has been a regular collaborator in this project as well as several other projects pertinent to the site of Dispilio. From 1981 until recently, he was registered as an official member of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and in fact, elected as an MP for the Party between 2000 and 2007.

Marxist Theory (and its representative in archaeological discourse, Gordon Childe) have largely influenced Chourmouziades' work. In 1980 and 1981, he published two articles in Greek under the general title 'An Introduction to the Neolithic mode of Production, Part I and Part II'. The general argument put forward by both those studies is that past material culture constitutes 'the product of social relations'; in turn, these relations are embedded within a (historically determined) mode of production and negotiated in the context of specific "programmes of spatial organization, food production and technological development" as well as "within the context of very specific ideological behaviours" (Chourmouziades 1982: 1).

From the late 1970s onwards, he has acted as the chief editor of two archaeology journals, both in Greek, 'Anthropologica' (1978-1982) and 'Gordon' (1991-1995); the aim in both cases has been to familiarize Greek archaeologists with theoretical developments in archaeology abroad (Europe and the United States). Along with several articles and archaeology monographs, Chourmouziades has also written short stories and novels (i.e. 'The Peddler', *O Gyrologos*) and archaeology books intended for a wider public (i.e. 'Words out of dirt', *Logia apo Choma*). From the early 1980s onwards, he became more involved with museum studies (cf. Chourmouziades 1980, 1984) and regularly organized numerous seminars on this particular subject. Currently, during the excavation seasons at the site Dispilio Chourmouziades invites specialists from different fields to deliver seminars to his colleagues, students and excavation workers, several of which address issues pertinent to museum studies. These seminars are broadly known as the 'Excavation School (of Dispilio)' (*Anaskafiko Didaskaleio*).

The curatorial agenda

Largely drawing upon Chourmouziadi's and Solomon's seminal work on the ideological background of the 'Neolithic Exhibition' at Volos (Chourmouziadi 2006; Solomon 2008), the foregoing curatorial agenda should be discussed by stressing two principal factors. First, Chourmouziades' explicit intention to disassociate the visitor's experience from the authoritarian and self-referential character of archaeological discourse; how archaeologists understand, talk and write about the past is of no concern whatsoever to the visitor. As a result, and this takes us to the second point of importance, the curator uses the exhibition narrative to bring forward an image of the Neolithic which does not aim at the conspicuous display of higher forms of art and

civilization (as in the case of the National Archaeological Museum) but focuses instead, on the unveiling of the poetics of everyday life (Solomon 2008). Chourmouziades rejects the idea of presenting the Neolithic as a period of primitiveness; the mundane, ordinary practices of the everyday are professed to be (analytically) ‘extra-ordinary’ for they as well played a major (if not central role) in the historical development of human kind. Essentially, this is a narrative that places at the centre of enquiry a fiction of “peasant simplicity” and “village utopia” and yet, as Tziovas has rightly observed, this does not necessarily run counter to the nationalist narrative: “the opposition is not so clear-cut, since one might argue that nationalist ideology propelled the narrative (re)turn to the region” (*cited in* Shannan-Peckham 2001: 113).

Another issue that requires some serious consideration as regards the curator’s image of the museum, concerns the very essence of the term ‘museum education’. More to the point, it would be misleading to suggest that in those museums we consider to be ‘museums of art’, there is no educational/didactic agenda. In fact, it is through exhibitions like the ones hosted in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens that the Greek nationalist narrative was brought forward as an uncontested version of historical reality and truth (*cf.* Fotiadis 2004). This latter museum example formed a solid institutional mechanism of knowledge transmission, with its main difference from Volos being that the latter made a far greater investment in the establishment of a model of education that would place at its foundations the notions of *accessibility*, *familiarity* and *active participation*. This ideological/curatorial predisposition constituted a communitarian vision, whose “political project” was “to strengthen local influence and boost grass-roots participation” in the creation of Greek (pre)history (Leontis 1995: 82).

To this end, the conscious avoidance of museum display cases in Chourmouziades’ exhibition acts as an explicit manifestation of the need to bridge the gap between the visitor and the exhibits but also for that matter, the Neolithic past. The surplus of emphasis laid upon the display of socio-economic practices that survive even until today in villages and the countryside, in conjunction with the use of local materials for the clothing of the exhibition literally transformed the Thessalian Neolithic from a ‘foreign country’ (Lowenthal 1985) into a familiar place. Moreover, visual reconstructions encouraged the visitor to approach past materialities not as fragments or remains but instead as clearly defined entities. Finally, the total lack of captions favoured an unbiased, bottom-up interpretation of the exhibits; this interpretative technology was very different from the top-down, ready-made and undisputed interpretation imposed to the finds in cases like the ‘Sculptures Collection’ at the National Archaeological Museum. In a way, it could thus be claimed that ‘museum education’ in *Athanassakeion* relied more upon the visitor and less upon the archaeologist and/or curator.

The discussion so far, does not establish any straightforward connection between the issue of national identity and Chourmouziades’ curatorial work at Volos. This lack of any apparent signs of convergence is further reinforced if one considers that, by way of contrast to Paparrigopoulos’ historical project, there has been no real attempt so far to include the Neolithic period in Greece into a unified linear narrative that could be considered part of the national narrative. In fact, more often than not, the period is portrayed as ‘Pre-Hellenic’ (Chourmouziadi 2006: 84). We could perhaps detect some sort of connection in writings portraying the development of particular types of architecture and/or spatial organization in the Bronze Age (like the *Megaron* or the *Acropolis*) as signs of compatibility with Geometric/Doric architecture (or what is broadly labelled

as ‘early Hellenic’ architecture) (*cf.* Alty 1982). The Mycenaean period has also been linked with the development of *Hellenization* (particularly because of the adoption of a writing system, Linear B) (Zacharia 2008: 4). The Neolithic, however, does not figure in any of those discussions and therefore the quest for establishing a connection with ‘*Hellenism*’ has never crystallized as an analytical trend within the confines of the archaeological discipline. Chourmouziades’ work does not form an exception to this rule.

Even a cursory glance at the ideological background of Chourmouziades himself provides further support to the foregoing observation. Chourmouziades’ scientific writings largely draw upon Marxist ideas and what is significant in that respect, is his concern to communicate, to popularize archaeology by producing a series of books and articles addressed to non-archaeologists and non-specialists. In his scientific work, Chourmouziades made extensive use of Marxist vocabulary. His account of Neolithic society attributes primacy to the ‘economic’ (*see above*); the latter determines and dominates the ‘social’ (i.e. a privileged economic causality in other words gives shape to the entire structure of society). However, and despite his obvious adherence to Marxist principles, Chourmouziades also makes extensive use of a literature that may be characterized as functionalist or systemic. In several of his articles and books, he refers to the work of Lewis Binford, Colin Renfrew and David Clark (all prominent figures of neo-evolutionist thought in archaeology) but also, Russian archaeologist Leo Klejn, whose work has attempted to find points of convergence between Marxism and systems theory. Interesting in this respect, is that his work produces a strange combination of terms: from the one hand, a Marxist terminology, i.e. ‘forces of production’, ‘means of production’, ‘economic infrastructure’ and on the other hand, functionalist and systemic terms, like ‘equilibrium’, ‘homeostasis’, ‘negative’ and ‘positive feedback’ and the Binfordian distinction of ‘technomic’, ‘sociotechnic’ and ‘idiotechnic’ artefacts (*cf.* Trigger 1998). All aforementioned influences may be detected, at least to a certain extent, in the Neolithic exhibition of Volos. However, even for someone who is more familiar with the relevant theoretical literature, it becomes difficult to discern whether some of the choices made by Chourmouziades may be painted as Marxist or functionalist in orientation. After all, even for the curator himself, it did not seem to be an issue of importance to draw clear boundaries between these schools of thought, despite the fact that several systemic interpretations in archaeology have been taken to invoke conservative, imperialist or colonialist ideas (as for example the widely used narrative of social complexity) (*cf.* Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b). So, in order to summarize, this exhibition opposes itself from the idea/image of the glorified classical past (and the broader issue concerning the origins of civilization) but also from the tendency to present Greek national history as a linear, undisrupted sequence.

Perhaps, to a certain extent, Chourmouziades’ work constitutes a conflicting version of pre-history, an alternative narrative in relation to the greater narrative of nationalism as expressed in the other two case studies. A more careful look upon the produced story however, brings us once again to the Kuhnian concept of the ‘paradigm’ (Kuhn 1962): a paradigm is the greatest of narratives, the most fundamental set of principles and ideas about the world for a given period of time a world-view, a regime of truth, a system of thought (to state but a few of its synonyms). Seen under those terms, Chourmouziades’ work is not a peripheral, alternative narrative in relation to the nationalist narrative, for the latter is itself a second-order narrative, a by-product of a greater cosmological framework, namely modernity. As already discussed in the introductory

part of this paper, the modernist paradigm accords a surplus of value to scientific truth and its capacity of empirical validation, elements also present in Chourmouziades' work. Equally interesting is the concern of modernist thinking for order and ordering, the establishment of clear boundaries in scientific practice. Whether perceiving the work of Chourmouziades as Marxist, functionalist or systemic, the notions of the 'system', 'unity' and 'wholeness' are present both in his writings as well as his presentation of the Neolithic period as a *unity* in the *Athanasakeion* exhibition (*see also* Chourmouziadi 2006). To summarize therefore, rather than being seen as a mere side-effect (or even an 'anomaly') of the dominant nationalist discourse, the 'Neolithic Exhibition' at the Archaeological Museum of Volos constitutes a more subtle confirmation of a fundamentally modernist ontology. It is perhaps for this reason, that the efforts made by Chourmouziades to redefine the nature and character of museum display (at a very early stage in his career and within the highly conservative and hierarchical environment of the Archaeological Service) was not prevented or rejected in any way as too provocative or too political; instead, it was allowed to be realized. These 'unintended consequences', to use Giddens' terms (1984), allowed the realization of a museum project that continues to be seen as a pioneering vision amongst Greek archaeologists and museum specialists even until today.

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From Royal to National: The Changing Face of the National Museum of Scotland

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Abstract

Since devolution in 1997 Scotland has been a nation increasingly conscious of its national brand. The Scottish government has undertaken several international partnerships in the fields of culture, education and commerce, and through its rhetoric and policy the government appears to be encouraging a global perception of Scotland as a nation in the throes of a ‘New Enlightenment.’ The National Museum of Scotland (and former Royal Museum) has benefited from this alleged cultural renaissance, having reopened July 2011 following its second renovation in less than 15 years. Comprised of two separate buildings, the former Royal Museum (1854) and the Museum of Scotland (1998), the National Museum of Scotland’s most recent construction program restored and modernised the Royal Museum structure, which had originally been built as an Industrial Museum before receiving Royal status in 1904.

Given the fact that the Royal Museum’s origins were in part a testament to Scotland’s position in the United Kingdom and British Empire, the current Museum’s new form communicates much about the evolution of Scotland’s national identity and its relationship with the world. Scotland’s evolution from 19th century industrial powerhouse of the British Empire to the increasingly independent ‘Enlightened’ nation of today has been echoed by the ever-changing form of its national Museum. This paper will explore the evolution of the National Museum of Scotland from its origins as an Industrial Museum to its modern conception and will ultimately seek to show that the National Museum of Scotland fulfils an alternate role as an historic artefact in and of itself, as much a victim of Scotland’s evolving identity as the historic relics it houses.

Introduction

Since devolution in 1997 Scotland has been a nation increasingly conscious of its national identity and the ability of cultural institutions to foster it. From the Year of Homecoming in 2009 to the opening of sites such as the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum (2011) and the Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre (2007), Scotland has utilized its long history and widespread diaspora to stimulate its tourism and business sectors and promote its cultural identity on a national and global scale. The Scottish government has undertaken several international partnerships in the fields of culture, education and commerce, and through its rhetoric and policy the government appears to be encouraging a global perception of Scotland as a nation in the throes of a 'New Enlightenment' (Fassey & McIntosh, 2008).

The National Museum of Scotland (formerly the Royal Museum) has benefited from this cultural renaissance (Cooke & McLean, 1999: 362), having reopened in July 2011 following its second renovation in less than 15 years. The Museum complex is located on Chambers Street in Edinburgh, in an area also populated by several prominent University of Edinburgh buildings. The Museum is comprised of two distinct buildings: the first, commonly known as the Royal Museum (1854), is a Victorian-era structure with a Venetian Renaissance façade and soaring internal galleries, and is Grade A heritage listed; the second building, until recently known as the Museum of Scotland (1998), is smaller and of late twentieth century construction. The two buildings are connected to one another through passages and walkways, and have recently been united under one single name, the National Museum of Scotland. This union occurred after the 2008-2011 renovation which returned the Royal Museum to its original nineteenth century appearance but added high-tech installations such as a four-storey 'Window on the World' structure, intended to showcase "where the cultures of Scotland and the world meet" (National Museums Scotland, 2011e).

For several years the Museum complex has been regarded as a prominent representation of the achievements and culture of Scotland. Writing in 2008, Scottish historian Tom Devine noted that he viewed "much of the [Museum's] collection as a metaphor for Scotland: symbolic of a remarkable global role and the impact [that] this small country has achieved" (Devine, 2008: 3). This idea was furthered by Museum Director Gordon Rintoul in 2011, when he suggested that the Museum building had itself become the exhibit (Jamieson, 2011). These statements are congruent with the academic belief that national museums interpret the histories of the communities they represent, thereby reflecting the hegemonies of the period of its creation and later reinterpretations (McLean & Cooke, 2003b). This paper will explore the evolution of the National Museum of Scotland from its origins as an Industrial Museum to its modern conception, paying particular attention to the parallels between events in Scotland's national history and changes to the Museum's format. The 2008-2011 renovation will be of specific focus, given its occurrence at a time of increased national awareness and its proximity to present day. This approach will highlight the parallels between the Museum's development and external political events, thereby demonstrating the role of the Museum as an artefact in and of itself. In doing so, this paper will show that the Museum's newest form communicates much about the evolution of Scotland's national identity and its relationship with the United Kingdom and wider world.

Early History

The symbolic foundations of the National Museum of Scotland were laid many years before the first incarnation of the actual building (construction began in 1854), when in 1780 the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland was founded by the 11th Earl of Erskine. The oldest of its kind in Scotland, the Society's focus since instigation has been the study of Scottish history and archaeology, commonly through the collection of artefacts and data. By the mid-nineteenth century the Society had amassed a substantial collection and welcomed thousands of visitors to its museum annually; public interest in antiquities had been slowly increasing since the turn of the century. In 1851 the Society signed an agreement with the British Government which designated the Society's collections as National Property, ensuring the preservation of the Society's goals and nationally important artefacts (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2012). This agreement coincided with the Government's plans to build a new industrial museum in Edinburgh (later to become the Royal Museum), indicating a period of strong Government support for Scottish antiquities. It is possible the British Prime Minister of the period, John Russell, the 1st Earl Russell, had a fondness for Scotland having studied at Edinburgh University for ten years (Prest, 1972: 11-13). Although much of the Society of Antiquaries' collection was subsequently kept at a different location from the Royal Museum, the work of the Society and its sizable collection of artefacts serve to highlight the Enlightenment-era, Government-patronized beginnings of museology in Scotland.

As previously mentioned, at the same time that the Government was assuming control of the Society of Antiquaries' collection in the 1850s, work was also underway on designs for a new industrial museum in Edinburgh. The museum was planned from the outset for public use and was intended to showcase a range of artefacts and curiosities in keeping with the museum's industrial era origin. This was in keeping with the fashion of the time – the Great Exhibition had opened in London in 1851 to widespread acclaim and also championed industry and technology. Designs for the new museum in Edinburgh, initially named the Industrial Museum of Scotland, were begun in 1854 by Captain Francis Fowke of the Royal Engineers and his assistant Robert Matheson, a local Scottish architect. Fowke was a well-regarded architect with several large projects to his name: at the time of beginning work on the museum in Edinburgh, Fowke had just finalised his designs for the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin (1854), and would in a few short years complete the designs for the Royal Albert Hall in London (1865). Fowke was well versed in the Victorian Neo-Classical architecture often used for large exhibition spaces, such as that of Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace (Great Exhibition) in London. Fowke's design for the museum in Edinburgh resembles the Crystal Palace in many ways, particularly in its use of airy iron-columned galleries and glass ceilings. The exterior of the museum is in a Venetian Renaissance style, suitable for highlighting the important public nature of the structure without being out of place in the Neo-Classical surrounds of Chambers Street.

The scale of Fowke's design required the Museum to be completed in stages, the first between 1861 and 1866 and the second between 1885 and 1889. The beginning of construction was marked by a foundation stone laying ceremony on 23 October 1861, attended by Prince Albert, the Royal Consort of Queen Victoria (Historic Scotland, 1970). Prince Albert had also been the driving force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, so his appearance at the foundation ceremony in Edinburgh was significant. By the time of the completion of

construction on the Museum's east-wing five years later, however, many things had changed. Prince Albert, seen by many as a Royal patron of the Museum, had died only weeks after attending the Museum's foundation ceremony in 1861, while the Museum's architect Fowke had passed in 1865. The Museum had also been renamed in the intervening years of construction, the first of many such occurrences. At the opening ceremony in 1866, it was Prince Alfred (son of Prince Albert) that led the proceedings, declaring the newly renamed Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art open to the public. It would keep this name for forty years, changing in 1904 to the Royal Scottish Museum. This connection with the British monarchy, clear from the Museum's outset, has been regularly renewed by Royal visits: the Queen officially opened the Museum of Scotland in 1998, for instance.

Despite its Royal patronage, the early decades of the twentieth century saw significant changes for the Museum, and the disruption was not just limited to construction. Several extensions were undertaken, the first two from 1910-1914 and 1934-1937. Shortly after this second renovation the Museum was repurposed for World War II, with exhibits packed away and the available space being used as a medical supply store. This unorthodox assumption of the building did not last long – the semi-regular pattern of renovation and expansion started again post-War (Summerhayes, 2008). The Brighton Street Extension in the 1950s reflected the changing philosophy of museum exhibitions, with the new extension including a lecture theatre, tea-room and education centre. Later additions, such as the inclusion of the fishponds on the floor of the Gallery, further enhanced the conception of the Museum as a place for interaction, entertainment and showcasing modern technology. These improvements were in keeping with the general modernizing processes at play in Scotland and Britain as a whole during this time.

The Museum of Scotland

The final years of the twentieth century marked significant changes for Scotland, and for the Museum complex. Discussion had been underway since the 1950s about the need to create a museum that marked out Scotland's place as a nation through the exhibition of important Scottish artefacts and the outlining of Scotland's national history (Cooke & McLean, 199b: 13). The Royal Museum building, for years the home of a wide array of Scottish items, was felt insufficient to address the aims of this 'national' museum, as the Royal Museum was driven by an Enlightenment-based philosophy of scientific research and discovery that extended to international artefacts. This left Scotland without a dedicated museum of national history, the desire for which may have had some correlation with the growth of nationalist politics in Scotland from the 1930s onwards, a movement which gained strength in the 1990s. The push for a new Scottish museum resulted in Government funding in 1989 for a building intended to exhibit the narrative of Scotland through history, culture and archaeology (*Building*, 1997).

The site selected for the new Museum of Scotland was next door to the Royal Museum building, with the architectural firm Benson & Forsyth winning the international design competition in 1991. Although their design beat 371 other entries it was not universally popular – Prince Charles resigned from the judging panel on the day Benson & Forsyth's building was declared the winner ("30M GBP Museum extension to go ahead soon," *The Scotsman*, 1 April 1993). The design includes a sandstone exterior, a cylindrical turret on the front corner of the façade, a roof-top terrace and windows of varying shapes and sizes, evoking aspects of the

surrounding landscape, which includes the nearby Edinburgh Castle. The Museum of Scotland's interior was designed to encourage visitors to take a path that follows the chronological and thematic stages in Scotland's history. The first sections of the Museum focus on Scotland's beginnings and early people, and these exhibitions progress upwards through several floors. Sections of the museum are dedicated to 'the Kingdom of the Scots,' 'Scotland Transformed,' 'Industry and Empire' and the most recent exhibition entitled 'Scotland: A Changing Nation' which is located on the top floor. The interior design also encourages subtle changes in mood as visitors progress through the Museum. The lower levels, which are associated with earlier periods in Scotland's history, are darker and somewhat crypt-like; the upper levels, however, are noticeably brighter with higher ceilings. This provides a subtle alteration in visual experience as visitors move towards the present day collections, perhaps symbolising the move of a nation towards greater cultural and social awareness.

Another design feature of relevance is the placement of windows to provide views that are relevant to the artefacts nearby. These design decisions often highlight moments of Scottish history when the nation was at odds with its English neighbour. The window next to the National Covenant – a document signed in 1638 by Scottish patriots who fought to uphold the Presbyterian doctrine under threat by Charles I of England – for instance looks out over Greyfriars Churchyard, the location in Edinburgh where the Covenant was signed.

The Museum of Scotland's role as the keeper of Scotland's national story makes it a natural location for the display of many notable artefacts of particular significance to the nation, such as the Scottish-owned portion (11 pieces) of the Lewis chessmen and Prince Charles Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie)'s travelling canteen. The Lewis chessmen are of particular interest, as they are the subject of an ongoing debate between the Scottish Government and British authorities over the rightful ownership and display of the artefacts, which were found in 1831 on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland (Milne, 2008). The remaining 67 pieces are on display in the British Museum.

Another important inclusion in the Museum is a quote from the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath, which is displayed on one of the interior walls in large painted script. The Declaration, one of the earliest known forms of a declaration of independence, came after the Scottish defeat of English forces at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Sent to Pope John XXII, the Declaration outlined the Scottish right to exist as an independent state free from English rule. The section of the Declaration displayed on the wall of the Museum reads: 'For we fight not for glory, nor riches, nor honours, but for freedom alone, which no good man gives up except with his life.'

Despite the inclusion in the Museum of this popular symbol of Scottish independence, other nationalist icons do not feature prominently. William Wallace, for instance, who fought in the Scottish Wars of Independence and has become somewhat of a Scottish folk hero, is noticeably under-represented. In the ensuing discontent that occurred when Wallace's absence was noticed, Museum staff explained their decision to leave out certain traditional elements of Scottish history as both a result of the limitations of the artefacts available, and an attempt by the Museum to address the stereotypical elements of Scotland's history (Cooke & McLean, 1999b: 20). This is in part an acknowledgement of Wallace's recently popularized persona as portrayed in the Hollywood movie *Braveheart* (1995). This attempt to redress inaccuracies also explains the

inclusion in the Museum of an exhibit entitled 'Images and Realities,' which tries to highlight and correct false assumptions regarding Scottish history and identity through exhibiting stereotypes and their realities (McLean & Cooke, 2003a: 156).

Royal becomes National: twenty-first century renovations

When the Museum of Scotland building was completed in 1998, a section of stone between the old Royal Museum and the new Museum of Scotland was engraved with the phrase, 'Scotland to the World, the World to Scotland.' This quote was an attempt to unite the Royal Museum's scientific and natural world collections ('the World to Scotland') with the Museum of Scotland's national historical and archaeological collections ('Scotland to the World'). An unintended consequence of this linking of institutions was the highlighting of the aging appearance of the Royal Museum building. By the time of the Museum of Scotland's opening the Royal Museum had undergone seven significant refurbishments and extensions, four name changes and two amalgamations with external entities. The result was a Victorian-era structure cluttered with artefacts and confused by layers of building additions.

Accepting the need to refurbish the Royal Museum, the Museum management initiated a fifteen year master plan which included a significant structural overhaul intended to bring the Victorian building up to the standards of its new neighbour, the Museum of Scotland. Gareth Hoskins Architects, a Scottish firm, won the contract to develop a new design and direction for the Royal Museum. The design aimed to remove as much of the twentieth century additions as possible, including the destruction of partitions and the lowering of the ground floor by 1.4 metres to accommodate a new Entrance Hall (Macmillan, 2009). Sixteen new galleries were added to cover several broad themes, including Discoveries, World Cultures, Natural World and Adventure Planet. A new feature, the Window on the World installation, was also added. This installation reaches four storeys (18 metres) high and provides space for 800 objects that might not otherwise have a logical place in the Museum's exhibitions. With the design in place and awards of £17.8mil by the Heritage Lottery Fund and £16mil from the Scottish Government, the Royal Museum building was closed and emptied of its artefacts in 2008 and construction began (National Museums Scotland, 2011c).

The renovation of the Royal Museum had several benefits, not least the creation of 50% more public space (Ferguson, 2011). Many of the Museum staff, as well as the exhibition designer Ralph Appelbaum, have suggested that the new design allows for a cohesive presentation of Scotland's contributions in the world. The Discoveries gallery, for instance, features items that are "filled with tales of remarkable Scots, and people influenced by Scotland, who have made their mark in the fields of invention, exploration and adventure" (National Museums Scotland, 2011a). Appelbaum noted in July 2011 that, "visitors will see afresh how Scots have influenced the world and brought its influences back home. The aura of the Scottish Enlightenment and the stories of the adventurous and innovative Scots who gifted this Museum with an extraordinary collection now permeate its public spaces. The proud intellectual tradition for which this Museum has long been a symbol has been given a new voice" (National Museums Scotland, 2011a).

The Museum, now united with the Museum of Scotland under the single title of 'National Museum of Scotland,' opened on time and on budget in July 2011. In the week after reopening

100,000 people visited the Museum, with people ranging over all of the floors – an achievement of note considering only 5% of visitors made it above the ground floor prior to the renovation (Jamieson, 2011). The renovation is only one part of the fifteen year Master Plan, however, and Museum staff have initiated the next stages. One part of this Plan is the promotion of the reopened venue for after-hours events and functions, a program that has already been taken up by the Royal Bank of Scotland with its Museum Lates series. Further improvements to the Museum will be made over the next three to four years, with another renovation pending. These works, estimated at £10mil, will include the redevelopment of the pedestrian area on Chambers Street, and a public piazza at the rear of the Museum building near the Edinburgh University Old Quad (Ferguson, 2010). These plans will see the Museum become one of, if not the largest museum in the United Kingdom and can in part be interpreted as aiding the Scottish Government's aim to bring about their so-called new Scottish Enlightenment (Christie, 2011; Lawrence, 2011: 58; Fassey & McIntosh, 2008).

The National Museum: Artefact of the Nation?

Writing in 1998 about what was then the new Museum of Scotland building, Fiona McLean noted that “the growth of Scottish museums has far outpaced the growth of museums throughout the rest of the UK, reflecting Scotland's reassertion of its national identity, which has come to a head with the devolution referendum and the re-creation of Scotland's own parliament” (McLean, 1998: 245). Her observation has been echoed several times since, and not just by academics: just prior to the reopening of the Museum in July this year, the organisers were quoted as saying the renovation was “a defining moment in the re-affirmation of the Scottish identity” (Miller, 2011). Scottish politicians also supported this view, with Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop noting at the reopening that “the new National Museum of Scotland promotes the best of Scotland and [Scottish] contributions to the world” (National Museums Scotland, 2011c).

In the renovated Royal Museum, which had its beginnings in the industrial era and took its inspiration directly from the Enlightenment pursuit of antiquarian investigation, a diverse collection of artefacts has now been intentionally united by Museum organisers by presenting a “Scottish narrative [that is] given context and interest by the Scottish adventurers and scientists who collected or invented them” (Cornwell, 2011). When this Scottish narrative is encountered within the newly-united Royal Museum and Museum of Scotland buildings, both of which are themselves historical artefacts of Scotland's history, it has, in the words of Museum management, the effect of “raising the nation's cultural identity and [reflection of] the self-confidence of a modern and ambitious Scotland” (National Museums Scotland, 2011b).

The strong sense of national representation that is now evident in the united Museum complex should be considered in the context of broader cultural and political events that are currently underway in Scotland. In the last fifteen years Scotland has regained its National Parliament following a Referendum for Devolution; has elected its primary nationalist party, the Scottish National Party, to a majority government, and is now in the early stages of planning a Referendum for Independence from the United Kingdom in 2014. In purely cultural terms, major Government funding has been given to numerous events and heritage sites of national significance. The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and the Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre,

for instance, which are two locations with a significant impact on Scottish national identity, have recently been completed with Government assistance and further high profile projects are planned (Battle of Bannockburn visitor centre). Scottish national awareness is high, and this is apparent in both political and cultural arenas.

When considered side-by-side, therefore, the evolution of the National Museum of Scotland bares some similarities with that of its homeland. Scotland was a highly industrialised nation in the Victorian period, with a general belief in the value of the United Kingdom and British Empire. The British Royal family were regular patrons of Scottish institutions and Queen Victoria's fondness for the Scottish countryside and tartan fabric can be seen as being partially responsible for the 'tartanisation' of Scotland in this period. The Museum, first the Industrial Museum of Edinburgh before changing its name to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art and then the Royal Scottish Museum, echoed the attitudes of the era it came from. First the Museum assumed an industrial focus that was echoed in a design reliant on iron and a collection of Victorian technologies. This focus evolved at the turn of the century to take on a Royal element, when in the early years of King Edward VII's reign the Museum received official patronage (1904). This might be interpreted as the act of a newly crowned King seeking favour with his subjects in Scotland, or simply the attempt to preserve the values of the Victorian-era Museum in the rapidly modernising early twentieth century period.

Subsequent twentieth century renovations are also congruent with historical events. Extensions to the Museum in the 1950s came at a time of relative prosperity following the close of World War II, and in a climate of improving technology. This was the last significant renovation to take place until the construction of the Museum of Scotland in 1998. The intervening period of nearly fifty years of inactivity at the Museum can in part be understood through the turbulent nature of British politics and economics in the same period. In the 1970s and 1980s Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government was in power, and Scotland experienced a period of significant deindustrialisation followed by a recession in the 1980s. It was not until 1989 that, during a period of improving economic fortunes, the British Government pledged funding to the construction of a new Museum of Scotland. By the Museum of Scotland's completion in 1998 the Referendum for Devolution (1997) had seen the reinstatement of the Scottish Parliament and nationalist sentiment was growing steadily. In this light it is not surprising that aspects of the Museum's design and exhibits follow a distinctly nationalist vein.

The mindset of the present-day National Museum, which is openly national and actively seeks to present Scotland and her achievements to the world, both complements and contrasts with its Victorian origins. While the building's design has been renovated and modernised it has retained its Victorian-era shell and has in some respects has revived the original structure through the removal of twentieth century built elements. The Museum's collections have been reorganised to correlate with its Museum of Scotland neighbour, but are still true to the Museum's Victorian origins, focusing on science and the natural world. These contradictions can also be seen in the present Scottish nation, which in 2011 elected a majority Scottish National Party Government yet firmly retains connections to the British Royal Family, for instance. Much like the nation to which it belongs, the National Museum of Scotland therefore finds itself straddling two identities, the former Royal and the increasingly prominent National. Given the Museum's tendency to

reflect the attitudes and allegiances of the Scottish nation, it will therefore be interesting to see the direction of future renovations in light of Scotland's journey towards Referendum in 2014.

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Freedom Loving Northerners: Norwegian Independence As Narrated in Three National Museums

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Abstract

After undergoing three different liberation processes during a relatively short period of time – from a dynastic union with Denmark in 1814, from a *personal union*¹ with Sweden in 1905 and from German occupation in 1945 – independence has become an important term for defining a national and cultural identity in Norway. The narratives presented in this report all refer to an old European mythological construct of Northmen's independent and freedom loving character: The *Museum of Cultural History* presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while the independent Norwegian farmer is portrayed at the *Norwegian Folk Museum*. A series of stories of Norwegians fighting for autonomy is offered by the *Armed Forces Museums*. Norwegian Museum authors unite the mythological basis of Scandinavism to a Grand Narrative of Norway, distancing it from the earlier cultural and political dominance of Denmark and Sweden, saluting the medieval kingdom of Norway.

Introduction

Norwegian nation building was a project, which developed across different disciplines and competing political and ideological fields during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, as demonstrated by the three national museum narratives presented in this report. However diverse, these narratives all make use of an old European mythological construct of “the independent and freedom loving character of Northmen”. This construct is rooted in classical literature, e.g. *Aristotle* (384—322 B.C.), *Tacitus* (c. 56 - c. 120 A.D.) and *Jordanes* (6th century A.D.), as well as a tenacious belief in the interdependency of elements, climate and human temperament, in accordance with proto-psychological theories of humorism (Arikah 2007). We find that the construct was crucial to Lutheran reformers promoting Protestantism as a natural development within Christianity, and that it would later fuel a politically motivated Nordic Gothicism initiated by a group of seventeenth-century Swedish scholars known as the *Uppsala Circle* (Olwig 2002). The Gothic infatuation was soon adopted by the Danes, as demonstrated by the Danish Royal historian of Swiss origin, *Paul-Henri Mallet* (1730 – 1807), who linked the liberty of Europe to Scandinavian efforts and portrayed the Scandinavian sea warrior as a proud, indomitable individual with a surplus of physical strength. Mallet was also inspired by the French philosopher *Charles-Louis Montesquieu* (1689 - 1755) who explained the supposed freedom of men and women in Norse Saga literature as a consequence of living in a cold, forest environment (Neumann 2001; Olwig 2002; Haavardsholm 2004). The concept of freedom loving northerners became crucial for politicians and intellectuals seeking a shared Nordic past during 19th century’s Scandinavism. Yet at the same time it was adapted to the individual nation-building project of each country.

Norwegian nation-builders have perhaps been especially eager to use the term *independence* in defining and developing a national and cultural identity, as Norway underwent three different liberation processes during a relatively short period of time (from a dynastic union with Denmark in 1814, from a personal union with Sweden in 1905 and from German occupation in 1945). The need to legitimize a separate Norwegian state was strongly felt. The construct of “independent Norwegians” is clearly reflected in the narratives of the museum cases in question: Museum of Cultural History (*Kulturbistorisk museum*), Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum (*Norsk Folkemuseum*)² and the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums (*Forsvarsmuseene*).

The Master Narrative of the Museum of Cultural History presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while the love of freedom is associated with ordinary people (represented by the independent farmer) in Norsk folkemuseum. Both refer to a lost Golden Age in Norwegian history. The *Armed Forces Museums* offer a series of stories of Norwegian military history, its strongest narrative perhaps to be found in its Resistance Museum department where resistance work during WWII is presented as a product of the Norwegian people’s democratic spirit. Prominent Norwegian historians have contributed to the Armed Forces’ museum narrative, many of them with a personal experience as resistance fighters. Yet as a young and complex administrative organization (1995) proclaiming professional independence, the Armed Forces Museums as a whole lacks the strong voice of a visionary founder. The two cultural historical museums are contrastingly founded on solid traditions for collecting, preserving and presenting cultural historical material, and on the ideological voices and visions of nationalist founders and developers, as will be presented here, these are *Hans Aall* (1869 – 1946) and *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger* (1884 – 1951).

In the following report, I will discuss how these museum narratives came into existence. I will present the literature and media through which they were promoted and distributed, as well as their authors. I also aim to portray the historical and political climate in which these authors operated, and finally to visualize the role that the national museums have served in forming an overall National Narrative.

Museum of Cultural History (Kulturhistorisk museum)

Our general image of the Vikings is to a great extent dependent on depictions by 19th century Scandinavian historians, poets and artists. When three “long ships” were found and excavated in the Oslo Fjord area between 1867 and 1904³, this image was however adjusted. Prominent people buried in ship graves fully equipped for a final journey gave a more continuous picture of life in late Iron Age than earlier romanticist interpretations of Saga literature, and such discoveries aided in accelerating the specialization of academic disciplines in Norway. Norwegian scientists at work in the various institutions constituting today’s Museum of Cultural History (the Coin Cabinet, the Ethnographic museum and the National Collection of Antiquities)⁴ developed an artefact based Viking narrative, yet despite their strict scientific focus, we find that these institutions – and especially the National Collection of Antiquities – prepared the ground for popular and political use of the Viking ideal at the turn of the 20th century (Haavardsholm 2004).

Oldsaksamlingen (Norway’s National Collection of Antiquities)

The history of Oldsaksamlingen dates back to 1811 when “the Royal Norwegian Society for Development” (*Selskapet for Norges Vel*) established a Norwegian antiquity commission, as a reaction to a request from the Danish Royal Commission that all antiquities found on Norwegian soil were to be relocated to Copenhagen. The founders’ plan was to establish a national museum of antiquity research in Norway as part of a Norwegian university (Haavardsholm 2004; Bergstøl & al. 2004). Announcements and articles in national newspapers (e.g. *Rigstidende* and *Morgenbladet*) appealed to the readers’ nationalist sentiment and engaged eager donors. Thus SNV⁵ invoked what is referred to as a ‘national awakening’ in Norway, corresponding to romantic currents in Germany and Denmark at the time – as well as to the strong patriotism of Norwegian students in Copenhagen⁶ (Collett 1999). The constitutional liberation of Norway from Denmark in 1814 did not however affect scientific cooperation across the border, and Norwegian archaeologists looked to Denmark for methods and inspiration⁷.

The Late Iron Age was identified as a period of innovations and accelerated cultural development in the Nordic areas, and archaeological finds indicated a travelling people. The term “Viking Age” would gradually be attached to this period by historians such as *Jens Jacob Rasmussen Worsaae* (1821 – 1885) in Copenhagen and *Peter Andreas Munch* (1810 - 1863) in Christiania⁸. Both found Norway to be the preeminent Viking area, and the Saga literature was by Munch conceived as Norwegian. As head of the Ethnographic museum, Munch introduced the Viking age as an argument for a national unification. Together with Oldsaksamlingen’s manager, *Rudolf Keyser* (1803 - 1864), he presented a racist *myth of origin* in which the pure blooded Norwegians were distinct from Swedes and Danes of the south (Neumann 2001; Haavardsholm 2004). Using historic and mythical figures, Munch supplied his Vikings with names and biographies, thus

making them credible representatives of the period: brutal yet inventive kings and warriors prepared for the civilizing sphere of Christianity (Haavardsholm 2004).

Archaeology was still a young discipline in Norway during the first part of the 19th century, and scientific portrayals of the Vikings were based primarily on translations and philological studies of Norse Saga literature supported by random archaeological finds such as tools, chain mails, hoards and drinking horns. Yet scientists had great expectations as to future contributions to the Viking Age studies from the field of Archaeology. Worsaae, for instance, hoped that new archaeological material would serve to reveal more peaceful sides to the forefathers of the Danes and Norwegians than the image of brutal warriors presented in Sagas and Christian records of Viking attacks. Like most historians of his time, Worsaae was influenced by romantic poets and painters who idealized the “noble savages” of the North in the spirit of Montesquieu’s aforementioned climate theories. A famous example is *Fridtjof’s Saga*, rewritten by the Swedish author *Esaias Tegnér* (1782 - 1846) in 1825, which became immensely popular and prompted a stream of tourists and painters to visit the west coast of Norway in the following century⁹. The Vikings are given chivalrous characteristics as Tegnér describes the famous Battle of Balestrand (in Sognefjord), and the novel anticipates the future renegotiation of the national narrative of Oldsaksamlingen (Haavardsholm 2004).

When rivets from what archaeologist *Nicolay Nicolaysen* (1817 - 1911) assumed to have been a 17 meter long ship were found in a burial ground in Borre (Vestfold) in 1851, hopes of finding an intact ship were aroused. Worsaae, who became leader of the Danish National Museum in 1856, used his position to encourage scientists as well as the Norwegian government to intensify antiquity research in Norway, requesting ancient burial grounds to be opened,¹⁰ as these were left intact due to a previous understanding of Scandinavian antiquities as having low aesthetical value compared to those of the more sophisticated Greeks and Italians (Eriksen 2009).

Wishes for an archaeological ship find “from the days of Fridtjof” were also expressed by social scientist *Eilert Sundt* (1817 - 1875), who expected a continuous line to run from the Viking *longships* to contemporary boat building traditions observed in the northern parts of Norway (Haavardsholm 2004; Eriksen 2009). Sundt wanted to apply the Theory of Evolution to boat development in Norway, believing that a people’s material skills and techniques reflect its general level of civilization. His wish came true when a ship grave was discovered in Tune in 1867, initiating “the period of burials” in Norwegian archaeology (Bergstøl & al. 2004). Despite being found in poor condition, the Tune ship allowed professors and engineers to study construction details of shipbuilding in Viking times. It is a clinker-built vessel from around 900 A.D. with overlapping strakes, and ribs fastened to the hull (www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/).

A 24 meter long and 5 meter wide oak vessel capable of accommodating 32 oarsmen was found and excavated in Gokstad in 1880, causing an even greater commotion than the Tune ship, as well as enthusiasm among scientists and politicians wishing to promote Norway’s glorious Viking past. Three small boats, a tent, a sledge and fine riding equipment were among the grave furnishings of the heavily built, yet gouty man in his 60s, found in his timber burial chamber (www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/).

A replica of this ship was sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and up the rivers to the Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 by *Captain Magnus Andersen* (1857 - 1938) and his crew. Eager to appear as a modern and civilized nation, not least as a culturally independent one, Norway

participated in every such world exhibition arranged between 1851 and 1900. Participation in this particular exhibition was, however, especially important, celebrating as it did the discovery of America. Professionally organized by History professor and Saga translator *Gustav Storm* (1845 - 1903), who claimed that Vikings (e.g. *Leiv Eriksón*) reached the American continent (*Nova Scotia*) as early as 1000 A.D., the project aimed at demonstrating how such longships may have been capable of covering great distances at sea, as described in Nordic Saga literature (Haavardsholm 2004; Marstrander 1986). The replica was named *Viking*. Nicolay Nicolaysen, who excavated the Gokstad ship, denounced the project as unscientific, since the ship had not originally been built for long journeys (Haavardsholm 2004).

Captain Andersen however reached the exhibition, thus fuelling the political confidence of Norway, a poor young nation gaining newfound recognition for its remarkable explorers. We find that 1893 was also the year when biologist *Fridtjof Nansen* (1861 - 1930) embarked on his journey to the North Pole together with *Hjalmar Jobansen* (1857 - 1913). His expedition across Greenland five years earlier had caused a popular nationalist boost of grand proportions, resulting in Norway getting acknowledged as a nation capable of competing on an international level in the field of science. The Norwegian government, which refused to support the Greenland project, was *now* sponsoring Nansen's polar adventure with 200 000 NOK. Nansen became a living national icon on returning from his North Pole expedition in 1896, and the national poet *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson* (1832 - 1910), having long since implemented Viking kings in Norway's national anthem, compared him to the mighty king and Saga hero *Olav Tryggvason*, and his ship *Fram* (meaning "forward") to Tryggvason's ship "*Ormen Lange*" (Bomann-Larsen 1993). With the strengthened confidence of decision makers, Norway's struggle for cultural independency as a nation changed into a fight for political independence as a state, and Nansen both accepted and served in the role he was given: an ambassador for Norway¹¹. Knowing that he had the authority to affect European opinion in the question of Norway's liberation from Sweden in 1905, he promoted Norwegian sovereignty on behalf of the Norwegian People (at home in a series of articles in the newspaper *Verdens Gang*) (Hestmark 1999).

Previous scepticism as to the artistic abilities of the Vikings was confounded when the last and most exquisitely decorated ship was excavated in Oseberg in 1904 – as if to boost the self esteem of the nation on the eve of its last battle for independence. It had been constructed ca. 815-820 A.D. and put to use as a burial ship for a prominent woman after years of sailing. The abundance of the material found in the ship burial allowed archaeologists to investigate how people lived and worked during the 9th century: a wagon, sleighs, kitchenware, tapestries and needlework, beds, tents, remains of dogs, horses and bulls, as well as foodstuffs such as apples and dough (www.khm.uio.no/vikingskipshuset/). The Vestfold finds revealed a multitude of Viking roles: farmers, fishermen, merchants, seafarers and cultural ambassadors (Haavardsholm 2004).



Figure 1: Professor Gabriel Gustafson and his team excavating the Oseberg ship in 1904 (© Museum of Cultural History).



Figure 2: Map of finds. No rights reserved

Presenting the ship finds

Unparalleled in their time, the ship finds were a great scientific achievement for Norwegian archaeologists, and attracted international interest. Oldsaksamlingen's mediaeval concerns were abandoned in favour of investigation into the ships. Guidebooks were produced for each find, but they all contained remarkably little information about the Viking age in general, and bore the sober scientific spirit of academic publications. Manager *Oluf Rygh* (1833 - 1899)¹² revealed a stronger occupation with the funeral customs than with the ship itself when in charge of the Tune excavation, drawing parallels to the burial scene of *Harald Hildetand* as described in the mythical Icelandic *Skjoldunga Saga*, while antiquarian Nicolay Nicolaysen contrastingly delivered a profound contribution to a developmental perspective on Nordic ship building traditions as head of the second ship's excavation. *The longship from Gokstad* (1882) was a comprehensive, ambitious project, engaging scientists from a variety of disciplines.

Rygh's successor, Professor *Gabriel Gustafson* (1853-1915), was in charge of the Oseberg ship excavation in 1904, however he published little but a preliminary guide¹³, and a description in his book *Norwegian Antiquity (Norges Oldtid)* from 1906. More critical of archaeological methods than Rygh and Nicolaysen, Gustafson corroborated his research with comparative ethnographic studies and Saga literature. He found that ship graves were not a burial tradition exclusively reserved for mighty or male Vikings, and stated like Nicolaysen that the Viking culture was as advanced as any other in Iron Age Europe. This view of the Vikings was supported by historian *Alexander Bugge* (1870 - 1929), who claimed that they contributed to the formation of new states on the British Islands, not only as the results of raids, but of peaceful actions (Haavardsholm 2004).

The first guidebooks concerning the finds contained remarkably little information about the Viking age in general, and the museum narrative was poorly suited to address a non-academic public. Having served the project of nation building by communicating a glorious Viking and mediaeval past since before the Constitution of 1814, the men at work in Oldsaksamlingen were now dedicated to a purely *scientific* investigation of the ship finds (Haavardsholm 2004). Nevertheless, in bringing forth actual evidence of a Viking past, as well as for Norwegians' superior shipbuilding skills, the discipline of archaeology had prepared the ground for a popular, political use of the Viking narrative. At the crux of Norwegian nationalism, the Viking had become a role model, and his virtues of courage, adventurousness and strength were attributed to contemporary explorers like *Fridtjof Nansen* (1861 - 1930) and *Roald Amundsen* (1872 - 1928) (Bomann-Larsen 1993; Haavardsholm 2004).

Debates concerning the housing of these newly discovered national symbols became very intense, especially after the authorities turned down the archaeologists' request for a national institution capable of implementing the Viking ships (Haavardsholm 2004; Bergstøl & al. 2004). Despite the fact that Oldsaksamlingen suffered from inadequate conditions for research, preservation and exhibitions in the university buildings, plans for an institution uniting the museum collections were halted several times, until an architect competition was eventually organised in 1890 – with no plans at this stage for housing the ships (*Tune* and *Gokstad*). The project was delayed once again by *Prime Minister Christian Michelsen* (1857 - 1925), despite a proposition of 200 000 NOK (Bergstøl & al. 2004). Fast growing museums in every major Norwegian town competing for material posed a threat to Oldsaksamlingen's ambition of

becoming a national institution, and before entering the Parliament in 1891, Michelsen had wished to counteract scientific dominance from the capital city as part of a scientific society in Bergen (Hestmark 1999). Nevertheless, the museum managers had to wait until 1897 before 100 000 NOK were finally provided to finance the building construction. Oluf Rygh participated during both planning and building of what today is known as *Historisk Museum* (Historical Museum), but it was his successor as of 1901, Gabriel Gustafson, who finalized it. The building was completed in 1902 and open to the public from 1904. It offered a modern yet patriotic architectural framework for the exhibitions. European art nouveau style was combined with ornamental references to the Viking age, *Norwegian style* being the architectural trend of the time. When planning ornamentation for the facades and interior, it is likely that architect *Henrik Bull* (1864 - 1953) was inspired by Oldsaksamlingen's material (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

Even without the Viking ships, or any outspoken aim, the exhibitions contributed indirectly to a Master Narrative of "adventurous Norwegians", and continue to do so. The Ethnographic Museum displays a collection of objects from around the world donated by Norwegian sailors, missionaries and explorers¹⁴ over the years. The collection additionally raised popular interest in "the exotic life of heathens", and popularized evolutionist theories of the time, as presented by its first manager, Professor Peter Andreas Munch. In the coin cabinet department, Fridtjof Nansen's and Roald Amundsen's medals and decoration collections are displayed alongside Viking dividends and hoards collected and published by its first manager *Christopher Andreas Holmboe* (1796 – 1882), thus tracing a line of adventurers from antiquity and to the present (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

Gabriel Gustafson stressed the need for a ship exhibition in which research and enlightenment would play the strongest part, in contrast to architect Fritz Holland's (1874 - 1959) competing plan for a vulgar nationalist "Viking hall of fame". Holland's Viking romanticism was not compatible with Gustafson's demand that the ships present a developmental perspective and should be exhibited alongside Oldsaksamlingen's general Iron Age finds. A Viking ship museum close to Norsk folkemuseum (the Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum) on Bygdøy, a peninsula near Oslo, was finally accepted as a first step towards a new scientifically satisfactory national museum. Architect Arnstein Arneberg (1882 - 1961) had the drawings ready by 1914, but Gustafson passed away the following year (Haavardsholm 2004).

Anton Wilhelm Brøgger

When *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger* (1884 - 1951) entered Oldsaksamlingen as deputy manager in 1913, the Viking ships were still awaiting both proper housing and publication. Becoming professor and head of Oldsaksamlingen in 1915, he embraced the challenge, handling it with new narrative and administrative strategies. Norwegian nationalism had never been as strong as after the last union dissolution, and it soon became clear that unlike his precursors, Brøgger was not afraid to use the Viking narrative for either popular or political means. As the son of the famous geologist *Waldemar Christopher Brøgger*¹⁵ (1851 - 1940), who contributed to a peaceful union dissolution in 1905 as the Norwegian government's confidential emissary in Sweden, Anton Wilhelm was additionally predisposed to strong patriotism – as well as an evolutionistic approach to cultural and political matters.

Mineralogical and topographical landscape studies played an important part in forming a national identity in Norway, and Brøgger Senior, University Rector from 1907 – 1911, had befriended Fridtjof Nansen both personally and disciplinarily (Hestmark 1999). During childhood, Anton Wilhelm followed his father in his research fields, developing interest and understanding of the collected material, yet decided early that he wanted to become an archaeologist. He entered the discipline of archaeology through a dissertation establishing a profound basis for later studies of the Norwegian Stone Age, and managed *Stavanger Museum* from 1909 to 1913. Brøgger's organizational skills were unquestionable as he managed to increase Oldsaksamlingen's staff from four to eleven, as well as boosting its general resources, and not least to finalize the museum project on Bygdøy, which had been halted (Grieg 1952; Bergstøl & al. 2004).



Figure 3: Anton Wilhelm Brøgger (1884 - 1951) (© Museum of Cultural History, UiO).

Wishing to become rector of the university like his father, he became a notable player in the institutional politics of the discipline and the energetic manager also found time for general politics. He served as deputy representative to the Parliament of Norway during the term 1928–1930, and was chairman of the Liberal Left Party from 1930 to 1931, as well as secretary-general of the Norwegian Archaeological Society (*Norsk Arkeologisk Selskap*), among other things¹⁶.

Although he was unable to adopt his father's position at the university, Brøgger certainly upheld his patriotic role. We find that he would invoke the Viking narrative in questions of national politics, for example when defending Norwegian territorial rights during Norway's occupation of East-Greenland from 1931 to 1933¹⁷. In an article from 1932, Brøgger refers to two previous rounds of Norwegian colonization of the island, the first constituted by Viking

settlements included in the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. The growth of the Norwegian shipping industry during the 16- and 1700s made a new round of what Brøgger refers to as Norwegian colonization possible, originally as part of priest *Hans Egede's* (1686 - 1758) missionary quest, accelerated by good (whale) hunting perspectives. He knowingly names this latter period in Norwegian history “the second Viking age” (Brøgger 1932). Recognizing Norwegian activity on Greenland as an expression of Norway’s “national character” (*folkesjel, Völkseist*), he calls for respect of Norwegian hunting traditions in the arctic areas. The mythological construct of freedom loving northerners is revisited as Brøgger claims the ancient Norse hunting culture to be expansive *by nature*.

Borre – cradle of the Norwegian Kingdom

Another example of how Brøgger employed the Viking narrative as a vehicle for developing a national narrative is when he contributed to establishing Norway’s first national park in Borre, in the northern parts of Vestfold (the western part of the Oslo fjord area). The area is characterized by more than 40 burial mounds which are part of the region’s general history since the 13th century when the Icelandic historian *Snorre Sturlason* (1178/79 - 1241) presented the 9th century’s Norwegian Vestfold kings in his *Ynglingasaga* (Myhre, 2003). *The Ynglings* represent the oldest known Scandinavian dynasty, from which – according to Snorre – Norway’s first sole king, Harald Finehair (*Harald Hårfagre*) descended. As a young nation Norway was in need of an impressive early history, the Borre mounds attracted the attention of Norwegian historians and archaeologists at an early stage, and the first remains of a large Viking ship were actually discovered here by archaeologist *Nicolay Nicolaysen* (1817 - 1911) in 1851. Snorre was still considered a reliable source for historical studies due to the 1873 and 1899 translations made by historian *Gustav Storm* (1845 - 1903), thus Anton Wilhelm Brøgger elaborated the idea of a Viking seat in Borre into a thrilling story of kings and queens from the Saga literature (Myhre 2003; Haavardsholm 2004).

Brøgger suggested that the Oseberg lady, buried in her red dress, was Harald Finehair’s grandmother, *Queen Åsa*, and at the opening of the national park in 1932, he named several Vestfold kings who according to him most likely rested in the Borre mounds. Borre became a national symbol, presented as the “cradle of the kingdom of Norway” in schoolbooks and other educational literature. Despite critical readings of the Islandic Saga literature starting already at the beginning of the 20th century, Brøgger’s institutionalized narrative remained more or less unchallenged until 1990, when historian *Claus Krag* (1943-) argued that Snorre’s history of the Ynglings was a 13th century construction, and that Harald Finehair lived in the *western* parts of Norway (Sogn, Sunnhordaland or Karmøy) (Myhre 2003).

Nasjonal Samling – the Norwegian National Socialist party led by *Vidkun Quisling* (1887 - 1945) – misused Brøgger’s narrative and staged their annual meetings in Borre from 1935 to 1944 (Myhre, 2003). Despite his genuinely strong nationalism and his evolutionist perspectives, Brøgger himself never sympathized with the national socialists – quite to the contrary. As a member of the *Committee for Cultural War Preparedness* established in 1938 under supervision of antiquarian and head of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, *Harry Fett* (1875 - 1962), Brøgger led a rescue operation to save Oldsaksamlingen’s most important specimens from possible harm when the Second World War broke out. The items were secretly evacuated and

hidden in Fagernes (Valdres). Brøgger also served as a board member of the National Theatre (*Nasjonaltheateret*) during World War II, and was arrested twice by the Nazis for refusing to abide their directions. He was deported to *Grini concentration camp* after the second time. When he returned from Grini his health had greatly deteriorated and Brøgger retired in 1949 (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

A popular narrator, yet a controversial scientist

Professor Gustafson, Anton W. Brøgger's precursor, had been too busy caring for the preservation of the excavated long ships to publish the finds properly, thus the new manager soon identified the need for a comprehensive publication of the last ship find in Oseberg, containing the most extravagantly equipped and elaborately decorated Viking vessel. Furthermore, he composed an exhaustive guide to the ship finds, with detailed information on every artefact, using a manageable small format. Brøgger aimed strongly at generating interest in his field among laypeople thus the story of the Ynglings is present in museum guides and literature produced by the new manager and his contemporaries. Short guidebooks were additionally made to give a popular presentation of Viking life in general, e.g. *The Viking Period* from 1917 by curator *Jan Petersen* (1887 - 1967). Brøgger would furthermore appeal to his audience through popular evening lectures, exhibitions for school children as well as radio presentations, thus implementing a new medium in the museum's dissemination strategies (Helliksen 1996; Bergstøl & al. 2004).

Whereas outwardly popularizing the Viking age, Brøgger was known as an inventive and quite controversial scientist, in retrospect considered ahead of his time. Brøgger was inspired by continental academic trends, and stimulated discussions on the aims of archaeology at an international level. Inspired by the Austrian/German "Kulturkreis"¹⁸ and contemporary social anthropology, as well as Structuralism, he adopted a more complex view of cultural development as contrasted with that of traditional evolutionists categorizing their material in accordance with Thompson's three-age system (Helliksen 1996). In his book, *The Norwegian People in Antiquity* from 1925, Brøgger criticizes a unilateral chronological-typological approach to archaeological material, and considers technology and natural conditions as overriding factors in cultural expressions and development. He found no reason to draw a distinct line between cultures based on hunting and agriculture, and warned fellow archaeologists about the simplifying effect of common racial perspectives (Brøgger 1925). His experimental approaches to archaeological findings did not always meet with success, yet he contributed to broadening the methods and perspectives of his research field, and when the Second World Congress of Archaeologists was held in Oslo in 1936, Oldsaksamlingen appeared as an internationally leading research institute (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

For a more scientific publication of the Oseberg ship, Brøgger cooperated with Bergen Museum's manager, *Haakon Shetelig* (1877 - 1955), who had partaken in the excavation together with Gustafson in 1904. Their work resulted in 5 illustrated volumes, funded by the Norwegian government¹⁹. Shetelig shared the continental spirit of Brøgger and their fellow friend Harry Fett, and became renowned for his style historical research when dedicating Volume III to Iron Age style and ornamentations. It is likely that Fett – a leading academic in the field of art history establishing a firm method for style of historical analyses – inspired Shetelig, with whom he established the still existing journal *Kunst og kultur* ("Art and Culture") in 1910 (Aas 2003; Harby

2009). Shetelig also laid a strong foundation for both technical and cultural historical boat studies in chapter III of *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* from 1951. This was a publication conceived as “the grand climax to the work of Brøgger and Shetelig” by Harvard Professor *Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.* (1895 - 1979), one of the seminal figures in the study of Mediaeval and English literature in the 20th century. Brøgger wrote the remaining chapters, covering the history of early boat types, ship graves and ships in the Saga literature. Yet symbolizing the classic Viking ship, Shetelig’s treatment of the Gokstad vessel “forms the core of the book” (Magoun 1953). When he named the yearbook of the Archaeological Society *Viking*, Brøgger clearly demonstrated that he acknowledged not only the symbolic value of the Viking era, but also its importance for Norwegian archaeology as a research field²⁰.

Brøgger maintained a steady interest in *life* among ancient cultures from the onset, following lectures on Norse literature in the course of his studies. Before the 900-year anniversary of the Norwegian church (1930), Brøgger produced a study on the battle of Stiklestad²¹. In 1947 Brøgger executed a translation of *Kongespeilet* (“King’s mirror”), a Norwegian educational text from around 1250. From the 1940s onward, Brøgger would increasingly stress social relations as a driving force in cultural development. We find that a line runs from Brøgger and Oldsaksamlingen to the emerging university disciplines of Ethnography and Anthropology, through some of his students. *Gutorm Gjessing* (1906 - 1979), manager of the Ethnographic Museum from 1947, and of a second university institute from 1963, contributed to reshaping general museum politics in accordance with general post-war perspectives. Encouraging him to apply for the professorship, Brøgger wanted him to focus on arctic studies, but Gjessing instead pursued a *global* perspective. Developing a critical view on national states and the way minorities and indigenous people were treated, he concerned himself with the Norwegians’ treatment of the Sámis, and transferred the Sámi collection to the Norwegian Folk Museum in 1951, to be exhibited as part of *Norwegian* culture. He would gradually emerge as a radical socialist, denouncing evolutionism and the imperial perspectives of the past. Gjessing also opened the academic arena to the famous social-anthropologist *Frederik Barth* (1928 -) (Bergstøl & al. 2004; www.storenorskeleksikon.no).

Brøgger was anxious to secure his students’ reputations as professional and accurate scientists. We accordingly find that the post-war generation of archaeologists was eager to adopt new and improved methods of excavation. During the 1960s and -70s, there was a general shift in the field, perhaps facilitated by Brøgger’s ecological perspectives, from German to British and American research, and to borrowing methods from the natural sciences (Bergstøl & al. 2004).

As his vast number of publications demonstrates, Brøgger’s capacity for work was immense²². In 1932, he was awarded the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav for his efforts of studying, communicating and preserving Norwegian Cultural Heritage (Helliksen 1996; Bergstøl & al. 2004)²³.

Finalizing the halted museum project

Gustafson’s successor met with difficulties in finalizing the halted Viking museum project, due to the 1920’s economic Depression in Norway. He had got the building process started in 1918, after a massive press campaign, and brought the fast charring Oseberg ship to Bygdøy in 1926. He then embarked on his life’s largest and swiftest fundraising campaign (200 000 NOK) in order

to obtain the remaining aisles intended for the ships from Tune and Gokstad (Bergstøl & al. 2004). The museum was opened to the public in 1931, but was never completed as planned. The Oseberg specimens even had to wait for the final step of the building process to be completed in 1957, before being exhibited together with the ships.

Gustafson's museum vision is abandoned in favour of a monumental building which in many respects resembles the planned hall of his competitor, Fritz Holland. The museum resembles a church, and its sacral appearance was constructed as a shrine for important national treasures, rather than as an exhibit of Late Iron Age in a general context of cultural development. The building has a pure and simple expression, elegantly enclosing ships and grave finds in four symmetrically structured aisles around a nave where one may view the national treasures from small, elevated lookout-sites.



Figure 4: Vikingskipmuseet (© the author).

Today's Viking ship museum

Today we find the narrative of Oldsaksamlingen's men in museum guidebooks and on information boards. It is somewhat toned down, and without any references to the Vestfold kings, as Claus Krag during the 1990's changed the almost 800 years old story of Borre in Viken (an area including Skagerak and the Oslo fjord) (Myhre 2003). Yet the Vikings are still presented as bold, brutal, inventive explorers contributing to cultural exchange and development both at home and abroad. The routes of their travels have been charted, and their boat building techniques illustrated, and informative notes accompany each of the ships and their respective equipment.

The Viking ship museum is one of the most frequently visited museums in Norway, indicating that the archaeological finds in Tune, Gokstad and Oseberg once and for all established Norway as "land of adventuring Vikings" in the Master Narrative of the Museum of Cultural History. The museum environment on Bygdøy additionally places the Viking ships in a milieu of explorers, seeing as both the raft on which *Thor Heyerdahl* (1914 - 2002) crossed the Pacific Ocean in 1947 and the polar vessels of Nansen and Amundsen are exhibited nearby. The close vicinity to the Norwegian Folk Museum strengthens its function as a national museum.

Oldsaksamlingen's manager from 1968, *Sverre Marstrander* (1910 - 1986), wished to expand the buildings both at Tullinløkka and at Bygdøy due to steadily increasing collections, the latter plan

in order to exhibit Oldsaksamlingen together with the Viking ships just like Gustafson wanted it (www.khm.uio.no; Bergstøl & al. 2004). The plans were never implemented, but in 1998 the University started a process leading to the Norwegian Government's planning of a new building for Museum of Cultural History – and the Viking ships – in Bjørvika, close to the city centre. The plan is strongly contested. In 2006, the Directorate of Cultural Heritage started a process to preserve the Viking shipbuilding and its interior, while the University board and museum manager Egil Mikkelsen (1947? -) suggested that the ships be moved (www.khm.uio.no).

If moved, the ships will be displaced from a “national setting”, and will contribute to a cultural centre under development in Oslo as part of the project named *Fjordbyen* (Fjord City) (www.prosjekt-fjordbyen.oslo.kommune.no).

The Norwegian Cultural Historical Museum (Norsk folkemuseum)

The history of the Norsk folkemuseum is introduced in most publications by a small “story” about its founder, *Hans Jacob Aall* (1869 - 1946), and how he arrived at the idea of a folk museum during the summer of 1894, in the process of collecting material for the new Art and Design Museum in Trondheim²⁴. Aall found that the design oriented material he was collecting on behalf of the Art and Design Museum did not reflect Norwegian culture as a whole, and an idea came to him on reading a newspaper article in *Aftenposten* presenting the outdoor museum of *Skansen* in Stockholm (Sweden). Skansen opened in 1891 as a department of “the Nordic Museum”, an institution established in 1873, aiming to preserve and present Nordic, especially Swedish and Norwegian, folk culture, during perilous times of modernization and industrialization. Aall suddenly realized what was needed in order to save the cultural heritage of Norway from fast decay – as well as foreign collectors. Compelled by a sentiment of national romanticism, he left his work in Trondheim the following December to establish a folk museum of national proportions in Christiania (Hegard 1994; Aall 1920).



Figure 5: Hans Jacob Aall (1869 - 1946). (© Gustav Borgen, Norsk folkemuseum).

This introductory tale demonstrates that Norsk folkemuseum is indebted to its founder's national sentiment and sense of responsibility, and establishes a romantic base for the overall museum narrative. It also presents the rural districts and their peasant culture as expressing a genuine Norwegian cultural identity – a bit of a paradox considering the fact that Norway has a coastline of 25 148 kilometres (including more than 58 000 islands)²⁵ and consequently abundant fishing traditions. Yet this was a perspective shared by most historians of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, based on the assumption that the most isolated communities were the ones that preserved the oldest and most genuine cultural expressions of language and folklore, as well as of arts, crafts and building techniques. Farmers were accorded an increasingly prominent role in the national narrative of Norway, as historians linked them to the proud and independent spirit of the Norwegian people.

Aristocratic farmers

During the first half of the 19th century, Norway's first generation of historians appealed to the "democratic minds" of Norwegian farmers to approve the new constitutional state. *Ernst Sars* (1835 - 1917), the leading Norwegian historian throughout the second half of the 19th century, stressed quite a contradictory position by claiming that the farmers were bearers of an *aristocratic* spirit – a reminiscence of the pre-Christian aristocracy of regional clans that were defeated by Christian monarchies during Mediaeval times (Fulsås 1999). Like true aristocrats, farmers allegedly prevented a feudal society from developing in Norway, by defending their property and personal freedom (Mykland 1978; Hodne 1994).

Considered the leading Norwegian historian during the second half of the 19th century, Sars contributed to a shift in the national movement from general Scandinavism to a specifically Norwegian romanticism, disparaging the role and influence of civil servants of Danish origin – both during and after the union time. The history of Norway was now conceived as running in a continuous line from the Viking Age to contemporary times, and at the unveiling of the outdoor museum department on Bygdøy in 1902, professor of folklore *Moltke Moe* (1859 - 1913) correspondingly stated as follows: "the Norwegian Folk Museum begins where Oldsaksamlingen ends" (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994). Contributing to establish public legislation for Norwegian cultural heritage preservation, Aall had the Folk Museum recognised as the central museum in Christiania for post reformatory material in a proposition to the Norwegian Parliament in 1897, leaving Oldsaksamlingen in charge of Antiquities and Mediaeval material (Hegard 1994). Thus with his museum, Aall aimed at presenting "Part II" of the Grand narrative of Norway.

The initiating phase

In a visionary letter inviting anticipated and potential supporters to the foundation's meeting in December 1894, Aall states that the historical interest of the Norwegians dates back to the age of the Sagas. The letter requested support for, and assistance in collecting new material, and the readers' national sentiment was addressed with reference to history as a guarantor of national identity (Aall 1920). The aforementioned Gustav Storm, was already heavily involved in the museum plans (he was soon to become the museum's public defender²⁶), as was Moltke Moe. Moe – who was a close friend of the Aall family – represents a second generation of folklore collectors as son of the Grimm-inspired fairy tale collector *Jørgen Moe* (1813 - 1882) operating together with *Peter Christen Asbjørnsen* (1812 - 1885). Aall accompanied him on one of his journeys

to the district of Telemark as a young man (1887). Now Aall's elder friend became his ideological advisor during the early years of the museum, and the museum statement in Aall's invitational letter was actually penned by him. Aall would refer to Moe's written museum statement throughout his career as director (which lasted for 51 years), even reprinting it in full length in a 15th anniversary yearbook from 1920. After an energetic "door to door"-campaign prior to the 1894 meeting, Aall and his letter garnered 98 signatures to his support lists (one for men and one for women). Later, the museum statement reached all corners of the country in the form of flyers, which earned further support and attention for his project (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994).

Tough competition, both for artefacts and for funding, caused the young director to refuse any salary during his first year as curator. The founding year was characterized by hard work, but also by optimism due to large donations and a generally supportive press. According to himself, Aall worked on pure instinct before gaining professional skills (Aall 1920). From 1896 onwards, Aall exhibited a series of regionally organized collections in a city department before he purchased a plot of land on Bygdøy in 1889 to become its permanent location. He now started re-erecting rural buildings intended for the open air-museum. In 1901, one year prior to the opening, an area close to the projected entrance was rented for the first comprehensive exhibit on cultural history in Norway – a major national event that took place just three years before the personal union with Sweden was dissolved. Art historian and future head of Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Harry Fett, was hired for professional assistance. The exhibition covered most regions in southeastern Norway, distinguishing between urban and rural cultural history. Separate exhibitions on Norwegian church art, military history and the Norwegian coronation regalia were also part of it. The buildings erected for the exhibition were appropriated by Norsk folkemuseum, which opened its Open Air arena the following year (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994; www.norskfolkemuseum.no).

The uniting force of romantic nationalism

Aall was clearly influenced by the national spirit of his time, seeking to frame and visualize the national character of Norwegian culture in general, as well as that of the various regions. There were actually three independent representations of nationalism superseding and partially overlapping each other during the 19th century. The first was one of bourgeois officials defining folk culture from an outside perspective with appeal to foreign (Danish) standards and language, whereas the second one was that of left winged educators and language reformers who opposed the former. Then emerged the uniting force of a *romantic* nationalist movement, mediating between the two, which made the liberation from Sweden in 1905 possible in an ideologically divided country (Neumann 2001; Hodne 1994). We find that the latter perfectly matches the broad appeal and aim of the Norsk Folkemuseum.

Many of the museum's principal supporters belonged, like Aall himself, to a well-established bourgeoisie. Moltke Moe, for instance, frequented the *Lysaker circle*²⁷ of artists and intellectuals, and was a close friend of Fridtjof Nansen. The previously mentioned historian, Gustav Storm, was another prominent figure who defended the museum during its more turbulent early years. Yet voluntary museum organizations also supported Aall's project, and central collectors representing the working class movement collected material as part of their political work (Eriksen 2009).

Folklore professor *Anne Eriksen* (1958 -) hypothesizes that the idea of bourgeois collectors “creating a falsely idyllic image of old folk culture” is in part a construct of ideology critics of the 1970s and -80s, and accordingly questions the true influence of the bourgeoisie. She even finds it plausible that their contemporary museum men recognized Moltke Moe and the conservative Lysaker-community to a lesser extent, than later curators and museum forces (Eriksen 2009). Aall’s networking skills were in any case never subverted by harsh political actions or utterances, and he managed to engage representatives of most political fields. In fact little is known of Aall’s political opinions, for example concerning the question of the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union. During a period of heated political tensions between the two nations, he would cooperate eagerly with, and take advice from his most challenging competitors, the manager of the Nordic Museum *Arthur Hazelius* (1833 - 1901) and his son *Gunnar Hazelis* (1874 - 1905) (Galaen 2005). In 1906, one year after the termination of the union, Aall willingly published Professor Gabriel Gustafson’s masterwork *Norges oldtid* (Norwegian Antiquity), while Oldsaksamlingen’s manager met resistance elsewhere on account of his Swedish background. As a museologist, Aall certainly had negotiation skills which served the institution at several occasions when in need of public funding, entering the Parliament building to do his lobbying face to face with the politicians (Hegard 1994).

Yet the Master Narrative of Norsk folkemuseum is to a certain extent also a political one. Erik Rudeng (1946 -), director during the 1990s, states that no museum has a stronger attachment to the events that made Norway an independent nation than Norsk folkemuseum, from 1914 – the 100th anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution – exhibiting the first Parliamentary room (in use from 1814 to 1866) along with the housing of Norway’s first prime minister *Frederik Stang* (1808 - 1884), personal belongings of national poets and more of the kind confirming political as well as cultural independency (Tschudi-Madsen 1993). The Parliamentary room was exhibited in a new museum building, introducing a city milieu at the open air-arena.

A complete picture of Norway’s cultural history

Aall’s visions certainly embraced more than the rural culture of proud Norwegian farmers. In order to present a complete picture of his country’s cultural history, Aall wanted the Norsk folkemuseum to be a monument to urban life as well. A miniature Norway soon developed on Bygdøy, representing high and low, farmers and poets, pharmacists and politicians. Just like some of the rural material was arranged indoor in separate rooms at *Ridehuset* – a 1903 copy of an older military riding hall, rooms in the new building from 1914 were dedicated to different historical epochs, such as renaissance and baroque, arranged to demonstrate how Norwegian homes were influenced by trends in foreign countries such as Denmark, Germany, Holland and France (Aall 1920; Hegard 1994; Eriksen 2009). As the city centre needed renewal, city apartments were now collected from the central Old Town in order to demonstrate how Christiania had evolved into a typical North European town during the reign of King Christian IV, as he had it rebuilt in stone and brick after a devastating fire in 1624 (www.folkemuseet.no; Hegard 1994).



Figure 6: City milieu at the Open Air Museum (© the author).

A significant church art collection was established at the behest of Harry Fett, who worked as amanuensis at the museum until 1911. Fett, whose parents were of respectively Swedish and German origin, lent the national institution a *continental* spirit – as well as a scientific one, in producing several central publications and exhibitions. *Gamle norske hjem – hus og bohøve* (Old Norwegian homes – houses and contents) from 1906 and two volumes of *Norske kirker* (Norwegian Churches) became very influential. No previous analyses of post reformation churches existed prior to the publication of his second volume of “Norske kirker” in 1911, but the controversial art historian was already noted for his interest in art and architecture from the period after the Reformation (1537), as a member of the Society for Preservation of Ancient Monuments. On becoming Director General of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage in 1913, he prepared the ground for modern cultural heritage management, providing legal protection for more recent buildings than before (Harby 2009). Fett further advanced the exchange of competence and experience between Skansen and the Norsk folkemuseum through his friendship with Hazelius’ son as well as another of his employees. He even applied for work there twice, but Aall would not let him go the first time (Galaaen 2005).

Harry Fett considered Norwegian stylistic traits to be nuances of a European style, and he stifled former ideological aspects of the collections, hereby weakening the Museum’s Master Narrative somewhat. Yet when Norsk folkemuseum overtook the Royal outdoor collection of Oscar II in 1907 (the world’s oldest outdoor museum established in 1881) he promoted the stave church as an expression of a genuine Norwegian architectural style. Originally developed as a

gesture to the Norwegian people and a token of Swedish-Norwegian unity, the King's collection now served Norwegian nationalism. *Gol Stave Church* became an important emblem for the museum, just like the Viking ships had become emblematic for Oldsaksamlingen (www.norskfolkemuseum.no; Hegard 1994; Galaaen 2005).



Figure 7: Gol Stave Church (© John Erling Blad).

Fett was loyal to his institution when arguing that ethnographic material found on Norwegian soil belonged to Norsk folkemuseum, rejecting what he understood to be “Swedish cultural imperialism” in the Nordic Museum (Galaaen 2005). In 1947, the Nordic Museum embarked on a lengthy process of repatriating Norwegian material. Thousands of objects were to find their way back during the decades that followed, the last group in 2009 (<http://www.aftenposten.no/>).

During the years 1934 – 1938, a huge building complex enclosing the main square developed in accordance with drawings from an architectural competition held in 1919. Crown Prince Olav unveiled the church art exhibition in 1935, as the first exhibition in the new museum buildings. It

is still located in the same nave shaped room, which is often used for concerts on account of its tall ceiling and favourable acoustics (Hegard 1994; www.norskfolkemuseum.no).

Aall had the ambition of exhibiting complete farmyards from fifteen different regions of Norway – an old idea which was never fulfilled, but which resulted in the accelerated development of the outdoor area during the final decade of his management. Lillehammer museum had presented a complete yard from Gudbrandsdalen as early as in 1913, when Norsk folkemuseum only exhibited single buildings and farm elements. In a pamphlet from 1945, Aall stresses that this project should be prioritized along with systematic photo documentation of the complete exhibition material.

We find that the Museum's Master Narrative at this point of time is one of a young, complex and modern state influenced by continental currents, but resting on the cultural roots of an old egalitarian peasant culture with a genuine Norwegian character.

Setting a new standard

Norsk folkemuseum became an inspiring model for cultural museums, setting a new standard for exhibiting cultural material. Tableaus of dolls displaying prosaic scenarios, and live performances of folk dance and music in the outdoor department (obviously inspired by The Nordic Museum in Stockholm) accelerated the epistemological development in Norwegian museums, along with their project of popular enlightenment. Aall wanted his museum visitors to be able to see and experience a variety of Norwegian cultural life, and to draw parallels between their forefathers' struggle with nature and their own (Aall 1920). He would soon become the leading voice of Norwegian cultural museum management in general, publishing a small pamphlet of guidelines for local, regional and central museum variants in 1916 and, on behalf of the Norwegian National Museum Association (*Norske museers landsforbund*), a more thorough guide for cultural museum institutions in 1925 (Aall 1916, 1925). He would go on to compose the first thorough museum history, but was never much of an academic and did not publish any major theoretical works (Hegard 1994). Leaving the scientific writing to Fett and fellow art historian *Carl W. Schnittler* (1879 - 1926), Fett in return published several guides for the museum (for instance 1902, 1907, 1914, 1919, 1938), some being simple leaflets presenting a map explaining the museum structure with short references to exhibitions, some constituting more than 200 pages of detailed texts and illustrations. Common to most of them was a recognizable pattern resembling the traditional Norwegian decorative painting style known as 'floral painting' (*rosemaling*).

While the ideological idealization of peasant culture led to the systematic collection of folklore (legends, fairy-tales, songs and ballads) during the 19th century, interest in and concern for its physical aspects was delayed as part of any public project. Aall's idea of "rescuing" Norwegian ethnographic material was therefore much welcomed, but hardly novel. A Norwegian department of cultural history had long since been established on the west coast in Bergen Museum, the dentist *Anders Sandvig* (1862 -1950) had collected material for a regional museum in Lillehammer since 1887, and plans of a Norwegian collection of ethnographic material had earlier been launched by the directors of the Ethnographic Museum. Whilst *Ludvig Kristensen Daa* (1809 - 1877), director of the Ethnographic museum, displayed Norwegian ethnographic specimens alongside with other cultural artefacts in the museum exhibition, his successor *Yngvar Nielsen* (1843 - 1916), claimed that no European culture belonged in an ethnographic museum. Collected

Norwegian material was therefore transferred to the Norsk folkemuseum in 1907, where it was considered to better serve the aim of the new institution than that of the old.

The Ethnographic Museum was established in 1854 as a consequence of a request from London, when Sámi material was requested for an ethnographic museum. Thus a huge Sámi collection accompanied the institution, portraying “the primitive life of northern indigenous people” until it too was transferred to Norsk folkemuseum in the 1950s (Bergstøl & al. 2004). The transfer served to somewhat reduce the “otherness” of the Sámi people, who wished to be treated as equals with respect to the Norwegians, yet focus on the differences between Sámis and Norwegians was continuously maintained on behalf of intercultural aspects. Despite being presented as typical Sámi skills in Norse Saga literature, skiing and boat building techniques, e.g., continued to symbolize “Norwegianness”, with no credit given to possible Sámi sources of inspiration (Hesjedal, 2004).

However, no earlier museum plans matched the grand scale vision of Hans Aall’s Folk Museum, perhaps with the exception of social scientist *Eilert Sundt* (1817 - 1875) who envisioned an outdoor collection of buildings from different regions of the country as early as in 1861, writing a dissertation on rural building traditions in Norway that would later inspire Scandinavian ethnographers, not the least of whom was Arthur Hazelius (Hegard 1994; Galaaen 2005). The novelty of Aall’s idea was the way in which he discarded earlier criterions as “age” and “artistry” when collecting material for his museum, finding the everyday life of ordinary people worthy of display. He moreover wanted his museum visitors to be able to experience a *variety*, if not *a totality*, of Norwegian culture.

A miniature Norway today

Aall’s vision of a miniature Norway on Bygdøy was further expanded by Aall’s successor, Reidar Kjellberg (1904 - 1978), who incorporated the culture of industrial workers. A separate department dedicated to research and collection of “working class memories” was established in 1950 (*Avdeling for arbeiderminner*). Curator *Edvard Bull* (1914 - 1986) argued, as Aall once did, that the times are changing rapidly, and memories are in need of a rescue operation (Amundsen 2007). A section of small wooden workers houses from the suburban area of Enerhaugen constituted a new environment in the Open air-museum from the late 1960s onwards. Enhanced focus on the less romantic aspects of Norwegian cultural history must be viewed in the context of the cultural politics after WWII. In a letter to the Norwegian government from 1945, a group of intellectuals demand ‘a radical re-evaluation of the means and ends of cultural politics’ (*Vår kulturs fremtid* 13, reprinted in Hodne 1994) (author’s translation). The letter stresses the need to protect and develop cultural environments and improve every condition for artists, teachers and students in order to strengthen peoples’ belief in spiritual values (Hodne 1994). The study of working class memories in the Norsk folkemuseum must be considered (at least partly) as a reaction to a constrained, complacent rhetoric attached to a national narrative enclosed by historical perspectives and rural romanticism. The time had come to focus on Norwegian people in an even broader sense than before.

The explicit aims of Norsk folkemuseum have certainly changed since Aall’s time. A private museum of such proportions follows national (and international) trends in museology. In accordance with the official museum policy of the Norwegian government, Aall’s aim of

strengthening national pride and identity has been replaced by an ambition of promoting tolerance and understanding through historical and cultural diversity (www.norskfolkemuseum.no). Thus immigrant culture has found its way to Norsk folkemuseum, and a Pakistani apartment is now part of the permanent exhibition in Wessels gate 15 (a townhouse which displays apartment interiors from 1879 until 2002). Liv Hilde Boe, director of the museum in 2000/2001, suggested erecting a mosque in the outdoor arena (Boe 2004).

The main structure from Aall's time still remains, and his project of reshaping complete environments of farm yards continued, as have his epistemological visions of making the sceneries come to life through activities and role play. On visiting the just recently restored *Trøndelagstunet* (a courtyard from Trøndelag) last spring – a project initiated in the 1920s – my mother and I were served coffee in an authentically furnished 1950s kitchen by a pleasant 'housewife'. We were accompanied by contemporary radio voices in the background as we had a nice chat, the knitting hostess, my mother and I. Thus a museum experience in Aall's spirit was definitely at play, setting the visitor back in time completely. Intended to paint a vivid picture of life in Trøndelag during the 1950s, Norsk folkemuseum enables visitors to take part in daily farm activities (www.norskfolkemuseum.no).

The museum offers a variety of arrangements, from handcraft courses and concerts, to historical lectures and summer school for children. Traditional celebrations of Christmas and Midsummer's eve still attract some of the biggest audiences.

The Armed Forces Museum

Before presenting the Armed Forces Museums' narrative(s), a quick military historical review is required. Early Norwegian military history is quite unique, as the recourses at hand for mediaeval kings were based on two types of soldiers – on the one hand their personal elite troops, referred to as the *Hird*, on the other hand simple farmers and townsmen obliged to serve the king in times of war. The latter built and equipped their war ships themselves, and kept them ready in case of *Leidang* (expeditions mostly used for defence, but sometimes also for attack). The chain of power was not unilateral, as a king was dependent on the goodwill of farmers to retain a safe position. We find that both the *Hird* and the *Leidang* system were established as early as the 900s, thus marking the transition between a Viking society of internally warring chieftains and the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. As Norwegian military techniques were specialized in naval warfare, they fell behind in the field of land war. We find that only a few fortresses were built in Norway during the middle ages, *Akershus fortress* being one of them. From 1299, the centre of power was moved from Bergen to Oslo, with *King Haakon V* (1270 - 1319) who was responsible for developing Akershus Castle from that year onwards. He led an active foreign policy, hoping to increase Norway's influence within Scandinavia. The Kingdom's position and military abilities were weakened by the Plague, which arrived in 1349, and complex dynastic ties between the Nordic royal houses led to Norway becoming part of the Kalmar Union in 1397. This event is generally regarded as a step towards Danish authority – no longer questioned following the introduction of Absolutism in 1660. The Norwegian Army remained a separate entity under Danish rule, except for a common fleet established in 1509. Norwegian peasants were required to keep weapons in order to do their military duty whenever called upon (Erslund 1999).

The narratives of the Armed Forces Museums are linked to these conditions as a matter of conflict, yet also as just part of our military history. During *The Great Northern War (1700 – 1721)* engaging Tsarian Russia, Denmark-Norway and Saxony-Poland-Lithuania in an anti-Swedish alliance, Norway offered indispensable competence in the field of naval warfare, and Norwegian officers like *Peter Wessel Tordenskiold (1690 - 1720)* and *Iver Huitfeldt (1665 - 1710)* became heroes after contributing to the defeat of Sweden. In 1814, European Post-Napoleonic politics resulted in the forced dissolution of the dynastic union between Denmark and Norway, and the initiation of a new union due to Swedish demands based on the Kiel Treaty of 1813. Norwegian politicians managed to establish a parliamentary assembly, and Norway was established as an independent country with its own Constitution, but in personal union with the Kingdom of Sweden (Ersland 1999).

In the main exhibition of the Armed Forces Museum in Oslo, we actually find that Norway's role during its union period is given a stronger focus than the period of sovereignty preceding it. Neither bold Viking kings nor powerful mediaeval kings are given much attention, despite Norway's quite unique early military history. The relative unavailability of collection material might serve as an explanation for this understated emphasis on early military history, but hardly on the whole. A more likely explanation is perhaps a growing climate of anti-nationalism during the 1970s, as well as the unwillingness to use the Vikings for patriotic means after WWII. The most recent union is however the one, which has been given the least credit as it was established during a period of increasing nationalism resulting in its dissolution in 1905. The many attacks on Norway prior to the union have also given rise to a history of conflict between the two neighbouring states.

An early military historian's Saga like narrative

As already stated, the first generations of Norwegian historians and museologists occupied themselves to a great extent with Saga kings; so did military historians. Of special importance were of course the Ynglinga Dynasty, and the previously mentioned king Harald Finehair, who is presented as Norway's 'first sole king' by Snorre Sturlasson. Yet, *Olav Haraldson 'the Sacred' (995 - 1033)* is actually a better candidate for the title, having reigned over a region more nearly approximating today's Norway between 1015 and 1028. He was slain by a peasant militia in 1030, and became a national Saint as he died in an attempt to Christianize the Norwegian people. Then came a long period of civil wars, and Norway would not become a stable kingdom again before 'the Birch legs' (*Birkebeinerne*), rebelling against royal and clerical powers, were defeated in 1225. Soon after, Norway reached its peak of military power with the reign of *Håkon Håkonsson (1204 - 1263)*. Internal wars were ended, and Iceland and Greenland were included in the Norwegian kingdom. Having already claimed the Shetland and Orkney islands, the Norwegian kingdom had never been bigger. This period is usually where we find that Norway's early military historians begin their narrative.

There is a divine providence that never lets the life cycle of a nation rest until it has reached its purpose (...) (Coucheron-Aamot 1901, author's translation)

This is the opening line of *The Norwegian People on Land and Sea: Norway's political and military history from Harald Finehair to 1814 (Det norske folk på land og sjø: Norges politiske og militære historie fra Harald Haarfagre til 1814)* written and published in 1901 by marine lieutenant and military historian

William Coucheron-Aamot (1868 - 1948). Rather unabashedly, the author argues that an awakened people's knowledge of Norwegian national and military history will contribute to the nation 'retrieving its place in the north', referring to what was considered the peak of Norwegian military history at this period of time: the crowning of King Håkon Håkonsson in 1247. Linking the splendour of mediaeval kings to the ancient Vikings, Coucheron-Aamot appeals to the general spirit of his time to create a Saga-like narration of Norway's political and military history. Quite obviously, it was the national sentiment of the early 20th century that conditioned the general presentations of Norwegian military history, and history professor Ernst Sars was credited for his help and support, along with national archivist Henrik Jørgen Huidtfeldt-Kaas (1834 - 1905). Yet a national narrative of these proportions was unlikely to be found in the early exhibitions of armour and weapons at *the Artillery Museum* of 1879, the first step towards a national military museum institution in Norway.

Finding proper housing

The Artillery Museum was initiated as a model chamber in 1860, in order to keep an overview of the Artillery resources, and was later supplemented with historical artefacts from older magazines. *The Quartermaster museum*, which opened at the Army depot in 1928, on the 300th anniversary of the Norwegian Army, displayed a variety of historical banners and uniforms, but likewise did not aim to present any national perspective in a broader sense. The idea of a national military museum at *Akershus Fortress*, the former headquarters of Norwegian heads of the state, was however discussed, but in 1921 unexpectedly turned down by the Norwegian government, the available exhibition material allegedly being of weak relevance to Norway in general, and the Akershus region in particular (Tor Holm, 1961). When promoted once more in 1928 by *Captain Peter Frederik Broch* (born 1897), the idea gained strong support from the now omnipresent head of the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Harry Fett, who was engaged in the restoration of Akershus Castle (Tschudi-Madsen and Moberg 1999).



Figure 8: Akershus Fortress (© the author).

Yet the Norwegian Ministry of Defence did not respond properly until 1934, when a committee started working on its realization, engaging Oldsaksamlingen and the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (*Kunstindustrimuseet*) in the preservation of weapons, uniforms and banners. The work was interrupted with the onset of WWII, and in an effort to ease the practical management during the time of occupation, the Artillery and the Quartermaster museums were united. The two collections were named The Army Museum (*Hærmuseet*) in the Norwegian Parliament's White Paper of 1940, and provided the starting point for the museum organization today known as the Armed Forces Museums (Holm 1961; Eyvang 1981).

The museum could not be run legally until after the war, but then the exhibition activity halted. At least 3000 artefacts were destroyed in a fire in 1942, and cannons were melted in the service of the German war industry. Director *Captain Fritz C Skaar* (died 1952) met with severe obstacles in gathering and rescuing the collection material from decay when re-employed in 1945 (Holm 1961).

Housing of the collections was in any case the most overwhelming challenge after the war, since both the arsenal building and the army depot were now being used for other purposes. Thus the struggle for a new museum building after the war was hard, with the Ministry of Defence prioritizing rearmament before public oriented museum management. In 1954, even relocation to *Fredriksten Fortress*, at some distance from the capital, was seriously considered as a solution, but the museum committee soon rejected the idea. As a result, the Army Museum was not able to display its collections on celebrating its 100th anniversary in 1960, as the yearbook woefully reports (Holm 1960). Still this publication of 393 illustrated pages serves as a fine museum history – of a non-existing museum! Norwegian military history had yet to be narrated as part of an exhibition, its collections temporarily stacked away for decades.

16 more years were to pass before the museum could exhibit its collections²⁸, by now rearranged and opened to the public in their original housing close to the fortress area (Holm 1961). Architect *Wilhelm Von Hanno* (1826 - 1882) and *Heinrich Ernst Schirmer's* (1814 - 1887) red bricked Arsenal building in romantic style from 1860 constitutes the principal building for both permanent and temporal exhibitions at the Defence Museum, with a total floor area of 7000 square meters. In planning it, the architects were inspired by a mediaeval military fortress block, and it plays an important part of their comprehensive building complex in and outside the area of the Fortress wall (Eyvang 1981). Thus the environmental framing of the museum experience is most appropriate, and the building well suited for the display of historical weapons, uniforms and other military equipment.

A complex museum organization

Before we plunge into the Armed Forces Museums' exhibition material in search for national narratives, a presentation of the contemporary museum organization may shed light on some of the challenges a complex administration structure may encounter in terms of communication.

The Armed Forces Museums is an administrative museum organization under "the Norwegian Ministry of Defence"²⁹, with seven departments distributed across the country: The Defence Museum (*Forsvarsmuseet*) and Norway's Resistance Museum (*Hjemmefrontmuseet*) at Akershus Fortress in Oslo, the Naval Museum (*Marinemuseet*) in Horten – allegedly the world's oldest –, the Armoury (*Rustkammeret*) in Trondheim – likewise presenting itself as one of Norway's oldest museums –, the National Norwegian Aviation Museum (*Luftforsvarsmuseet*) in Bodø, Oscarsborg Fortress Museum in Drøbaksundet and Bergenhus Fortress Museum in Bergen. The museums were consolidated in 1995³⁰, with the Defence Museum³¹ in Oslo serving as a main department. An additional responsibility for the preservation of certain external museum collection's military material underscores the organization's vast field of operation, while the many administrative and decisional forums with which it cooperates – and which it is partly dependent on – indicate further challenges in communication: In 1989, the Minister of Defence established a civil foundation for cultural activity at Akershus Fortress (*SAKK – Stiftelsen Akershus Kunst og Kultur*), and in 1993, The National Fortifications Heritage (*Nasjonale Festningsverk*³²) owned by The Norwegian Defence Estates Agency (*Forsvarsbygg*) became a new cultural arena – dependent on cooperation with both SAKK and The Armed Forces Museums. Several military fortress departments were turned into public museums during the 2000s, *Bergenhus* and *Oscarsborg Fortress* among others. In 2008, the museums were included in the *Department for Culture and Traditions* (*FAKT*) along with the Armed Forces' eight edicts, their bands and a veteran centre (<http://forsvaret.no/>). Despite a centralized museum administration and the cooperative purposes of the forums mentioned above, information about cultural activities at the museums and fortresses is distributed separately, and their websites are only weakly linked.

Two parallel aims of exhibiting military artefacts and material

The possibility of any leading visionary voice on behalf of such a complex organization seems unlikely. Instead, the Armed Forces Museums offer a series of narratives, and appear to have two parallel aims with their exhibitions: 1) to display Norwegian military history and development in general, and 2) to pass on the specific story of Norwegian resistance during WWII to new

generations. These two contemporary aims of the Armed Forces Museums represent two different applications of the past, and will be at the centre of focus in this report.

The first aim is explicitly stated as an overall objective of the Armed Forces' Museum work both in section 6.1 of White paper no 33 (2008-2009), and at the Defence Museum's official websites (<http://forsvaret.no/>). The national history of the different military branches – the Army, the Navy and the Air force – as well as the Coastal Artillery, is minded by separate museums in Oslo, Horten, Bodø and Drøbakundet. The epistemological structures of the museums' permanent exhibitions differ slightly due to the vast time span over which they were established, and the material, which they display. A permanent exhibition in Oslo's Defence museum presents Norway's military activity from the Viking age up until today. This exhibition will be thoroughly presented below, followed by a presentation of exhibitions at Akershus Fortress. Even if the other museum departments contribute to complete and adjust the national story on display in the Defence museum, they will not be treated here, in the interest of keeping the report short and concise.

As for the second aim, WWII and Norwegian resistance work constitute salient elements in the general exhibitions at every Armed Forces Museum, as well as in separate sections at Bergenhus Fortress and the Armoury in Trondheim, besides constituting the total exhibition of Norway's Resistance Museum. This second aim is not explicitly stated in any governmental papers, and must be regarded as an undisputed and self-evident museum task following WWII. As it was originally established as a private foundation of former resistance fighters, governmental management had little direct impact on the development of the latter museum, which perhaps presents the most *distinct* narrative of all Norwegian military museum departments. The Ministry of Defence immediately accepted a museum plan presented in 1962, despite its lack of general guidelines (Færøy, 1997).

The Defence Museum's narrative

On the 22nd of August 1978, at the Norwegian Army's 350th anniversary, King *Olav V* reopened the Armed Forces Museums' main exhibition in its original building close to the fortress area³³, after forty years in storage. The political and ideological climate in Norway had changed dramatically since the material had last been exhibited, and the exhibition was devoid of any vulgar glorification of ancient kings or Vikings. National pride was no longer associated with bold Vikings, but with war-*resistance*, and the Army Museum was accordingly renamed "the Defence Museum" (*Forsvarsmuseet*)³⁴. Those who had experienced WWII were anxious to relate their story to new generations, and "remembrance" became the driving force for arranging certain parts of the exhibition material (Holm 2011). As already mentioned, the museum became head department of seven consolidated military museums located in different regions of Norway, in 1995.

Thor Brynhildsen (1931-) was one of the members of a project group during the preliminary restoration of the Arsenal building, and leader of the museum's exhibition department from 1976 to 1985. He had no existing exhibition tradition on which to base his work, but approached the collection material in a schoolbook manner, welcomingly addressing younger audiences of school children. Hence the permanent exhibition on the first floor is arranged chronologically in periods of war and peace, unions and occupations, except for a brief and introductory presentation of a

less specific “Viking age”. The Kalmar Union, the Great Nordic War and the period of Danish reign are gathered in a section titled “1300 – 1814”, while the Norwegian union with Sweden is portrayed in the “1814 – 1905”-section. “1905 – 1940” encompasses both WWI and the disarmament period in-between the wars, while WWII is introduced in a section called “War at sea 1939 – 1945” (*Sjøkrigen*).

Written information about women’s military effort provides nuance to the more general historical presentations. Text boards are used as the leading medium to present the military history from the Viking age and to the WWII but they are supported by dioramas and exemplified by exhibited military material (weapons, uniforms, banners, drums, historical documents). Models of Norwegian Fortresses are also presented. The oldest material from Akershus Arsenal dates back to the 16th century, and was implemented in the Model Chamber’s collections soon after it was established in the Arsenal building (Holm 1961). Specimens from the Quartermaster Museum, established in 1928, are also part of the exhibition.

So what story does the permanent exhibition tell? A few Viking weapons are displayed in showcases along with the copy of the Baldishol Tapestry³⁵ at the entrance of the first section. A brief text states that the Vikings were both traders and conquerors that used sturdy ships for crossing the oceans, i.e. there is no romanticizing of the spirit of the North. There is however no lack of heroes and enemies in the following sections of the exhibition, even if no names are mentioned. The 14th century is presented with the title “Mediaeval times – military decay”, and the Kalmar Union is implicitly explained in the context of the Black Death having weakened the Norwegian State, leaving the rather peaceful political processes of the royal houses unexplained. Further on, a point is made of the high number of Norwegians (67%) in the Royal Danish Fleet in 1709, bespeaking the important role of Norwegians in sea battles against the Swedish empire during the great Nordic War. Sweden is by and large presented as Norway’s principal enemy, having engaged Denmark-Norway in battle during the Napoleonic wars, and not least having deprived Norway of its new won independence in 1814. A captured cannon from August 1814 documents a minor Norwegian victory at Skotterud before the union with Sweden was a fact, and a point is made out of the resistance against the Swedish king, Karl Johan. Norwegian military development within the independent Norwegian state is exemplified both through the Norwegian fleet, established in 1814, through Kongsberg weapon factory, established in 1818, and with 1901 investment in a rapid-firing cannon, making the Norwegian land artillery ‘the world’s most modern’.

The quest for military glory is less problematic for a young state like Norway, in contrast to former imperial states such as Sweden or Denmark. Contrary to the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, who avoid mention of former imperial ambitions, or the Swedish Army Museum, which all but mocks their former superpowers in some of their exhibitions, Norway’s Defence Museum makes as much of small victories and war resistance as possible – albeit in a discrete tone. Whereas the cultural ministry administers the central Swedish military museum³⁶, the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums are as previously mentioned under management of the Ministry of Defence, and even reports to its military sub-department, the Staff of Defence (*Forsvarsstaben*). In the interest of safeguarding independent and critical museum work, a White paper from 2003 (Str.mld. 48) requests museums to keep a certain distance to their funding ministries. This principle may have had an impact on more recent activities and exhibitions in the

Armed Forces Museums, but the oldest collection material is to a great extent dependent on the work of military officers. Unfortunately, the budgets will not allow the museum to rearrange or restore these older parts of the permanent exhibition in time for the jubilee of the constitution in 2014 (Holm 2011).

Thor Brynhildsen's successor, *Terje Holm (1951-)*, is in charge of the exhibition on the museum's ground floor: The Cold War, 1945 – 1989. It was completed and opened to the public in 2010, presenting an epistemologically more experimental showcase, and breaking genuinely with the older exhibition section. There is a measure of chronological deviation in the service of a visually stronger concept expressing the change from 'hope for peace' to 'fear of a new world war', stressing the two different universes of USA and USSR. The use of the exhibition material is generally more creative, i.e. a locked cellar entrance symbolizes the Norwegian Intelligence Service. Texts are now carved on cement columns and wooden boards, and a 150-meter long row of miniature vehicles running across the walls and ceiling demonstrates the size of a motorized brigade during the Cold War, and the arms race of the period.

The permanent exhibition ends with a note on the museum's plans of extending the permanent exhibition into contemporary time, and the new military history initiated with Norwegian soldiers participating in foreign wars. The slogan "Norway out of NATO" is written on a wall next to a modern tank front, a reference to popular reactions to Norway's contribution to NATO during times of peace – typically expressed by youths during the 1990s.

Museum research and epistemology

The Defence Museum includes a research centre, which produces treatises on narrow historical military topics and selected material, i.e. uniforms and specific battles and wars, which may be purchased in the museum shop. The Defence Museum's first director, Eyvind Eyvang (1920 -) published a short museum history in 1981 (*Forsvarsmuseet blir til*), and Tor Holm presents the Army Museum's history in the previously mentioned yearbook of 1960, yet literature on the museum and its exhibition is by and large scarce, which reveals a weak museological tradition as contrasted with the cultural historical museums. With the exception of a tiny guide, no popular handbooks are distributed. The exhibitions are intended to welcome visitors as part of guided tours, and the museum has a policy, which depends on personal contact with its visitors (Holm 2011). The tours must, however, be booked in advance, and are generally aimed at school children. Other visitors are left to their own interpretations of the exhibitions.

In the early years of the museum's history, it had a feeble academic profile, with few scientific publications, but its scientific means have been gradually strengthened, and the museum's epistemological repertoire has been broadened with the creation of historical tableaux (dioramas) with life size models, and added interactive elements such as sound and light buttons, short films and soldier huts to be explored, along with the experimental use of materials presenting the most recent military history.

There is obviously more than one way to realize the museum's objective to 'inform the public, so that they, based on historical facts, are able to take a stand when it comes to both previous and current military situations', as stated on their website. 'Facts' were, however, not the main focus when the Defence Museum decided to hire contemporary artist *Morten Tråvik (1971-)* for a project called 'Artist in Residence' in 2010, resulting in – among other controversial expressions –

a seven meter long condom strung onto a nuclear missile. The Defence Museum was hereby identified as a brave and modern museum institution, but the event caused some internal discussions within the Norwegian Armed Forces (NRK Johansen 2010; Holm 2011).

Akershus Castle

The Royal Family's protection is, as already suggested, of great value to the identity of the Armed Forces Museum, with the King inaugurating every new or restored department. The National Narrative of Akershus Castle is accordingly linked to its historical role as the headquarters of the Norwegian heads of the state, serving for centuries as a national archive, and from 1936 housing a royal mausoleum. Besides being an attraction for tourists and other visitors, it is used for representational means, and is a national symbol of high value (White paper no 33, 2008 - 2009). The Castle's museum function is of relatively recent origin, due to belated and long lasting restoration. Mediaeval oriented antiquarians such as Nicolay Nicolaysen ignored the castle initially, as they believed it to have been rebuilt after a fire in 1527, and only more recently expanded on. While both Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim and Håkon's Hall in Bergen have engaged historians and archaeologists from the middle of the 1800s, the question of restoration of Akershus Castle was not put forward until 1896, at that point with the ambition of reshaping it in its mediaeval form. Newspaper reports tell of grand festivities (Akershus-festlighetene) staged in 1899, with an immensely popular historical pageant in which the play arranged by King Håkon Magnusson V in honor of his daughter Ingeborg's wedding in 1312 was re-enacted (Tschudi-Madsen and Moberg, 1999). This was at the time when the young art historian Harry Fett made himself noted by the Society for Preservation of Ancient Monuments while protesting against mediaeval romanticism, which led to Nicolaysen's withdrawal and Fett himself becoming the society's secretary (Stang 2009). Yet the mediaeval perspective was to some extent revived when architect Holger Sinding-Larsen, following thorough archaeological research (1906 – 1922) concluded that the original mediaeval castle had in actuality been sizeable, with towers, halls, ring walls and a dry moat – contrary to the previous hypothesis of historian Gustav Storm (among others). Sinding-Larsen's theory formed a basis for the restoration work, together with his and architect Arnstein Arneberg's drawings (Tschudi-Matsen and Moberg 1999). The different epochs are made visible, and the castle emerges as a synthesis of the old mediaeval fortress and the later renaissance castle (www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/).

Despite minor damages from bombardment during WWII, a major part of the restoration was finished in 1947 at King Håkon VII's 75th birthday. A Support Association continued the restoration and decoration work from 1951 onwards and gifts from citizens and other museums (e. g. Norsk folkemuseum) has contributed to turning the castle into the "national treasure" firmly presented by director-general of the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, *Stephan Tschudi-Madsen* (1923 - 2007), and museum lecturer Harald Moberg (1943-) in their popular handbook from 1999, allegedly the year of its 700th anniversary. A more practical guidebook was also issued by the Norwegian Defence Estates Agency (*Forsvarets bygningstjeneste*), to support the physical experience of the castle area. The institution of guided tours and cultural activities were accelerated following the jubilee in 1999, and the 1899 festivities inspired the program for the Norwegian Year of Cultural Heritage 2009 (Mathisen, 2009). The castle is often used for contemporary art and musical performances.

The castle website offers “a walk through Norwegian history from 1300 until today”, wings, halls and rooms having been named after castle royalties or historical activities. The main hall originally housed the suite of Christian IV, founder of Christiania (who rebuilt the city closer to the castle after a city fire in 1624), while one of the smaller halls is named after *Margrete I*, the Queen Regnant who facilitated the Kalmar Union, and yet another after the popular *King Olav V*, father of the present King of Norway. The National poet *Henrik Wergeland* served as state archivist from 1840 until his death in 1845, and his room at the castle was reconstructed during the 1970s by Head of Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, and opened to public display (www.forsvarsbygg.no/festningene/; Tschudi-Madsen 1971). *Romerikssalen* is yet another hall, named after farmers who according to tradition were ordered forcefully to contribute to restoration work in 1540. Thus, in Akershus Castle Museum we find a narrative of symbolic character, presenting some highlights of Norwegian history, rather than a chronologically oriented story of protagonists and antagonists.

The Norwegian Resistance Museum

The Germans made use of Akershus Castle during the Second World War, imprisoning resistance fighters there. In 1945, 42 Norwegian patriots were executed near the double battery building, which now houses the Resistance Museum. The spot is marked with a memorial site where wreath-laying ceremonies occasionally take place. The battery was first planned for restaurant business, but a member of Akershus Fortress’ terrain committee did not approve of the idea. Neither did former resistance fighters, who found that a museum was better suited for a building standing so close to the memorial (Færøy 1997; <http://forsvaret.no/>).



Figure 9: Memorials at the fortress area (© Arne Bugge Amundsen).

The initiative to construct the Resistance Museum was taken in 1961, but collection and securing of documents and material from WWII had started immediately after the day of liberation (8th of May, 1845). Magnus Jensen, leader of several resistance groups during the war, directed the Home Front Historical Institute (*Hjemmefrontens Historieinstitut*), which operated from 1945 to 1948, and the archive material was deposited in the National Archive (*Riksarkivet*) until the museum's own archive and research department was established in 1966, following significant funding from the government (Færøy, 1997).

Norwegian resistance research lagged compared to the activity in other European countries, which made the museum foundation's board members seek cooperation with History Professor Magne Skodvin (1915 - 2004) at Oslo University. Skodvin, a former resistance fighter himself, was the driving force in the field, and became a link between younger historians, central home front leaders and the Resistance Museum in the years to come (Færøy, 1997). His academic competence is presented as necessary in securing a historically precise portrayal of the years of occupation in the exhibition.

The Resistance Museum committee, consisting of Paul Brunsvig (1921 - 1988), Police Representative Lars L'Abée-Lund (1910 - 1991)³⁷ and Knut M. Haugland (1917 - 2009), soon to become the museum's first manager, wanted a storyboard based exhibition, using artistic grips and symbolic expressions to evoke an enclosed experience of the horror of the occupation, as contrasted with the open view outside (Færøy, 1997). The Norwegian people's common democratic values and legal opinion were to be presented as a backdrop for the allegedly extensive resistance activity, and the museum's rather emotionally based objective is presented as such:

(...) To give the young people of today and coming generations a true-to-life impression of the evil represented by occupation and foreign rule, in this way helping to strengthen the sense of unity and defence of our national liberties (*Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum 1982, preface*).

The delay in the establishment of the museum was partly due to the building process, but according to museum lecturer Frode Færøy, also to the high academic ambition of its founders (Færøy, 1997). The Museum Committee wanted a qualitative portrayal, not of the occupation history in general, but of the Norwegian resistance force specifically. Despite the committee's decision not to romanticize the period or create heroes by namedropping resistance fighters, the voice of the museum becomes very clear, presenting a moral universe of "good guys" and "bad guys".

Exhibition events are ordered chronologically, starting on the 9th of April, the day of invasion. Following a short descent down into the darkened exhibition area, visitors are met (...) with a brutal sculpture of clustered rifles, and a note in German, impaled on a bayonet, declaring Norway as occupied. A small model shows how an improvised Norwegian force fought a German raiding party by Midtskogen farm as early as the evening of the 9th of April. A knifed copy of the Norwegian book of laws creates another brutal symbolic expression, while Nordahl Grieg's poem "17th of May 1940" in contrast expresses the indomitable spirit of Norwegians despite naked flagpoles on their Constitution Day. The poem is illustrated with a depiction of the historical Eidsvoll building, where the Norwegian Constitution was created, behind iron bars. A constant sports strike after the interference by the Nazis with their youth organizations marks the general antipathy they met from Norwegian youths, and exemplifies strong civil resistance. The

radio speech of Josef Terboven (1898 - 1945) – Reichskommissar during the German occupation of Norway – held on 25th of September 1940, declaring the Norwegian government as deposed, is communicated as text, followed by a new text board presenting the reaction from business and cultural organizations. The continuous examples of Norwegian resistance are titled “Somebody stood in the way”. The Oslo centred *R-group* is presented as a pioneer group of resistance fighters, while nationwide organization of the resistance starting in 1941 is demonstrated by illegal papers, radio activity and sabotage, along with the main resistance movement, *Milorg*. 1942 is presented as a turning point for the Germans, giving nurture to the hope for freedom among Norwegians. Anecdotal material such as an original handwritten song text mocking Vidkun Quisling, founder of the Norwegian Nazi Party, adds a little humour to the exhibition. On approaching the exit, the ground floor ascends and the exhibition lightens up, and the visitors are faced with a clip from the Oslo press saying: “Our fight is crowned with victory” under the date of liberation, 8th of May. King Håkon VII served as a symbol for Norwegian patriots during the war, and his monogram, along with flags, are used to decorate the May parade, as a photography clearly shows. “Never again April the 9th!” has become a Norwegian slogan, as stated on the final wall of the exhibition.

Museum Manager Knut Magne Haugland (1917 - 2009) comes close to a Grand Author designing the exhibition along with other members of the storyboard committee. Like several of his colleagues, he too was a prominent resistance fighter during the war, as a member of Martin Linge’s Norwegian Independent Company no. 1, and participated in the heavy water sabotage at Vemork in Rjukan in 1943. Having also participated in Thor Heyerdal’s *Kon-Tiki* expedition in 1947, Haugland supplies his list of braveries and national efforts with a great adventure at sea (Færøy 1997; <http://www.kon-tiki.no/>), thus fulfilling most criterions for being a national hero according to the Grand Narrative of Norway.



Figure 1: Knut Magne Haugland (1917 - 2009). (© Norges hjemmefrontmuseum).

Originally established as a private foundation of former resistance fighters, Norway's Resistance Museum presents a distinct narrative of Norwegians united in perilous resistance work during a time of occupation. The museum narrative has caused some minor media controversies in this decade, with manager Arnfinn Moland having been accused of monopolizing Norwegian resistance research, e.g. excluding the achievements of communist resistance fighters (e.g. Borgersrud 2010).

Conclusion

Freedom, independence and democracy as literally *nature given* aspects of being Norwegian characterize the Master Narratives considered in this report, like a mythological layer that structures the presented material. *The Museum of Cultural History's* Master Narrative presents a Viking ideal of brave and inventive explorers, while a Northern love of freedom is attached to the independent farmer in the *Norsk folkemuseum*. A series of accounts of Norwegians fighting for autonomy is offered by the *Armed Forces Museums*. These case studies demonstrate how Norwegian museum authors contribute to a Grand Narrative of Norway that goes as follows: a dormant nation awakens (at the beginning of the 19th century), then struggles (in the course of the 1800s) to become what it had always been destined to be (the potential revealed already by indomitable Vikings and independent farmers), finally succeeding when disentangled from its last union (in 1905), and defended once more by its own people when threatened by a new enemy (during WWII). This is a motif we know from general rhetoric of European national romanticism (Neumann 2001), but we find that Norwegian museum authors encompass the mythological basis of Scandinavism to a Grand Narrative of Norway disparaging earlier cultural and political dominance from Denmark and Sweden, and saluting the mediaeval kingdom of Norway. Thus the Grand Narrative of the museums in question corresponds with Allan Megill's understanding of the term as lying behind the Master Narratives: "a secularized version of the Christian narrative of pristine origin, struggle, and ultimate salvation", and are based on three separate Master Narratives "lying in the background, to be deployed selectively by the historian" (Megill, A., S. Shepard and P. Honenberger 2007).

Notes

- ¹ A personal union is a union of two or more different states sharing the same monarch while their boundaries, their laws and interests remain distinct.
- ² I will use its Norwegian name "Norsk folkemuseum" in this report in order to avoid that it is confused with the Museum of Cultural History.
- ³ Tune 1867, Gokstad 1880 and Oseberg 1904
- ⁴ *The Runic Archives* did not get a director until 1948.
- ⁵ Selskapet for Norges Vel (the Royal Norwegian Society for Development)
- ⁶ Demands for a Norwegian university were raised as early as the 17th century, as a result of the injunction that priests and officials in Norway needed university education, a demand upheld not least by the Norwegian Society formed by students in Copenhagen in 1772.
- ⁷ E.g. arranging their exhibition material in accordance with Thomsen's three-age system and implementing the new periodic understanding of history inherited from German historicism
- ⁸ *Oslo* was renamed *Christiania* during the reign of Christian IV (1577–1648), spelled *Kristiania* by language reformers from late 19th century, before regaining its original name in 1925.
- ⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Norway occasionally, and had a statue of Fridtjof the Bold raised in Vik (Sognefjorden) in 1913.

- 10 During the seventh meeting of The Scandinavian Society of Natural Sciences held in Christiania in 1856.
- 11 The Nansen family had a strong patriotic tradition. Fridtjof's grandfather, *Hans Nansen*, contributed to Norway's constitutional independence in 1814, settled in Sognefjord and gave his son the Saga inspired name "*Baldur Fridtjof*".
- 12 Appointed professor of Nordic Archeology in 1874, Rygh is considered the founder of the discipline in Norway, succeeding Rudolf Keyser's as collection manager, and establishing a chronological and typological overview of Oldsaksamlingen's Iron Age collection.
- 13 His Swedish background was held against him by Nationalists demanding the Oseberg publication to be a purely Norwegian production, thus his plans were halted.
- 14 E.g. Roald Amundsen (1872 - 1928) and Carl Lumholtz (1851 - 1922), <http://www.khm.uio.no/>
- 15 Topographical and mineralogical studies played an important part in establishing a national identity in Norway, and W. Chr. Brøgger published a monumental work in two volumes, "Norway in the 19th century" (*Norge i det 19de århundre*, 1900), together with prominent scientists serving the project of nation building.
- 16 A. W. Brøgger was additionally associated with Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture and earned the status of honorary member of *Norske Museers Landsforbund* (Norwegian Museum Association). He was a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters from 1914, and the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters from 1927 (Bergstol, Eek and Perminov 2004).
- 17 The case was finally brought to the Permanent Court of International Justice following fruitless negotiations between Denmark and Norway, which resulted in Norway losing the case.
- 18 Probably due to his studying archaeology in Germany during the early 1900s (Helliksen 1996)
- 19 The anticipated fourth volume of the Oseberg series presenting textiles was not published until 2006!
- 20 Brøgger also established the Borre Fund for promoting Norwegian Archaeology in 1916, and contributed to improving the legislation of antiquity preservation.
- 21 The Norwegian Saint Olav the Sacred was slain in this battle, and is considered responsible for the christening of Norway.
- 22 For a total overview: "P. Gjerde and S. Røyneland: *Anton Wilhelm Brøgger. Ein bibliografi*, h.oppg. Statens bibliotekhøgskole, 1988"
- 23 Publications important to this report besides those listed in the bibliography would be the following: *Borrefundet og Vestfoldkongenes graver* from 1916, *Short guide books: The Oseberg-Ship and The Oseberg-Room* from 1918/1927, *Osebergfundet, Vol. 1-3 and 5* (edited together with H. Falk and H. Shetelig) 1917-28, *Osebergdronningen* 1919, *Den norske bosetningen på Shetland-Orknøyene: studier og resultater* 1930, *The Viking Ship Finds: Guide* 1934, *Vinlandsferdene* 1937, *Sagaen om norskebygdene på Grønland* 1945, *Stiklestadslaget* 1946, *The Viking ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* 1950 written together with Haakon Shetelig.
- 24 *Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum*
- 25 Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/english/>
- 26 E.g. when attacked in a conservative newspaper (*Morgenbladet*) by rentier Sophus Larpent, questioning the museum's economic justifiability
- 27 The home of Fridtjof Nansen (and his wife, Eva) was located at Lysaker, close to Oslo.
- 28 The Ministry of Defence had a Defence committee develop plans and strategies for a national museum organization for the first time in 1969, and even demanded the collection material moved once more for temporarily storage (Eyvang, 1981). JH
- 29 Albeit not directly as they report to an intermediary military agency - "Forsvarsstaben" (the Staff of Defence).
- 30 The Naval Museum, The Resistance Museum and The Armory were already administered by the Army museum before the consolidation.
- 31 The department is referred to as The Defence Museum on the Norwegian Armed Forces' web pages, but the name refers technically to the building itself. *The Armed Forces Museum* is allegedly the adopted English name for the department (according to Terje H. Holm), but I use its website name throughout this report in order to keep it separate from the total organization of Norwegian military museums (*The Armed Forces Museums*).
- 32 <http://www.forsvarsbygg.no/Nasjonalefestningsverk/>
- 33 Architect Wilhelm Von Hanno (1826 - 1882) and Heinrich Ernst Schirmer's (1814 - 1887) red bricked Arsenal building from 1860, inspired by a mediaeval military fortress block.
- 34 "The Defence Museum" is the correct translation of the Norwegian name, "Forsvarsmuseet", and this is also the translation used on the Norwegian Armed Forces Museums' web page. Still the official English name of the museum is The Armed Forces Museum.
- 35 The only example of tapestry from mediaeval Scandinavia, and on the whole one of few in Romanesque style, dated to the period 1040-1190
- 36 <http://www.sfhm.se/>
- 37 L'Abée-Lund eavesdropped the German security police and the Nazi State Police as part of a secret police group (Færøy 1997).

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The Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg: The Cultural Memory of a Nation without National Borders

Frank Matthias Kammel

Germanisches Nationalmuseum

Abstract

The Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg showcases and researches German-speaking culture. Its foundation in 1852 was based on the conscience of unity of a nation that was characterised by a common language and culture, but lived in numerous separate states. It is thus a Germanic and not a German museum, since it concerned and still concerns itself with German culture beyond political boundaries. The task of the institution was therefore not to present the political or even military history of a state-nation. Instead, its aim was to relate vividly and communicate visually the social and cultural life of the German population in middle and middle-eastern Europe in the past. This aim has not changed until today, but it remains a major challenge to the visualization of cultural history and the idea of nation at the museum.

In the first half of the 19th century, an epoch of growing national statehood, the aspiring German bourgeoisie began to dream of a German nation-state, the model for which was provided by Britain, France, Spain and other European states. The revolution of 1848/49 was supposed to achieve democratic unification of Germany's many small particular states. Although that unification effort failed, involvement with the idea of the nation as a whole was kept alive within the cultural and historical domains. One of the intellectual protagonists of this movement was the Franconian nobleman Hans von und zu Aufseß (1801--1872). He repeatedly undertook efforts in this direction (fig. 1). In 1852 he was finally successful in having a motion passed in the Congress of German Historians and Antiquarians to establish a Germanic Museum. Just a year later the new establishment was recognized as a “national undertaking” by the German Federal Assembly in Frankfurt. From this time it was referred to as the Germanisches Nationalmuseum.



Figure 1: Hans von und zu Aufseß, the founder and first director of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in armor (second half 16th c.) and with crossbow (ca 1650). Photo by Johann Jacob Eberhardt in 1864 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

Its foundation was grounded in the consciousness of unity provided by the idea of a nation characterised by a common language and culture but as yet distributed in numerous separate states: the different German states, in the Habsburg Empire, Switzerland, in Alsace, the eastern parts of the French Empire, in the Baltic States parts of the Russian Empire, in Romania and so on. So it came to be as a ‘Germanic’ and not a ‘German’ museum, in as much as it concerned – and still concerns – itself with German culture beyond national boundaries, from Schleswig to South Tyrol and from Alsace to Transylvania. Its aim was to collect and make accessible comprehensive knowledge about history, literature and art of the German speaking regions in Middle Europe. The purpose of such a “German national museum” was to document the German-speaking world, which though in a state of extreme territorial fragmentation, was recognised as possessing a unified cultural heritage. The task of the young institution was not therefore to present the political or even military history of a non-existent nation-state, nor was it to form a splendid collection of fine arts. Instead, its aim was to relate vividly and communicate visually the social and cultural life of the German people in the past. This concept led the burgeoning institution to seek out relics of the past providing cultural-historical testimonies to the cultural conditions of life, in order to consider the question of what united the Germans as Germans.

From the beginning Nuremberg was favoured to become the future museum’s setting. The city had stood in the centre of the German Empire for more than five hundred years. And from Romantic period onwards it was praised as the typical German medieval town. So in 1857 the museum moved into the former Carthusian Monastery in the old town of Nuremberg. The basis for the museum was provided by Aufseß’ private collection. However, many other private individuals, communities, regional aristocrats and governments from the Netherlands to Austria and from Switzerland to the German speaking enclaves in Eastern Europe also responded to calls for support contributing with financial support and in other cases historical objects.

Aufseß’ priorities were, on the one hand, a well stocked library and a comprehensive collection of archival records and, on the other, such articles of daily use as were generally neglected in most contemporary museums.

The historical connection of the museum’s assignment corresponded to the collection’s presentation in a medieval monastery. In 1859 Aufseß commissioned, the then highly reputed artist, Wilhelm von Kaulbach, to paint a monumental fresco for the former Carthusian church. This commission was a reflection of the agenda pursued by the museum’s founders. It portrayed Emperor Otto III opening Charlemagne’s crypt in Aachen cathedral. It can be seen as an allegory of the museum’s objective, to descend into the depths of history, shining the “torchlight of science” onto the splendour of the old empire. They intended to use the collection as testimonials to German culture in order to help compile a clear picture of the great age of the German nation; the later being principally recognised as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

There were specific criteria outlining how cultural history was to be presented in the museum. For example, a “weapons hall” was not only intended to house collections of weapons and armour, but also contained altar figures of aristocratic and knightly saints, which were to epitomise the figure of the knight. The “women’s hall” featured all kinds of elements connected with domestic life. For indeed as one member of the museum’s staff, August von Eye, stated in 1855 the reason behind this was that when it comes to illustrating history, “old pots and pans

[are] just as eloquent as are much admired masterpieces of art.” (quotation source). In a “picture hall”, works of fine art were presented not as art, but as reproductions of past reality. For instance, a fountain figure served to document farmers’ customs and rural life.

A display of what was considered to be the apogee of German cultural history, primarily in the form of sculptures, paintings and plaster casts was established in the former Carthusian church (fig. 2). It included copies of the tombs of Henry the Lion and his wife from Brunswick and casts of busts found in St Vitus’ Cathedral in Prague that had been purchased in 1857, depicting members of the family and royal household of Emperor Charles IV. Shortly afterwards, King George V of Hanover donated the casts of the “Brunswick Lion” and the Pillar of Christ from Hildesheim Cathedral to the cause, thus using important sculptural monuments to document the Guelphs’ powerful position in the medieval empire. Accordingly, the Carthusian church took on the character of a hall of fame of German history. It was of course impossible to portray the cultural history of a nation without that nation's important dynasties.



Figure 2: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Display in the former Carthusian church. Photo ca 1879 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

Although Aufseß's successor August Essenwein (1831--1892) made some modifications to the museum concept, he did not change this core aspect. Indeed, as of 1866 he gradually started to extend the Carthusian monastery in Nuremberg to create an extensive neo-medieval museum complex. Donations from the kings of Bavaria and Prussia, from the Emperor of Austria and other German princes, the establishment of the German Empire in 1871 and grants from the new national government as of 1874 provided a good financial basis for this expansion. Over the next decade, the renovated cloisters received some 250 casts from the tombs of German rulers, generals and clerics, academics and artists from medieval times and Renaissance, some of them were even embellished in colour in imitation of the originals (fig. 3). Gravestones, such as that of King Günther von Schwarzburg in Frankfurt Cathedral and those of archbishops and archchancellors Peter von Aspelt and Siegfried von Eppstein in Mainz Cathedral, were used to present historic personalities, further examples being the grave of the poet Conrad Celtis in Vienna and the gravestone of the jester Til Eulenspiegel in Mölln. The concept behind this was one of a Valhalla, a temple for the cult of great men. Moreover, the collection thus represented a unique, three-dimensional compendium of the greatest artistic achievements in German sepulchral sculpture.



Figure 3: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Cloisters of the former Carthusian monastery with plaster casts of tombs of famous Germans. Photo by Carl Leidig in 1895 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum)

Additionally, a building inaugurated in 1880 was also dedicated to exhibiting the cultural history of a nation as a display of artistic achievements, presenting plaster casts of Romanesque and Gothic sculptures and reliefs. The building itself had also been constructed in the Romanesque and Gothic styles, while a number of its halls were decorated with copies of medieval mural paintings. Everything of distinction from the history of German Medieval and Renaissance sculpture was represented in this building. The external emblem of this sculptural encyclopaedia of plaster copies was a concrete cast of the Bremen Roland (fig. 4). As was the case of the other plaster casts, this was also a gift; a sculptural symbol of civic pride and freedom, the

cast was financed by the citizens and captains of Bremen in the years 1879-80. The Prussian and Bavarian railways agreed to transport the statue to Nuremberg free of charge.



Figure 4: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. So called Reichshof-Building with the concrete cast of the Bremen Roland (destroyed in 1968). Photo ca. 1890 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

In order to achieve a fitting representation of the nation's history as a linguistic and cultural community, it was necessary to provide the visitor with the following elements set in an appropriate architectural setting (fig. 5): a) references to the names of historic personalities, b) top-class works of fine arts.



Figure 5: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. The new buildings from time around 1880. Photo taken in 1902 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

However, to complete the narrative of this panorama of cultural history, the decision was taken to also include the visual depiction of significant historical events. The stained glass windows, which formed a key architectural component of the new museum's building, offered a particularly good frame for this. Glass paintings from a 17-part cycle illustrating the “most important moments from the history and cultural life of the cities” were designed to this end. These historical images display, for instance, important battles and the coronations of rulers as well as the laying of the foundation stone for Cologne Cathedral and scenes from the Nuremberg merchants' spice trade.

Around 1900, another extremely important element was added to the items on display at the museum: rural life. Even though the museum had taken the view that artisan craftsmanship was the basis of cultural development and had illustrated its significance using pertinent testimonials before this time. Rural culture had come to be recognised as independent and representative of its own values. Rapid changes in society due to industrialisation and nascent urbanisation aroused interest in what was known as “popular culture”. The museum looked to the rural past for models of how people used to live and work in bygone times. Taking impetus from the presentation of traditional, regional households at the world fairs of the late 19th century, the museum established a collection dedicated to rural dwellings. Entire interiors were bought up to present country life – from the North Sea islands to Lower Saxony, the Lower Rhine region to the Tyrol, including Switzerland and western Bohemia – thus offering typical examples of the

traditional lifestyle of the Germans including the Germans in Austria, Bohemia, Switzerland and the eastern enclaves in Hungary, Romania and Russia.

The acquisition of a comprehensive collection of folkloric costumes was based on similar objectives. Opened in 1905, this section comprised 370 figurines, primarily showing garments for celebrations and weddings but also traditional mourning dress and children's clothing from the most important areas in the German-speaking countries, from the western Low Countries and Alsace to Pomerania and Transylvania (fig. 6). Each of these traditional costumes represented a particular region. The collection was thus a three-dimensional compendium of stereotypes. It was a monument to agricultural life seen through the nostalgic eyes of its time, showing a world where farmers represented the venerable providers of food and goods for the people and constituted the backbone of the nation. The traditional costumes were synecdoche of the entire nation, symbolizing the “personified nation” and all the peoples that it was made up of. And since these went far beyond the boundaries of the German Empire (Reich) at its time, it is an outstanding example of the museum’s concept, a concept of a nation that retained its essence, unbroken by any state frontiers.



Figure 6: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Collection of traditional folkloric costumes. Display opened in 1905 Photo ca 1933/34 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

Although, after the end of the First World War this section remained untouched, displays in place since the 19th century and portraying various eras through a combination of all kinds of material culture, were dismantled. The most significant change was the separation of fine art from all the other artefacts. Great emphasis was placed on the tendency to see art as a valid

expression of national identity, not least by means of special exhibitions of the work of great German artists. It was not until the mid 1930s that attempts were made – in a succession of 14 rooms and by making use of all genres – to return to a chronological so called “survey of the masterpieces of art and culture from the Migration Period to the 30 Years War”. This ambitious project presented the above-mentioned period – including the Middle Ages – in accordance with the spirit of the times, in a Nazi and anticlerical perspective, as a completely secular era. Its very title was evidence to its simplification of culture, dividing it into two categories, fine arts and arts and crafts. Significantly it referred back to the principal which from the start refused to see the history of the German nation as the history of a geographical state. Therefore the fundamental aims of a museum whose focus had always transcended objective national boundaries entered into a marriage with the mindset of the time, a conviction of Germany’s potential as a superpower, in a fusion of the museum’s historic mission and Nazi ideology that was as subtle as it was sinister.

This can be demonstrated by looking at one particular display, that of the sculpture collection’s most attractive works: the larger than life-sized figure from the tomb of Count Henry III of Sayn alongside his daughter from the Monastery (Premonstratensian) Church of Sayn near Koblenz. As the largest extant wooden grave figure and the first known representation of a parent alongside its child in Germany’s sepulchral sculpture, it is one of the superlative examples of 13th century German sculpture. But in the 1937 Nuremberg exhibition, it was positioned as the centrepiece of a sequence on the culture of the German knight (fig. 7). The work was the uncontested highlight in a gallery labelled “The German Knight”. Commenting on the other exhibits, the museum guide referred to it as the “most valid and noblest formal expression of the knightly type” of men.



Figure 7: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Look into the display of Medieval Culture in 1937 with the Tomb of Duke Heinrich III. von Sayn. Photo 1937 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

After the Second World War the museum consciously distanced itself from this kind of ideological appropriation of artefacts of cultural history. The severely damaged museum was deliberately reconstructed along Modernist lines with Bauhaus architect Sep Ruf (brought in to complete the project). The public collection addressed predominantly themes of form and style in the development of art. As a natural consequence this led to a decisive move away from its reflection upon the concept of the nation. In terms of financing, contributions and general identification, connections between Germany and other German-speaking countries (nations) and regions were severed following the defeat of Hitler's Germany, even more drastically so than during the period after the First World War. The Austrians and the Swiss, for example, could not or did not wish to see themselves represented as "being German" by the Germanisches Nationalmuseum. At the same time, the political establishment of the newly formed Federal Republic still felt that the museum should be dedicated to a representation of the complete, undivided nation. Here they were of course primarily referring to those parts of eastern Germany which were now either in Russian hands, had been forcibly relinquished under the terms of the peace treaty with the Allied forces or from which the German population had been deported. This led to the installation of so-called "memorials to the home country" between 1950 and 1965, intended to create a "national archive" for the cultures of those groups of German people who had been expelled from the Eastern parts of the country (fig. 8). These halls, holding cultural artefacts from Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia, Bohemia etc., greatly enhanced the existing collection, increasing also its impact on a national-political level. Consequently, the museum was assigned the role in cultural policy of acting as a "refuge for the German soul", which it would retain for approximately the next 15 years. It seems that in this context the nation was defined through its territorial and cultural losses.



Figure 8: Germanisches Nationalmuseum. So called Memorials to the Home Countries. Look into the display for German culture in western Bohemia and Silesia. Photo 1952 (© Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

Incidentally, there have been various attempts in the institution's history to give the museum's collection a stronger nation-state orientation, though such efforts never lead to a permanent change in attitude. One example would be the museum's acquisition in 1866 of remnants from the dissolution of Germany's first parliament in St. Pauls Church in Frankfurt, i.e. historical documents of great national importance. Nevertheless, up until today, the museum's collections and research have continued to concentrate on the German nation beyond historical state borders. As has always been the case, living up to this principle can prove rather problematic. However, in past decades several temporary exhibitions focused on themes of cultural history in German-speaking regions have taken up this challenge. In addition, the permanent collection has been subject to successive alterations and changes with the intention of creating an overview of the respective eras of cultural history. And now in a period of European unification, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum is continuing in its task to clarify issues surrounding the national character. But now more than ever before cultural connections between the German culture and that of their neighbours, the interaction between these cultures and their mutual influence on each other constitutes a prominent part of the public's interest in the museum's collections and displays.

The basic aim of the museum has not changed from the beginning until today in general. That's why the Deutsches Historisches Museum was founded in Berlin in 1987: to create a national museum of history of the German states. This new institution is committed primarily to the political history of a sovereign state, the Federal Republic of Germany and their predecessors, but not to the cultural history of a nation, that defines itself by its language.

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The Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden and its national agenda: an overview of the 1900-1970 period

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Abstract

How has a national narration been established and reproduced at Sweden's central museum for Prehistory and the Middle Ages, the Museum of National Antiquities (MNA, today named the National Historical Museum)? The chronological framework for answering this question here relates to the period from 1900 to 1970 with an emphasis on the 1920-50 period, the foundational time of the Swedish Welfare state. During these decades the MNA changed on many levels, including a new building and a new organizational structure, which entailed a change of exhibitions as well. At the same time the museum presents a remarkable continuity with regard to its objectives and agenda.

During most of the 20th century the link between statistically processed object types and ethnographic interpretations was and is a discursive construction. However, the situation between 1900 and 1950 was unique with regard to the MNA exhibitions and the ideological profile of archaeology. What flourished then was an archaeology that might be characterized as nationally romantic, culturally conservative and racial, and one might add that this changed only gradually in the wake of the Second World War. Still, and despite certain sympathizers of Nazi Germany amongst its practitioners, Swedish archaeology cannot be compared to that developed in the context of Nazi ideology. It did not advocate or actively support racial war, euthanasia or aggressive racial hygiene (Baudou 2002). Nevertheless, Swedish archaeology formed part of an international context, where cooperation and correspondence between researchers, not least German ones, were a natural part of the practice. This article provides a brief outline of the theme of national identity and archaeological representation in Sweden, mainly through an interpretation of the displays of the early 20th century in the MNA.

Introduction

The Museum of National Antiquities (hence MNA, today named the National Historical Museum) was from the beginning in 1866 a national museum for pre-history, and thus a museum for research and exhibition that visualized and exemplified theories and perspectives in contemporary archaeology. As demonstrated by Fredrik Svanberg, Swedish archaeology was in the early 20th century more than “influenced” by physical anthropology research. In the discipline’s own perception of its history it was maintained for a long time that it had not been interwoven with physical anthropology and/or race biology. A closer look clearly shows that early archaeology was both theoretically and practically collaborated with physical anthropology in this period. Svanberg points out that the main objective of archaeological practice before and after 1900 was the search for “Sweden and the origin and evolution of the Swedes”. Previous references to “our ancestors”, “peoples” and “tribes” progressively adopted such terms as the “the Nordic type”, “Germanic tribes” and sometimes with explicit racial references. The basic idea was that the Swedish people, equal with the concept of a now existing Swedish majority culture, originated from primeval times, making it unique in the world, because it had in large developed independently of other European high cultures. Furthermore, Swedish culture, Aryan or Germanic, was not just unique, but compared to that of other peoples it also constituted “an advanced culture”. Svanberg terms the research carried out in accord with this discourse as “ideological racism, without a specific race concept” (Svanberg in Print: 11-27). Science journalist, Maja Hagerman has called the same phenomenon “contextual racism” (Hagerman 2006).

By the 1900s’ Swedish (and Danish) antiquarian research was at the international front of archaeological method and theory. The archaeologists Hans Hildebrand (1842-1913) and Oscar Montelius (1843-1921), in turn Director-Generals of the Central Board of National Antiquities as well as directors of MNA (Hildebrand was Director-General of National Antiquities between 1879 and 1907, and Montelius took over the position from 1907 to 1913), had both attained international reputation as leading researchers in archaeological dating thanks to their use of the so-called typological method. This method focuses on statistical mappings of the style-related attributes of ancient finds, and on combining the analysis with field contexts in order to establish chronology.

Most of the research took place in storage departments where the objects were arranged and studied, which thereafter resulted in exhibition displays, where the artefacts were shown according to the typology and culture determined by the researchers. There is reason to claim that from 1870 onwards there was established a kind of normalized practice of archaeology and antiquarian research that lasted until the 1970:s (Lövgren 1996:32f; Pettersson 2005: 326). By this I refer to the fact that academic research often took place *in* the museums and that the curator often were both an acknowledged scientist as well as an employee at the museum. The archaeologist and Director-General Hans Hildebrand, referring to new evolutionary archaeology, declared in 1880: “Only after beginning to study the *types* with regard to their character and development has the study of material culture become a science; and our times have to strive to make this stage [in the archeology field] wholeheartedly enter the typological stage.”(Hildebrand 1880:54) Ancient history, including the Viking period, the Middle Ages, as well as medieval church art, was

exhibited at MNA with scientific pretensions, either in cabinets with typologically and geographically arranged objects, or by church artefacts arranged by style and functional-oriented categories. Characteristic of this visualization of material culture was the idea that human culture could be traced, analyzed and displayed with the support of statistically classified archaeological findings. Even the Viking Age concept was actually coined by Oscar Montelius, in a popular science publication edited in 1872, where he used ancient finds as evidence of saga narratives of the lives of seafaring heroes (Hagerman 2006: 276). Hence, culture could be observed and interpreted *through* artefacts, which conversely meant that the way things were arranged structured the imagined “culture”.

In another study Fredrik Svanberg has convincingly demonstrated that the actual collecting systems and practices in fact dictated the way prehistoric culture was categorized and exhibited. He even goes as far as claiming that the classification systems, after they were established, dictated both analyses and concrete activities in the museums: “It will be through the classification systems of the collections that objects and history will be viewed, staff will be hired, and current practices will be decided on.” (Svanberg 2009: 57)

The aim of MNA’s activities was, as Hans Hildebrand himself had vigorously declared, to give a complete picture of the nation’s cultural life during its various stages of development (Svanberg 2009: 47). This vision progressively expressed a permeated ‘research program’ emerging step by step. The leading actors of MNA had, in addition, managed to motivate state authorities and civil servants to look upon the reassessment of the past through the materials of archaeology as a state concern, leading to the passing of government acts on heritage preservation in the 19th century (Molin 2003). The acts guaranteed, for instance, that all ancient finds of scientific or aesthetic importance were to be included in the Museum’s collection. This did not, however, take place without conflicts with private archaeologists, who publicly questioned the monopoly of the state. Nevertheless, in the long run, the centralization strategy prevailed and *everything* of major importance was to be gathered at MNA, where leading antiquarian scholars established themselves. Its displays came to express a programmatic argumentation about the homogeneity, long-lastingness and distinctive character of the Swedish people and Swedish culture.

The National Historical Museum and its permanent exhibition 1900-1970

MNA is a national museum whose physical location has changed during its existence. The museum opened in 1866 on the ground floor and in the basement of the National Museum, which is still located right across from the Royal Palace. In the late 1930s the collections and staff moved from the premises of the National Museum to the present venue in the district of Östermalm. The activities of the “new museum” were officially inaugurated with the exhibition “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden” in 1943, which will be described below.

In the early 1900, three museums in Stockholm were charged with the task of representing the nation’s cultural history: the National Museum, MNA, and Nordic Museum (founded by Artur Hazelius). Arranged in accordance with the academic disciplines that still use artefacts as their source material, the National Museum is today a museum for art history, MNA is basically an archaeological museum, while the Nordic Museum is primarily an ethnological museum. However, the two latter museums also have a clear focus on art history, as well as general history.

The old museum

The aim of the museum and its collecting process was explicitly “patriotic”, as was explicitly reflected in the exhibitions. The principle of organization was the chronological-typological arrangement of finds displayed, in combination with a geographical division according to Sweden’s provinces related to an (imaginary) Swedish cultural landscape. The new archaeological periodization i.e., the division into the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages were regarded as evolutionary stages in the cultural development of the ancient Swedish people. The exhibition sections followed this tripartite division, and further divided material into research-related sub-periods. Physically, the exhibition was presented in large broad and tall cabinets, flanked by display cases, all filled with row after row of artefacts divided by type. The pedagogical idea was that the visitor should follow the nation’s cultural and material development from the Stone Age to the Modern Age (from 1919 with a break at the Middle Ages) by following this chronological and thematic trail from room to room.

Each cabinet was geographically labeled, “Skåne”, “Halland”, etc., at the top of its middle section. Sub-divisions of the Stone Age were referred to in the frame above some cabinets, for instance as “Younger Stone Age. Period I. The era of the thin-necked flint axe and round stone axe”. The signs and the museum display indicated that the type categories were ways of labeling the underlying cultural history dimension that permeated the exhibition rooms. Only the initiated visitor could, however, “see” this culture, for example by watching long rows of thin-necked flint axes.

The display cases were supplemented by such as elements as a couple of models of especially famous ancient monument areas, such as Ales stenar (‘Ale’s Stones’) in Skåne. The model of a bronze tumulus was also shown, as well as full size copy of the Rök Stone, the rune stone showpiece. There were scarcely any instructive texts or maps – a visitor outside the narrow circle of experts need to be guided physically, or to consult the written guides which were printed and revised regularly from the early 1870s onwards. Fredrik Svanberg sums up how an ideal visit was expected to take place through the exhibition rooms:

In the old exhibition at the National Museum you entered, after passing two anterooms, the big Stone Age Hall and then passed through a gallery where you met first the Bronze Age, next the Iron Age on the island of Gotland, and last the Iron Age on the Swedish mainland [...]. You then entered the Viking Hall with its coin cabinet in an adjacent gallery (the location of the coin cabinet shifted over time). Finally you visited the big “Church Hall” or “Deep Hall”, called so because the floor was depressed (now housing the museum shop and other activities), where medieval and modern objects were exhibited. This overarching disposition differed somewhat at the opening in 1866 but was fully implemented by the time of the first written guide published by Montelius in 1872 and only slightly altered before the museum moved to Narvavägen [in 1939, RP]. The changes implied a gradual thinning out of objects in the early 20th century to make the museum easier to grasp. (Svanberg 2009: 48)

The initial ambition had been to arrange and show *everything*, but as collections grew this became a practical impossibility. The new strategy adopted in the early 20th century was thus to arrange part of the collection in storage rooms, another part in special study collections for experts, and a further part in pedagogically arranged “public sections” for regular visitors.

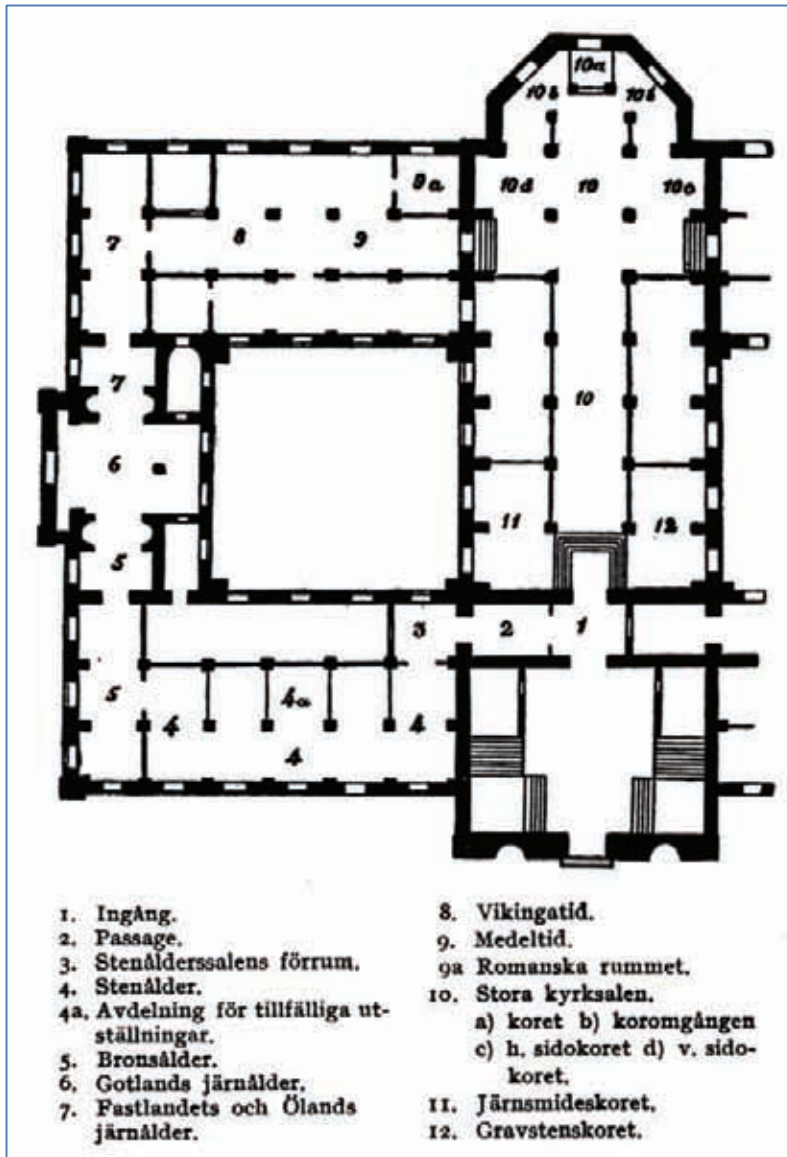


Figure 1: The Historical Museum exhibition on the ground floor of the National Museum in 1929 (according to the back cover of the collection guide). [Copied from Svanberg 2009 p. 49.]

Translation: 1. Entrance 2. Passage 3. Stone Age Hall Anteroom 4. The Stone Age 4a. Section for Temporary Exhibitions 5. The Bronze Age 6. The Gotland Iron Age 7. The Mainland and Öland Iron Age 8. The Viking Age 9. The Middle Ages 9a. The Romanesque Room 10. The Big Church Hall a) The Chancel b) The Ambulatory c) The Right Side Chancel d) The Left Side Chancel 11. The Wrought Iron Chancel 12. The Tombstone Chancel.

As Director-General of National Antiquities between 1923-46, the ambassadorial art historian, Sigurd Curman (1879-1966) took the reins, and piloted a long period of reorganization and modernization. Ten years in office as Director-General Curman stated his vision of the public museum's role in popular education:

A museum should try, by systematic studies and collections, to solve certain specific problems; it should make its collections intelligible to the general public, school children in particular, through lectures, demonstrations and similar activities. Special exhibitions should create opportunities to study for those interested. Only then will a museum become what it

could and should be, a *living institution*, which effectively promotes the knowledge and understanding of its field of activities. (Curman 1933: 34)

Thanks to Curman's authority, his instructions became the norm for MNA's internal work as well as for how the new county museums should be built and maintained (Laine 1985: 138f).

At the same time Birger Nerman (1888-1971), Professor of Archaeology, published his work *Det svenska rikets uppkomst* ('The Rise of the Swedish Kingdom', 1925), where he applied an interdisciplinary approach – in sharp contrast to the strict source critical methodology of C. Weibull, a contemporary historian – in using ancient historical sources as well as Icelandic sagas to analyze archaeological material. Nerman's former fellow student and current colleague Sune Lindqvist (1887-1976) also specialized on the *Beowulf* poem and on nation-building theories. The latter was a popular theme. Ever since the early 1880s when the archaeologist Knut Stjerna excavated some spectacular graves at Vendel church in the province of Uppland, an event that gained considerable media attention. Archaeologists speculated about the existence of a loosely coherent state with its center at Old Uppsala as far back as the 6th century AD. This Proto State was called "Sveariket ('the realm of the Svear)". A main line in Lindqvist's and Nerman's research was to search for empirical evidence of the Svea state and its unique people. That Sweden was among the oldest nations in Europe was a frequent assertion. Both these archaeologists were, at least in the 1920s, employed as scientific experts at MNA. Furthermore, Nerman became Director of the museum from 1938. As professor and teacher Lindqvist gained an influence over "nearly the whole of the Swedish archaeological post-war generation" (Nerman 1925: 267; Hyenstrand 1996: 2, 17, 92).

With Lindqvist and other archaeologists employed at the museum, Curman prescribed changes to the ground floor exhibitions. An aesthetic approach to the display of objects now became important in the new arrangement: creating air and space around the ancient finds was part of a novel modern object language that was not only to convey facts from antiquarian science but was also designed to communicate even more forcefully than before, aesthetic, normative and national values to a broad audience. At the same time instructive texts and maps began to be used to pedagogically reinforce the arranged items. Several innovations, like reconstructions of helmets and shields found in graves, were also exhibited as a complement to the authentic objects (Curman 1928: 9f; Nerman 1946: 203f). This became the initial phase in an attempt at implementing contemporary socio-political visions about making use of exhibitions to raise the general educational level.

Still, it was obvious that the older scientific exhibition paradigm had not been abandoned. The exhibits were primarily treated as objects for research and collecting and as arguments for an assumedly fact-based analysis of ancient times. A chronological-typological section was once more set up, as well as a display case for objects of a "technical" interest. In another place of the exhibition the important land-rising theories developed in cooperation with geologists became the starting point for presenting the age and the provisional location of ancient finds.

Some of the objects were now arranged like goods in a shop window. This may be considered as an expression of "the Curman generation's" way of attributing an added cultural value to the ancient objects beyond their established archaeological value. Giving the archaeological objects a new aesthetically and artistically valuable dimension meant strengthening yet another aspect of the complex national "reverence value". The display technique thus re-established the national

romantic and the emotional as well as the approaching functional and “propagandistically pedagogical” value. Copies and reconstructions reinforced the latter feature, as did the space now reserved for temporary exhibitions (Pettersson 2001: 131; Thordeman 1946: 136).

New study collections were introduced as a complement to the public sections; the latter now displayed the showpieces, i.e. those artefacts that were thought to most clearly reflect the historical development of culture (or the panorama of culture) that the archaeologists wanted to convey. The actual result was an even more idealized picture of the past than before. With the thinning out of the cabinets to the benefit of the showpieces, Birger Nerman’s and Sune Lindqvist’s national romantic picture of Svea chiefs, and the supreme style and taste of the enterprising Vikings was “proved” by the empirical authority of the displays. Hence the visitor was now able to *view history as it was*, and even to compare the native heritage with the “level” of other civilized peoples.

The new museum

Not long after Curman took over the chair, he also started working for a new, more spacious, building for MNA including rooms for the administration (SOU 1925:15: 123-128). Curman’s principal views about the design of the building had been spelled out in a proposal dated January 1928, where the social and educational function of museums was described: “The development from a royal cabinet of curiosities, designed for the diversion of a select few, to a scientific research institute has gone further to make museums into institutions for popular education, for the purpose of serving in the widest possible way all layers of society and their desire to gain a knowledge of the development of the history of mankind and the fatherland in various fields” (Curman 1929: 22). The foundation stone of the new building was laid in 1934. With the new Historical Museum the social pedagogical function would be fulfilled. Curman’s objective was to recapture and visualize “the fairly unique position that the society of the Swedish people occupies in the world.” To Curman, Swedish culture and its heritage was not only unique, but constituted the very driving force and motivation for the preservation of ancient monuments:

Few, if any of the other European peoples are likely to have settled permanently within their present boundaries for such a long time as the Swedish people. Everything indicates that its people have in the past millennia always been free and independent, developing a culture that has compared well with that of southern, climatically favoured countries.

All of this should be possible to illustrate in a clear and instructive manner, in a new, spacious and well-organized museum thanks to which the knowledge of these circumstances will become public property, all the more easily grasped as they have become visible to the eye. And it must without doubt be looked upon as being of the utmost importance from many points of view that all classes of society should be enlightened about the main lines of our development history, the connection between the past, the present and the future, the laws of evolution and the importance of the labour of bygone generations. Such knowledge may constitute the safest foundation for a sound love of the fatherland and a sensible civic spirit.¹ (Curman in His Majesty’s proposition, Nr 98, 1929, 1929: 23)

Curman’s view of Swedish cultural heritage, of the role of MNA in educating the people, and of the importance of making as many as possible aware of the homogeneity of Swedish culture are here motivated with reference to “the laws of evolution”. When the very same passage was reprinted in the exhibition catalogue published for the inaugural exhibition of the new museum in 1943 Curman had, however, added a conclusion directly borrowed from Oscar Montelius: “[...]”

as well as of the remarkable continuity in our society's multi-millennial existence (Curman 1945: 22)". It was the history of the development of a people, the evolutionary process of culture, which was to be given even stronger emphasis at the new MNA. For this vision Curman received political support (Riksdagens skrivelse Nr 176, 1929). On April 17, 1943, the King opened the exhibition "Tiotusen år i Sverige ("Ten Thousand Years in Sweden")" and hence officially inaugurated the new building of the National History Museum.

Ten Thousand Years in Sweden

The main agenda of the inaugural exhibition was to illustrate something like a general mustering of the competence of Swedish museums in exhibition pedagogy as well as mirroring recent experiences in antiquarian research. The result was that a number of novel museum pedagogical approaches were tried.

The Stone Age:

The Stone Age section was planned in detail by the archaeologist Axel Bagge (1894-1953). He had a modern approach. In an internal memorandum from 1935 he even included film projections and slide shows in the exhibition rooms. It also appears that Bagge was deeply involved in the constantly recurring issue of the racial identity and settlement area of the ancient "Swedes". In his memo he states that: "the human skeletons from the Stone Age and the associated presentations of racial issues, diseases, etc., might be placed in this department". The section he was referring to was the part of the Stone Age exhibition dealing with "Trade in the Stone Age". The typological method applied to single ancient finds was to be followed according to tradition, but not too explicitly: "The typological approach is, however, at present in low esteem in Swedish archaeology and may often be said to be of nothing but historical interest and for this reason should perhaps therefore not play a too predominant and consequently too misleading role in a methodological section." (Bagge 1935, ATA). Bagge instead advocated an "ethnogeographical" display principle based on illustrating cultural circles chronologically and geographically in their spatial extension.

Bagge's in many ways innovative concept of exhibition transformed the Stone, Bronze and Iron Age sections, allowing them to appear as pedagogical and empirical statements for a cultural analysis that was characterized by nationalistic and to some extent also race oriented perspectives. Like his colleagues Lindqvist and Nerman, the fact that Bagge held a skeptical view of typology as an illustrative principle for the exhibitions was probably related to the view that this method of organizing and displaying artefacts did not clearly prove and demonstrate the notions of human and cultural areas that they wished to illustrate.

The exhibition was no longer organized by province and object type. Naturally, the tripartite period system remained, but each department was divided according to cultural history themes like ancient technology or trade and industry. The naming of "cultures" shown was however still linked to types or finding-places of typical artefacts: the "Pitted Ware Culture, the Aunietz Culture, the Boat Axe Culture", etc.

A scientific approach, analogous to that of the natural sciences, permeated the sections. Considerable space was, for instance, devoted to new geological findings and their importance for archaeological dating as well to the views of ancient landscape. Many illustrations highlighted

the effects of the continental ice sheet, supplemented by a whole wall of relief pictures showing the withdrawal of the ice across the Scandinavian Peninsula.

Among the pedagogical innovations were, for example, beside the display cases, jutting out (and mountable) placards with clear eye-catching headings and a brief informative text, sometimes supplemented by a few illustrative pictures. One example of a placard about the Older Stone Age (supplemented by a case containing selected type samples of artifacts):

STONE AGE POTTERIES

Probably operated by women, as among present-day primitive peoples.

The vessels were made by hand without a turntable and were burned in open fireplaces.

The above picture shows a present-day primitive pottery.

Worth noting, along with the gender aspect and the obvious ethnocentric touch, is that the analysis here as in many other parts of the exhibition alluded to a comparative ethno-archaeological method. Ancient domestic culture was compared to “present-day primitive peoples”. Another example is an exhibition item with shafted stone axes from the Swedish Stone Age, parallel with a placard containing the text: “Stone axes shafted by present-day Stone Age peoples”. The immediate purpose was of course to illustrate usage and techniques, but it also involved an indirect didactic reference to the cultural evolutionary outlook that permeated all the exhibition sections. “Cultures” were represented by (race-specific) peoples and these were characterized by their particular techniques, crafts and styles. Some peoples obviously still remained at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder, thus offering an opportunity to study their “primitive” techniques in analogy with ancient Swedish artefacts.

Didactically, the starting point of the Stone Age section was the grand Palaeolithic perspective. Building on contemporary knowledge of paleontological and archaeological periods, the whole of a shorter wall introduced the visitor to the evolutionary perspective: “THE EMERGENCE OF MANKIND”. Three main races were shown, with the Swedish proto-human, naturally, descending from the Cro-Magnon race:

THE PALEOLITHIC ERA

EUROPE'S OLDEST STONE AGE

Pithecanthropus erectus, the erect ape man

Neanderthal Man, the main race of the Older Paleolithic culture

Cro-Magnon Man, the main race of the Younger Paleolithic culture

A second shorter wall fulfilled a tradition from the early days of the museum by displaying a so-called comparative collection. A grandiose suite of pictures was shown containing explicit parallels between ancient native Swedish culture and famous “high cultures”, for example “South Scandinavia and the Middle East c. 8000 to c. 1500 BC.” The message was crystal clear: Swedish antiquity was compared and put on an even level with, for example, Mesopotamian and Egyptian high culture. This kind of comparison was in itself a further sign of the view that “cultures” can be observed and ranked by means of a battery of empirical facts. The function of the

comparative collection was to place “our” native culture in relief to other cultures, further reinforced and motivated by the notion that every cultural pattern was characterized by a “people”, a “tribe” or a “race”. Another aim, apparent from previous exhibition guides, was to emphasize that ancient Swedish culture, at least periodically, had maintained a high ‘international standard’ during several prehistoric periods. As had been established in the museums display tradition, showpieces from the Bronze Age, for instance, were presented as culturally equal to finds from Mycenae in Greece. And archaeologist did not hesitate to act as arbiters of taste in connection with such ranked evaluations: “The big dress pins with bowl-formed heads are grotesque examples of the taste corruption of the late Bronze Age” was how Sune Lindqvist could express himself in the museum guide from 1929 (Lindqvist 1929: 16).

Ancient man had always been the focus of archaeological research; still, this human being had scarcely been visualized in the MNAs early exhibitions. It may be argued that this circumstance changed drastically with “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden”. For instance, many functions of the artefacts were now illustrated by simple human shaped cardboard figures that were holding them. The fact that most stone axes on display now were shafted was also a simple way of changing the tone of the exhibition language. By visualize the artefacts as ancient man-made tools, they changed connotation from a previous role as scientific type samples in a typological oriented taxonomy. The technique of using knock stones, for example, was now accompanied by illustrative pictures flanking the authentic objects. A third novel approach exemplifies the analogies drawn between ancient objects and anthropological culture; it was the use of pictures of how contemporary “primitive peoples” used the corresponding artefacts to illustrate the cultural pattern of prehistoric Sweden.

The Middle Ages

When it came to planning for the medieval and the modern sections, the artistic or aesthetic element was apparently given higher priority than the more scientific and pedagogical approach of the prehistoric ones. Here the artefacts were arranged to “speak for themselves” without learned comments, or teaching placards. This fact aroused some criticism in the press, but the curators justified themselves by claiming that they had not had enough time. An equally plausible explanation is, however, that the *aesthetic* approach to medieval cultural history had already been firmly established thanks to the commitment from Curman and his colleagues from the 1910s onwards to promote medieval church art as a national heritage. Hence the Romanesque and Gothic halls were designed as church replicas in order to match the exhibits. Pedagogical texts or slide presentations were in 1943 (and still into present days) notably absent, especially in the medieval section. Peter Aronsson has suggested that this take on mediaeval heritage has a special function in dealing with the potentially problematic heritage of Catholicism in Protestant countries, transforming it into an aesthetic heritage that is hence valuable rather than representative of a dangerous other (Aronsson 2011: 60-83; Aronsson, 2012, in prep).

As in Curman’s previous church restorations, the aim was to achieve a contemplative atmosphere, an effect that Curman probably considered at least as essential as the factual scientific information value (Tegnér 1997: 555ff).

Ten Thousand Years in Sweden – a symbolic exhibition

Finally, the exclusive elements, the showpiece exhibitions, should be mentioned. A gold and a silver room were prepared for a burglary-safe display of the museum's most precious ancient treasures. These were later supplemented by a silver- and goldsmith gallery. In these rooms the medieval showpieces could be shown in illuminated display cases and thereby function as public magnets. This meant increasing entrance revenues, while simultaneously demonstrating that the value of the Swedish heritage was not solely of a spiritual nature.

“Ten Thousand Years in Sweden” remained for decades the model for designing permanent exhibitions in the new county museums round the country. According to Fredrik Svanberg, most of the arrangement for the exhibition remained into the new millennium 2000: “[...] albeit with modifications in 1951 (the Younger Iron Age), 1958 (the Older Iron Age), 1974–1977 (the Younger Stone Age) and 1978 (the Older Stone Age) and other minor changes. [...] In the 1980s the Older Stone Age hall was converted into a cafeteria and the Stone and Bronze Ages were squeezed together into the prior Younger Stone Age hall. In the former Bronze Age hall an Iron Age house was erected that visitors could walk into, in addition to other pedagogical installations.” (Svanberg 2009: 53)

Physical anthropology at the National History Museum

Physical anthropological allusions in connection with exhibitions have so far been illustrated by seemingly rather ‘harmless’ examples. However, “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden” included a glass case containing nine craniums together with references to the characteristic forms and racial types of the skull bases. The shapes of the exhibited craniums were elucidated by an illustrative placard showing the differences in skull base profiles between oblong and more rounded skull shapes. The display case was labeled: “Stone Age Swedes. Late Neolithic Period c. 1800-1500 BC”. It seems that the case had already been completed and exhibited in the old museum. It was arranged in the 1920s’ by Carl Magnus Fürst (1854-1935), an anthropologist who had, together with Gustaf Retzius (1842-1919), made a name for himself through an internationally noted study of 45,000 military conscripts for *Antropologia Suecica*, a race biological work (1902). The display case, which had apparently been considered so indispensable that it had been moved (in the 1943 war year) from the old museum to an even more central and illuminated place in “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden”, also turns out to have been left unchanged in the exhibition up until the 1970s’.

*

The subject of the collaboration between archaeology, osteology and the physical anthropology and race biological research of the time has for a long time been either more or less neglected or rejected as a basically insignificant aberration in historical work about the disciplines involved. For my part, however, I adhere to Fredrik Svanberg’s interpretation that the archaeologists were not only “affected” by physical anthropology, but that anthropological and racial research was *justified* through the observation of skeletal archaeological material and supported by archaeologists’ sometimes race-biologically suggestive culture analyses. In short, archaeologists and physical anthropologists collaborated in matters that benefited and justified both professions in a symbiotic sense. Although one should add that not all osteological research was about race issues.

By the 1943 inauguration exhibition racial research had existed in Sweden for over a hundred years, so the MNA display case, with its racially categorized craniums, was related to a well-established scientific discourse. Well into the 20th century, race determination based on osteological studies of bone fragments (especially skulls) was a conventional element in archaeological investigations – combined, of course, with other and more recent techniques, methods and analyses of artefact categories. Allusions to race and culture based on skeletal materials can be found in archaeological texts as late as the 1970s, and further on.² The aspect of historic time and cultural estrangement seems to be a critical factor in accordance to understand why these kinds of associations still can be articulated. Present day DNA based analysis on paleontological finds of proto-mankind species and also *Homo sapiens*, fall under the category of natural history and are therefore still open for racial categorisation (Aronsson 2008, NHIST/ESF conference paper). It seems that we tend to equal humans to animals, given an enough ancient time relation.

Fürst and Retzius' internationally recognized *Antropologia Suecica* (1902) was in many ways the logical outcome of an established field of research. The study had been preceded by Gustav Retzius' historical synthesis *Crania Suecica Antiqua*, published in 1899. For the latter work none less than Oscar Montelius himself had contributed by collaborating and by supplying craniums that had been unearthed. Montelius had by then been long convinced of the racial and long-lasting purity of the Swedish race. After the turn of the twentieth century a regularly recurring picture of what characterized Swedish cultural history was established. It included characteristic stereotypes such as the Swedes' love of freedom (with reference to the historically free peasantry) coupled with references to race biologically physical attributes like oblong skulls, blond hair, blue eyes and tall stature. The quintessence of this anthropological Swede was sometimes summed up by the "Nordic type" epithet, in the sense that 'the majority Swede' both biologically and culturally was heir to the Germanic peoples and, prior to that, to the Cro-Magnon human race (Hagerman 2006: 341).

Oscar Montelius was indeed inspired by the issue of race and culture from an ethnographic point of view and the former Director-General of the MNA stated his opinion on a 1917 article. His argumentation set up Swedish cultural history in contrast with the Continental Migration Period and considered its impact on the primeval population of the Scandinavian Peninsula:

In Scandinavia, too, migrations certainly entailed changes, but of a more passing character. The great emigration temporarily deprived or almost drained many areas of their population. But no Slavs were able to intrude here. As time passed, the gaps left by the emigrants were filled by peoples of the same blood as the other inhabitants of the country. For this reason the Scandinavian countries, not least large areas on the Scandinavian Peninsula, are in our days inhabited by peoples whose Germanic blood is purer than anywhere else in the world. (Montelius 1917: 412)

Montelius' arguments fitted into the debate about the nation's "ancestors" which had been going on for decades. He was sharpening his analysis by moving his time horizon for cultural genesis further back in a similar article in *Nordisk tidskrift* ("Nordic Journal") in 1921:

We are thus entitled to say: Our ancestors have lived here in Sweden for 15,000 years. When they arrived, what is now called Sweden was uninhabited. We possess a country that we have not taken from any other people. We Swedes have “made” our country ourselves, developed land and roads. Such acts of taking possession are exceptionally noble! (Montelius 1921: 408)

Montelius’ long time perspective supplemented the usual reference to the Germanic peoples prevalent in contemporary research on the so-called Cro-Magnon race. About this human type the reader is told that it was a “fine, quite advanced, long-headed race”, which had thus immigrated to the empty land as a result of the withdrawal of the continental ice sheet. The Nordic Cro-Magnon people had subsequently, by natural “differentiation” and *not* by any further immigration, evolved into the Germanics, who populated Scandinavia and the northern part of present-day Germany. However, the Germanic race remained most intact in Scandinavia without being either touched or mixed with the Finno-Ugric race eastwards in Finland.

Montelius texts were designed to be popular with a wider audience than that of archaeologists alone (his scientific texts were strictly focused on typological artefact issues). His reasoning, constituted a defense of the idea of a historically unbroken homogeneous folk culture. The self-assured tone needs to be considered in the context of the logical problem that the assertion of a Swedish culture of unity poses in light of the demographical fluctuations of the Migration Period that were well known among professional antiquarian researchers. The circumstance that all race research actually rested on a methodological and theoretical quagmire and that renowned researchers in anatomy and physiognomy had by the 1900 turn of the century rejected factors like head shape or hair colour as statistically viable racial characteristics, does not seem to have made any impact on those researchers whose minds were already set. On the contrary, a person like Gustav Retzius was able to ‘calibrate’ the fundamentally vague statistics from the study of the military conscripts in order to create a statistical bias towards long-headedness (Hagerman 2006: 341). However, not everyone in the Nordic archaeology context did agree with the hypothesis about the assumed purity of the “Nordic type”. The Danish archaeologists Sophus Müller and Johannes Brøndsted were among those who had declared the population continuity issue unsolved and possibly even unresolvable (Moberg 1948: 290). But these researchers were in minority; few had enough scientific capital (or a safe employment) to claim Montelius wrong.

MNA’s first exhibition guide appeared in 1872, written by Oscar Montelius. These guide books were reviewed from time to time to bring them up to date with the advances of research. According to Fredrik Svanberg’s study, references suggesting that Stone Age people were of the same race as today’s Swedes began to appear in texts from the late 1880s onwards. By the turn of the century vague hypotheses supported by skull based studies were transformed into professed certainties (Svanberg in print: 15f). The updating and publishing of guides ceased between 1912 and 1923, likely due to fact that the directorship of MNA was mildly expressed vague during the 1910:s – this because of the long lasting illness of Bernard Sahlin, Director-General after Montelius. However, the new guide written by Sune Lindqvist in 1923, somewhat unexpectedly, contained no reference to physical anthropology and skull shapes. Nevertheless, in Lindqvist’s 1929 *Vägledning genom samlingarna, från forntiden* (‘Guide to collections, from Antiquity’) the familiar arguments returned, without any critical reservations whatsoever. The visitor was now instructed to start the tour in the Stone Age Hall: “In the display case to the left skulls and skeletal fragments from the Younger Stone Age can be seen. Even at this early time the number of ‘long-

headed' Nordic skull shapes predominate [...], proving that the composition of the race then inhabiting Sweden was the same as the one now constituting the majority of the population. An entirely different 'short-headed' type also existed very early on [...]. At the far right can be seen a skull from Alvastra, which shows clear signs of scalping performed with flint arms." (Lindqvist 1929: 3f)

Without any doubt the visitor was supposed to see and experience that it was *our* history that was chronologically displayed here. The exhibition he referred to was the new displays in the old museum, which by then was completed with Fürsts arrangement for showing race oriented skull shapes. This is the story behind the case containing the ancient skulls:

In 1927 Carl Magnus Fürst gave a talk at the 50th anniversary of *Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi* ("The Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography"). One of the problems he emphasized concerned the status and administration of skeletal Swedish collections. Fürst made various requests for improving the situation. He wanted, for instance 'to have at his disposal in the National History Museum a display case to arrange anthropological material for the Stone Age section, namely cranium types and bones...' This request was granted by Director-General Curman, and in 1927 or 1928 the Stone Age Hall was refurnished so that Fürst could arrange a case with a central position in the hall.



Figure 2: The National Museum Stone Age Hall after the 1928 rebuilding. The display case arranged by Carl Magnus Fürst occupies a central position in the middle of the three display cases along the wall to the right. Photo by H Andersson from the History Museum Picture Archives in the Antiquarian Topographical Archives at the National Heritage Board. [Copied from F. Svanberg in print, p. 18.]

By 1928 the display case received an even better position, which could not possibly be missed by visitors, i.e. in the anteroom of the big Stone Age Hall [...]. The showcase probably remained there until

the museum moved to Narvavägen in 1939. At least it is mentioned in guide books as late as 1937 [...]. In the new Narvavägen exhibition, *Ten Thousand Years in Sweden*, a similarly arranged case was placed in a prominent position near the windows overlooking the yard in the Younger Stone Age Hall. (Fig. 3). (Svanberg in Print: 18f)



Figure 3: Racial theory as displayed in *Ten Thousand Years in Sweden* in the Younger Stone Age Hall in 1960. The contents of the display case are basically the same as the arrangement made by Carl Magnus Fürst in 1927 or 1928, which in turn derives from a 1920 book written by Fürst. Photo taken by Nils Lagergren from the History Museum Picture Archives in the Antiquarian Topographical Archives at the National Heritage Board [Copied from F. Svanberg in print, p. 19.]

In a popular-science overview from 1920 Fürst made downright racist speculations about how the long-headed “aristocratic” Nordic race type had coexisted in the Stone Age with a short-headed type assumed by Fürst to represent a “despised” human race. In the overview the (paradoxical) message which had by the time evolved into something of a mantra in racial hygiene contexts was also repeated: the Nordic race is, on the one hand, *immediately* threatened by modernity with imminent miscegenation, while the historical analysis, on the other hand, supposed to point out a strange and *resistant* homogeneity of the race, from the Stone Age till the present time.

Axel Bagge, who was responsible for the MNA Stone Age section, laid special emphasis in the exhibition catalogue for *Ten Thousand Years in Sweden* on the importance of craniums for interpreting racial affiliation. He also repeated the notion that the Swedish race used to be even purer in ancient times and that as far back as the Stone Age “we” were blond and blue-eyed, concluding with this noteworthy sentence: “On the whole the Scandinavian peninsula is the area where the Nordic race is best preserved.” (Bagge 1945: 70)

In his article Fredrik Svanberg states that these explicit links between archaeology and physical anthropology seem to have abated after Second World War:

Race research was clearly communicated in the museum exhibition in the display case with short and long skulls, curiously enough, as late as around 1970. By then people in the museum had long ago forgotten the actual importance of the display case. In an interview from 2009 Lars O. Lagerqvist, museum lecturer in the 1950s and 1960s, described how he refrained from lecturing about it, because “he did not really believe in it”, but:

‘I always used to take school classes there, because they are always so interested in skeletons. So I guess they might look at it. But I did not go into long and short heads and so on at length.’

Thus ended, as a comical but in fact dreadful feature for school children, the actual meaning of which had been lost, i.e. the nearly half-a-century-long museum display of the research results of Carl Magnus Fürst, anatomist and race researcher. (Svanberg in print: 21)

Physical anthropology and archaeology – trifle or mainstream?

The question may of course be asked how representative C.M. Fürst’s and Axel Bagge’s cultural analyses of a physical anthropological nature were at the time. In this overview I have indicated that they were far from alone in articulating this kind of interpretation. The fact is that researchers who had the will, courage and career opportunity to take up a more critically tentative attitude were in clear minority. In an interesting article from 1948 the archaeologist and museum pedagogue Carl-Axel Moberg asks the question, which also formed the title of his article: “Were the Stone Age people in Sweden really our ancestors?” For understandable reasons Moberg takes a highly diplomatic approach to earlier theories and standpoints. His basic outlook is that the question is highly relevant, but that his agenda is to point out that earlier cocksure analyses of population continuity were in fact based on vague empirical material. Moberg begins by stating that the reason why the notion of a homogeneous Swedish culture from the Stone Age onwards had had such an impact was largely because Oscar Montelius had forced the issue in such an authoritative manner. At the same time Moberg points out that Montelius’ argumentation and conclusions were not primarily based on “archaeological evidence”, but on “anthropological” osteology of a fundamentally rather uncertain character. Montelius’ archaeologically founded evidence had been based on the observation that the ancient finds per se did not seem to *contradict* the idea of population continuity (Moberg 1948: 290).

As an example of a more critical attitude to the issue Moberg mentions the historian Sture Bolin and his relativist standpoint in *Skånelands historia* (“The history of Scania”) from 1930. Neither were all of the archaeologists convinced of the Montelius perspective, even though there was scarcely anyone who delivered a clear criticism. An analysis unique for its time was offered by the Lund professor of archaeology John-Elof Forsander in the late 1930s. Forsander’s popular history presentation of Sweden’s prehistory in *Svenska folket genom tiderna* (“The Swedish people down the centuries”), edited by Ewert Wrangel (1938), is by today’s standard strikingly ‘neutral’. It contains no allusions to ancient races as culture carriers, but the presentation is much more nuanced and devoid of value judgments than the analyses that used to be offered by the MNA researchers. The population in the Stone and Bronze Ages is, for instance, referred to as a “northern European culture circle”. Nor does Forsander see any reason due to recently observed find categories to speculate in terms of race or “culture contradictions”, as the variations might as well derive from ethnogeographical changes within the groups (Forsander 1938: 35).

Nonetheless, even though it may be noted that some archaeologists in the “southern province”, and even at the MNA, expressed criticism of and disgust at standardizing a race oriented Swedish nationalism, everyone seems to have accepted the notion that mankind could be divided into racial types and that skeletal material could provide the relevant knowledge. Even Forsander states in his chapter on “the Germanics” that current research did not yet know for certain whether this people was identical “with regard to race and mentality” with the Nordic peoples on the Scandinavian peninsula (Forsander 1938: 178). Another example mentioned by Fredrik Svanberg is the observation that the MNA archaeologist Ture Arne in an article from 1943 begins by defending his own archaeological and osteological racial analyses, and then immediately goes on to comment with irony and disdain on the current Nazi belief that racial affiliation expresses something about individuals’ mental disposition (Svanberg In Print: 24). Like Sigurd Curman, Ture Arne was in fact a strong active opponent of Nazi Germany and its ideology, which demonstrably did *not* mean that the two were critical of their own museum’s display case with its racially oriented skulls. How should this be interpreted?

The answer will be the obvious one: nobody questioned the fundamental idea of historically evolved human races (as it would have overthrown the interpretative frame of decades of archaeological collecting and research). It was the step from thinking in racial terms to using this ‘knowledge’ as a weapon for political and/or social oppression that divided the opinion of researchers. The cranium display case was MNA’s most explicit example of cultural analysis marked by physical anthropology. Nationalist, gender-related, ethnocentric or sometimes straightforward race biological allusions also existed, as we have seen, in other parts of the exhibition. However, the MNA exhibitions in the new and old museums were not aggressively delivered propaganda pieces. As indicated by the cited interview with Lars O. Lagerqvist, it was probable that not all museum employees gave much thought or commitment to these aspects. How the visitors in turn experienced the issue can be no more than food for speculation.

Archaeology historians like Evert Baudou have noted that Swedish archaeology did not display the same kind of theoretically and methodologically biased research as was current in Nazi Germany: “The leading Nordic archaeologists around 1900 chose research topics with a national background, but their results were guided by scientific methods. In theory and method the archaeologists worked with scientific stringency, but in the analyses they might have overstepped the mark.” (Baudou 2002: 58). In another article Baudou chooses, rather than nationalism and race research, to refer to researchers’ personal interests and “scientific curiosity” as the “driving forces” behind archaeology (Baudou 2005: 1). The same viewpoint is held by Baudou’s contemporary, art historian Anders Åman in his book on Sigurd Curman from 2008. (Åman 2008: 237).

It is true that Swedish archaeology did not apply the invented and aggressively political antiquarian research that was conducted in Germany in the wake of G. Kosinna (1858-1931). Kosinna’s research had been based on a geographical and chronological search for a proposed Germanic ancient homeland, which after his death escalated to ‘bad science’ – the German archeologist then as a rule, under the Nazi-regime, collected ‘evidences’ that was predicted and dictated on forehand. This way of ‘bias-science’ was, amongst others, criticized by the scientists from MNA in Stockholm. But the odd overstepping the mark for the Swedish archeologists that Baudou refers to is misleading. The fact that archeologist’s speculations about ancient cultures

were based on prejudices about human races and their different characters was integrated as an actual core for the research. It was hardly a matter of odd oversteps when, for example, notions about ancient 'swedes' skull shape and hair color still in 1945 could be printed without reservations in the exhibitions catalogue for Ten Thousand Years in Sweden.

In my opinion, the method and theory applied by the archaeologists of the time cannot be separated from their conclusions or the contextual power inherent to the arenas where their conclusions were presented. It is of relevance that physical anthropology research was allowed a place in Sweden's central museum for archaeological and historical research. It is also relevant that the "facts" presented by anthropologists and archaeologists were disseminated in race biological surveys and in various educational contexts (Rydén 2001: 148; Lundborg 1927: 12, 15). In fact, I am critical of the argument that holds that personal interests and scientific curiosity are the primary "driving forces" of any disciplinary research area. This is like suggesting that personal interests can flourish *outside* or independently of factors like ideological nationalism or, for that matter, careerism, competitiveness and even coercive collegial loyalty.

To begin with one can argue that there is of course no reason to deny that the scientific and personal interest of the individual researcher *was* not actually behind the enterprise of mapping the physical anthropological and culturally evolutionary prehistory of the 'Proto-Swede'. For archaeologists like Oscar Montelius it was, in my view, a personal agenda – the subject being, if you prefer, his "driving force" (alongside documented personal ambition and the striving for a position in society). Secondly: researchers, science and national museums do not exist outside of historical, social and cultural context. In short, I consider the question itself of the possible importance of nationalism as a scientific driving force as vain, since nationalism should be looked upon neither as a theory nor as a method to be considered, approved or rejected in analogy with other kinds of academic standpoints. The mechanisms of nationalism or, for that matter, racism operate on a more unconscious and tacit level than what is explicitly applied in archaeological or anthropological theories about human cultures. Fundamental values and ideology lie, so to speak, behind and will largely become visible mostly through linguistic or visual 'signals' – or they will be revealed by the very choice of research area. *Why* was, for instance, research on Bronze and Iron Age tumuli considered so important to the archaeologists of the early 20th century?

To conclude on the MNA's national and cultural narration, I would say that the actual paradigmatic shift from a traditional positivistic and materialistic approach to cultural history, to a post-modern (or post-processual) tentative interpretation, has developed only recently – mainly in the later part of the 1990's. The museum is in fact right now struggling with readings from research in material culture and national representation. The archaeologist Charlotte Fabech at MNA gives, as an example of the latter, an ambivalent analysis about the present state of multicultural and global aspects. She partly seems to look back in envy at the 'good old time' when archaeology could deliver a single coherent national synthesis (Fabech 2005). As the museologist Hilde S. Hein concluded already a decade ago, the cultural policy of the past few decades' focus strongly on the visitor and his or her democratic right to "experience" – regardless of ethnicity, gender, class or education – which has changed the traditionally authoritative role of the museum. "[M]useums have descended from the heaven of authoritative certainty to inhabit the flatlands of doubt." (Hein 2000: 142).

Conclusions

Referring to the museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill the national narration may be interpreted as a modernist attempt at order and control (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 24). On the basis of the vision to interpret and visualize the people's territorial and historical mutually interwoven histories, narratives were created about the characteristics and advantages of the authentic Swede. Referring to a set of structured keywords from A. Appadurai (1981: 201-219), I will summarize the national narration that inspired the MNA archaeologists throughout the major part of the 20th century. Under the items below I will also indicate some of the themes that this study, for reasons of time and space, has *not* included:

1. "Authority". By this is primarily meant discursive authority – who has or have the right of interpretation and in what way is the arena, the actual validity of the message, legitimized? Here my study has demonstrated that the MNA archaeologists possessed the dignity of nationally leading researchers and that their exhibitions legitimized broadly anchored notions of Swedish and human culture. [It need hardly be mentioned that MNA represented an institutional authority directed towards the general public.]

2. "Continuity". Here Appadurai refer a) to the possible existence of a discursive consensus about the notion of historical continuity – as an instance of this my study has clearly exemplified the endeavour of Swedish archaeologists to find and maintain that there exists a cultural connection between prehistory and the present time. By not only asserting the existence of continuity in customs and manners, but also notions of an 'intact' biological race, the figure of thought of cultural homogeneity was reinforced.

Further, Appadurai use "continuity" to refer b) to a direct analysis of a national genesis myth like the one handed over by Swedish archaeologists. Such a narration may provide an image of the historical growth of culture as characterized either by flux and long coherent lines, or by disturbances, migrations and setbacks. My study indicates that the early 20th century was characterized by a "master narrative" whose wish to establish factors pointing towards homogeneity and long-lasting cultural stability predominated. This should be set against 19th century national self-images, which were in general more diffuse, often comprising considerably more factors such as migrations, wars of conquest between various "tribes", or speculations of a direct influence from appropriate European "high cultures" (such as the Celtic, Mycenaean or Phoenician cultures).

The 20th-century aspiration towards a homogeneous cultural self-image is expressed, for instance, in archaeologists' systematic marginalization of the cultural heritage of the Sami (which has *not* been included in the study). Examples of this historical "oblivion" are found practically everywhere among the MNA research and exhibition activities; In Sune Lindqvist's *Vägledning genom samlingarna* ("Guide to the collections") from 1929, the first mention of the Sami does not occur until page 29 in the chapter on the Middle Ages, under the topic of "a place for pagan rites".

As a final observation the present study has *not* included *the social aspects* encouraging the self-image of cultural homogeneity, racial aristocracy and agrarian freedom. During an epoch stamped by two world wars, mass emigration, political democracy and radical modernization it is scarcely far-fetched to interpret the research-related self-image as a conscious or

unconscious striving to create a national identity and stability. Conclusions in that direction have been made by Peter Aronsson, among others (Aronsson 2008: 187-212).

3. "Depth". This concerns the aspect of how chronologically comprehensive the national narration is taken to be. Is the identity sought after in historically close epochs, or even in contemporary times, or is the forming identity located to prehistoric times? In the present study we have seen that the starting point of 'Swedishness' in a physical anthropological, archaeological and ethnogeographical sense originated in prehistory. In the late 19th century MNA archaeologists dated the by then established starting point of Germanic Swedishness to the Iron Age. At the beginning of the 20th century the dating of corresponding ancient Swedish culture had been transferred back to the Late Stone Age. Like the earlier aristocratic passion for genealogical heredity, age-old cultural descent was used as an argument for the national "right of possession".

Part of the chronological depth is also the notion of specific key periods in the past. Researchers at MNA kept holding forth, in writings and exhibitions, the Middle Bronze Age and the Iron Age Viking Period as high-culture periods. Today the Viking Age (c. 850-1066 AD) still occupies a disproportionately large exhibition area in the museum and a disproportionate number of books for sale.

4. "Independence". This term implies the necessity of separating periods and/or regions from one another in the imaginary chain of national and cultural development. For Swedish cultural heritage preservation it is a well-known fact that the view of what is national used to be regionally divided. From the turn of the twentieth century onwards there was a clear tendency visible among researchers, local history preservationists and intellectuals to look upon the basically administrative regional divisions as "natural" cultural regions. Every region represented its specific form of culture, preferably originating in ancient times, possibly with an unbroken line from the Stone Age. Taken together, these were, however, the defining parts of the Swedish cultural landscape (with its political borders dating from 1809). MNA's initial exhibition principle involving display cabinets divided by province clearly mirrors this cultural self-image. The transformation of the inaugural exhibition in 1943 according to a more thematic exhibition principle in turn reflected the strong centralization of cultural heritage preservation at the time. The image of 'Swedishness' was by then assumed to have been definitely assessed; the 'only thing' that remained was to illustrate the research results as pedagogically effectively as possible.

The delimitation also applied to the view of prehistory, where the Stone, Bronze and Iron ages were in turn divided into sub-periods. This, too, may be exemplified from Lindqvist's museum guide (1929): "*The Younger Stone Age Third period* is characterized by the broad-headed axe and sometimes goes by the name of the Passage Grave Period after the stateliest grave type." (Lindqvist 1929: 6). This act of materialistic periodization created a feeling of researched order and of observed progression of cultural evolution. Since the culture-historical interpretations were derived from studies of artefacts, the visitor could literally *see* cultural progress. Newer, more advanced styles had followed upon older and less developed ones. However, the researchers' notion of this cultural evolutionism was *not* characterized by an altogether linear process. In analogy with Oswald Spengler's contemporary epic on the cyclic development of western culture, archaeologists were able to identify periods of rise and

fall within each era. The Bronze Age, for instance, presented a cultural boom in its middle period, to subsequently relapse into barbarism before rising anew in the Vendel period – towards the crescendo: The Viking Age! Besides, speculations about cultural influences were heated issues, such as the question as to whether the Bronze Age high culture was the effect of native or foreign cultural importation. Oscar Montelius' conclusion that the development was natively Germanic put the lid on any continued open debate about that particular aspect.

To conclude, “independence” may also be interpreted as a discursive endeavour to qualitatively separate ‘Swedishness’ from ‘foreignness’. In combination with the notion of culturally profiled human races this sense of national exclusiveness sometimes took on almost (tragi-)comical proportions. The cultural debate of the early 20th century included, for instance, established cultural anthropological ideas about the distinction between the Swedish (Germanic, long-headed) and the Finnish (Finno-Ugric, short-headed) “racial groups”. In a lecture given in 1897 Oscar Montelius claimed that the Finnish race had received its culture via Germanic peoples who had emigrated from ancient Sweden. This lecture, which was published the following year in *Finsk Tidskrift* (‘the Finnish Journal’), naturally awakened strong reactions among Finnish archaeologists and antiquarian scholars. The subject was debated for decades among antiquarian researchers and cultural historians. The one camp comprised those who wished to lean on Montelius, who had maintained in an even more self-assured analysis from 1917 that the ancient Stone Age “Swedes” had not only transferred culture to Finland, but had ever since stopped mixing with those Finnish “tribes” but lived, “exactly as today” side by side with them. The other camp consisted of Finnish scholars who, not surprisingly, did not wish to interpret the finds as suggesting that the primeval Finnish population had been incapable of creating its own culture (Jensen 2009). At the same time it should be noted that neither camp questioned the anthropological dimension which constituted a fundamental element in the debate. Both sides accepted the notion of physical anthropological race distinctions. Finland’s most celebrated archaeologist at the time, J.R. Aspelin, did extensive research on the assumed Finno-Ugric culture area and also laid the foundation of museum collections of a national character (Pettersson 2001: 251).

Note

- ¹ All quotation from Swedish sources has been translated by Staffan Klintborg, to whom I am grateful.
- ² For example K-G Selinge, "Människan i landskapet: Förhistoriska kulturmiljöer i Jämtland och Härjedalen", *Formvårdaren* 1976:14.

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Narrating the “New” History: Museums in the Construction of the Turkish Republic

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Abstract

The disciplines of archaeology and museology underwent a profound reformation after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Kemalist idea was to found a new state with new traditions, a common heritage to share within the Turkish boundaries; and the past became a powerful tool to fulfil this project. Numerous excavations were conducted in Anatolia after the 1930s, and consequently the archaeological museums were intended to play an important role in showing the new archaeological discoveries to the wider public. This paper aims to investigate the connection between museums and national identity in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic. In the first part, I analyze the development of the history of archaeological practice and its political implications before and after the foundation of the Republic. In the second part, I focus my attention on the foundation and development of the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul and Ankara, investigating the connection between the state and the museums through the visual representation of the past.

Introduction

In 1935, the former director of the Istanbul museums, Halil Edhem Bey (1861–1938), wrote an article in *La Turquie Kemaliste*, the official propaganda publication of the Kemalist government entitled “The significance and importance of our museums of antiquities among the European institutions” (Edhem 1935: 2–9). In this piece, he claimed the superior status of the Istanbul Museum in comparison to the famous museums of London, Paris and Berlin. He highlighted how the archaeological richness of Turkey was immense and therefore the Istanbul Museum became the depository of important collections of artefacts from different periods and civilisations, mirroring the variety of Turkish history. He criticised the previous management of cultural heritage under the Ottoman Empire that, unfortunately, was not interested in preserving the past of the country, with the result that Anatolian artefacts were given away to enrich the collections of foreign museums. Edhem continued by illustrating the different departments that constituted the uniqueness of the Istanbul Museum and showing the heterogeneity of its collections: from Classical artefacts to Hittite statues and Turkish decorative arts.

Edhem’s article illustrates the contested place of museums in the representation of nationhood and national identity in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic in 1923, providing a glimpse into the ways in which museological practices were implicated in the nationalist project. In 1935, when Edhem made this statement, the nature of the museums and the narratives they were trying to represent were still objects of debate within Turkish society. As Crooke asserts: “nationalism produces a self-legitimising national interpretation of the past, which will have an impact on how archaeology is valued and the character of the museums. As a result of this, museums can be seen as the product of a certain political relationship with the past” (Crooke 2000: 2).

What are the modalities of the relationship between the nation state and archaeological museums in Turkey in this particular period of history? This paper aims to explore the impact that the dominant representations of the new Republican government had on the interpretation of archaeological objects in Turkey, examining the new relationship between the state and the museums through the visual representation of the past. The two case studies for this paper will be the main archaeological museums of the country: on the one hand the Archaeology Museum of Istanbul, and on the other the Archaeological Museums of Ankara, which were later assembled to become the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. These museums are interesting examples not only because of their importance, but also for their own history. In fact, the Museum of Istanbul was founded prior to the advent of the Republic while, conversely, the Archaeological Museum of Ankara was the new museum of the Republic, founded in the new capital of the country to show the new discoveries of the Republican government to the wider public. Focusing primarily on exhibitions of these two museums in between 1923 and 1960, my research looks into the public negotiation, through time, of the new Republican identity through material culture. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, in fact, a critical reconstruction of the cultural system was set in motion and the field of public cultural institutions involved in the transformation and development of cultural areas such as archaeology and history was profoundly reformed. New institutions as the Turkish History Society were created and existing institutions were closed down or reformed, as in the case of universities. Therefore the beginning of the Republic will be taken as a starting point. The end point will be 1960, when,

after the military *coup d'état*, Turkey established the Second Republic. In the 1970s, the emergent Islamic revival influenced the diffusion of interest in Islamic and Ottoman history, culture, and archaeology in secondary and university education, a tendency that persists today under the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), which has formed the government since 2002.

To understand the role that the disciplines of museology and archaeology played during the Turkish Republic, it is fundamental to contextualise these studies in the light of the historical events that led the Republican government to carry out a new cultural policy in order to create “new citizens” for the newborn Turkish Republic. The construction of knowledge about the past was strongly influenced by the mainstream historical theories of the time, such as the Turkish History Thesis and Blue Anatolianism. Using these historical theories as a framework for my research, I aim to explore how the knowledge of the past was constructed and diffused through the use of a visual approach that included the employment of tools such as museums’ displays.

Archaeology and politics in the new Turkey

Archaeology, which entered the country as a foreign discipline conducted by foreigners, became, during the age of the Republic, one of the main fields of investment by the government. Their aim was to create a national Turkish identity and to legitimise the newborn Republic of Turkey. Consequently, the archaeological museums were intended to play an important role in showing new archaeological discoveries to the wider public. Since the establishment of the Republic, more than forty state-funded archaeological museums have been established all around the country. The substantial number of new archaeological sites and new archaeological museums shows the importance that the state gave to these practices as part of the nation-building projects of the time (Gür 2007: 42).

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the Republic of Turkey was officially created. At that time the country was composed of many different linguistic and religious groups, and people continued to have notable territorial and regional differences. The leaders of the state had therefore the arduous responsibility of building a new nation combining peoples of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The basis of this idea of nationalism was to abandon the multicultural past of the Ottoman Empire: the new people were given a new national character to attain in order to construct a new cultural identity. Under these circumstances, the new government started an extensive programme of reforms aimed at creating the new citizens of the Republic. With these reforms they wanted to administrate a new way of life for the people, inspired by ideals of westernisation and secularisation. These reforms had several aims: not only to give a common heritage to the new Turkish citizens but also to disconnect their previous relationship with the Ottoman Empire (Özyürek 2007b: 3–4). The new program of “modernisation” was intended to westernise the country and bring it to the same level as Europe. Within this policy, the ancient past and archaeology acquired a crucial role, becoming some of the primary tools at the service of the Republican ideology. As in other parts of the Middle East, the end of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of new nation-states coincided with the need for a new concept of citizenship, and new governmental institutions able to replace the Ottoman ones.

The most important reform for this research was the formulation of the *Turkish Historical Thesis*, a theory that tried to give Turks a sense of pride in their past and in their national identity.

According to the Thesis, modern Turks were the direct descendants of the Hittites who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia during prehistoric times. After their migration during the Neolithic period, caused by adverse environmental conditions, Hittites settled in Anatolia where they established the famous Hittite kingdom. From Turkey they would later migrate to all the countries of the Mediterranean, creating all the major civilizations of ancient history such as Etruscans in Italy, Greece, Mesopotamia and Egypt. This Thesis had several goals: firstly, since modern Turks were ethnically related to the Hittites, they could claim territorial rights on the Anatolian land, against other ethnic groups (Greeks, Armenians and Kurds). Secondly, linking Turks to the Hittites would break off the connections with the Ottoman and Islamic heritage, supporting a more secular identity. Lastly, and most importantly, since the Hittites created all the most important civilizations of antiquity, Europeans' origins were also directly linked back to Turkey.

With the formulation of this theory, archaeology became the primary tool to prove and sustain this claim. Until the 1930s, archaeological excavations carried out in Turkey on Classical sites were directed mainly by Europeans. After the 1930s several new excavations were funded by the Turkish government to search for the oldest civilizations of Anatolia. In 1933 excavation campaigns were launched, with the support of the Turkish History Society, at Hittite sites such as Ahlatlıbel, Karakal and Göllüdağ. From 1935–37, young Turkish archaeologists such as Remzi Oğuz Arık and Hamit Zübeyr Koşay started work on new sites such as Alacahöyük, the Thracian Tumuli, the castle of Ankara, Etiyokuşu, Pazarlı Sarayburnu and Karaoğlan (Atakuman 2008: 224).

Undoubtedly, archaeological excavations on Hittite sites played a major role in the development of the discipline in Turkey, especially because the first missions directed by Turkish archaeologists were conducted exclusively on Hittite sites near Ankara. Many contributions in recent years (Atakuman 2008, Shaw 2008, Tanyeri-Erdemir 2006) focus on the importance that the Hittite civilization has had for the Turkish History Thesis and the subsequent development of archaeological research in this direction. Only recently, a new publication by Redford and Ergin explored the archaeological research in the Republic on Classical and Byzantine sites (Redford & Ergin 2010). In any case, judging the archaeology of this period as purely “nationalistic”, in the search of the Hittites as mythical ancestors of modern Turks, would be rather restrictive. Afet Inan (1908–1985), vice-president of the Turkish History Society, enumerated in her speech at the second congress of the Turkish History Society in 1937 the many excavations carried out by the society, highlighting the numerous efforts to explore not only the Hittite ruins but also Neolithic and Phrygian remains (Inan 1937: 9–10). Certainly, other civilizations were studied in different areas of the country: foreign archaeologists from Britain, United States, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy continued to conduct excavations in Turkish territory, directing their attention to different periods and civilizations.

In 1938 a new minister of education was appointed, Hasan Alî Yücel (1897–1961), and with him a new generation of intellectuals started to demand the establishment of a new “Western-oriented humanism” (Bilsel 2007: 228). While the principles of the History Thesis were soon invalidated, in the mid-1940s a new group of writers and translators, identified as the ideologists of “Blue Anatolia” (*Mavi Anadolu*) or “Anatolia Humanism”, initiated a search for another way to associate Turkish identity with Classicism and European culture through the idea of Anatolianism

(*Anadoluculuk*). Anatolianism saw all the civilization that prospered in Anatolia since prehistoric times till the present as part of the same cultural continuum, which constituted the antecedents of Anatolian culture. For this reason, all the cultural expressions on Anatolian soil contributed to its formation and had to be adopted as cultural ancestors. Although all the civilizations were important for the Blueists, three episodes in the history of Turkey held particular importance: first the Hittites, because they represented a “bridge” between the Mesopotamian world and the Aegean one. Secondly, the Trojans, because they were the autochthonous people of Anatolia who fought against the Greeks. And finally, the Ionians, because they were the homeland of Homer’s myths and the first philosophers (Bilsel 2007: 223–224). All of the works produced by the humanists aimed to show similarities between the new and old civilizations, e.g. between the Trojans and the modern Turks.

These theories intended to create a sense of common cultural identity among Turks, and also to give Turkey an equal status to European countries in the difficult time after the collapse of the Empire. In this climate, museums became a tool at the service of the government to prove this nationalistic thesis and demonstrate to Europe the equal status of Turkey.

The Istanbul Archaeology Museums

The history of this museum harks back to the Ottoman times. The period of Ottoman modernisation that started in 1839, known as the *Tanzimat* or “reorganisation”, saw attempts by the government to foster the adoption of Western parameters. The reforms included not only the reorganisation of the political system but also archaeological changes, such as the introduction of specific legislation to control the activities of foreign archaeologists, an active collecting policy administered by the state, and the reorganisation of the Imperial antiquities collections as the Imperial Museum. In 1846, a collection of antiquities started to be assembled in the church of St. Irene, which consisted of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine artefacts. In 1869, the Magazine of Antiquities became the Imperial Museum and was moved to the Tiled Pavilion (*Çinili Köşk*). At that time, following a common practice, the antiquities found across the whole Ottoman Empire, regardless of their cultural origins, were transported to the Museum of Istanbul, as it was considered the central and most important institution of the Empire. In the beginning, the Imperial museum was directed by two Europeans, the British Edward Goold and the German Anton Déthier, both of whom held a key role in shaping and westernizing the first Ottoman museum. Goold, a teacher at the Galatasaray Lycée, was appointed as the first director of the museum and he was responsible for the creation of the first catalogue of its holdings, which was published in 1971 (Shaw 2003: 86). In 1872, Anton Philip Déthier, a Classical epigrapher, was appointed head of the museum. Déthier continued with the pre-existing acquisition policy, requesting artefacts to be sent to Istanbul from all over the empire, and also contributed to the first draft of the Ottoman antiquities law of 1874.

At the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1889, the collection began including artefacts from the Ottoman or Islamic periods (Shaw 2000: 60). From 1908, these objects were housed in the Imperial museum. These changes were part of a project of the Sultan to create a myth of the Ottoman state. He wanted to transform the Empire into a nation in response to the new nations that were rising around him. After Déthier’s death in 1880, Osman Hamdi Bey was designated as the new director of the museum. Under his direction, the practices of archaeology and museology

strongly improved and a new phase began for these disciplines in the country. As Arik points out, Hamdi Bey's new policy was characterised by several directives: the promulgation of a new Antiquities Law, the application of a scientific method to the display of the collections in the museum of Istanbul, the inauguration of several excavations carried out by Turkish missions, the launching of professional publications from the museums, and the foundation of small provincial museums all over the country (Arik 1950: 4–5). Most important in his campaign were his efforts to establish an Ottoman archaeological presence throughout the Empire, and the drafting of a new and improved antiquities law. To do so, he began archaeological projects, the most famous at Baalbek and Sidon, in the territory of modern Lebanon. Under his directorship, numerous catalogues of the diverse collections hosted in the museum were published, from the Funerary Monuments to the Greek figurines. The finds of these excavations, in particular the famous sarcophagi discovered in Sidon, are still visible today in the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul and since their discovery they have represented one of the main attractions of the institution. To exhibit these monumental items Hamdi Bey asked for permission to construct a new building opposite the Tiled Pavilion, which was designed by the French architect Alexandre Vallaury and opened to the public in 1891 (Shaw 2003: 157). The great number of objects that were arriving in Istanbul soon made the museum too small, and two new wings were added in 1903 and 1908. Furthermore, in 1883 Hamdi Bey opened a School of Art in a new building next to the Tiled Pavilion.

At the end of the Ottoman Empire few museums existed in the country: the Antalya Museum, the Bursa Archaeological Museum, the Bursa Museum of Turkish-Islamic Monuments, the Konya Archaeological Museum and the Sinop Museum. These institutions, although rather small and not scientifically organised, were created to host the numerous objects that the new archaeological excavations were bringing to light in the various areas of the Empire. Arik defined this first period of Turkish museums as a phase dedicated to “accumulation”: the institutions lacked professionally trained staff who could arrange displays in a scientific way, and therefore museums were only aimed to protect and show to the public the artefacts discovered in the excavations (Arik 1950: 8). Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, and still in the early period of the Republic, the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul continued to be the main institution of the country where all the important decisions were taken.

In 1923, at the establishment of the Republic, the Museum of Istanbul consisted of three different buildings: the Museum of Antiquities, hosted in the main building and containing the collection of Greek, Roman and Byzantine artefacts; the Tiled Pavilion that hosted the Islamic art collection; and the Museum of Oriental Antiquities, hosted in the previous building of the School of Art since 1918 and containing the collection of Ancient Near Eastern artefacts. The director of the museum at this point was Halil Edhem Bey, who succeeded his brother Osman Hamdi Bey after his death in 1910.

The early years of the twentieth century coincided with a period of great importance for the discipline of museology for the first time, in fact, museums and archaeology received international attention. The twentieth century saw museology become “global”: new efforts were undertaken by numerous nations to study museums through sharing between, and comparison of, the institutions. In 1927, a new journal entitled *Museion* dedicated only to museums was founded. It later became one of the official journals of the new international organisation

devoted to the study of cultural heritage, UNESCO. In the 1930s, the League of Nations organised the first conferences dedicated to the architecture and management of art museums, where several experts from different countries were invited to participate. In this climate Turkey started to adapt its museums to international standards, investing in the scientific classification of the artefacts that started to become the object of numerous studies.

Hedhem worked as the director until 1931, when Aziz Ogan succeeded him. Ogan was inspector for the antiquities in the Izmir area during the first part of his life (1914–1931), and he was one of the main founders of the Izmir museum. After that he became the director of the Istanbul Museum, where he stayed for twenty-three years until his retirement in 1954. As soon as he was appointed director, Aziz Ogan travelled to Europe to visit all the main museological institutions of different countries: he went to France, Italy, Germany, England, Spain and Greece. In particular, he spent some time in Greece to sketch and take notes on the museum of the Acropolis in Athens. Under his supervision, the museum carried on with the process of modernisation that aspired to transform the museum of Istanbul in a modern institution that could be compared to the European organizations: several rooms opened to the public with new displays, for example the Hymyaritic and Parthian rooms in 1934. Furthermore, under his leadership the staff of the museum completed the classification of coins and medals, and opened a new room for the exhibition of coins, medals, gold ornaments and gems, which up till then had been kept in storage. He established a laboratory for the cleaning and restoration of antiquities, and a laboratory for photography and plaster casts (Ogan 1947).

In 1934 the museum started to publish a report on its activities (*Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Yıllığı*), and this is still published today. These reports, which were issued intermittently from 1934 to 1969 and then again from 2001, are of great importance for the study of the policies behind the new acquisitions of the museum and the activities that were carried out in those years. Clearly, with the end of the Ottoman Empire the museum had to change its acquisition policy: first, because objects now could come only from the Turkish territories and second, because, with the establishment of several museums in the country, Istanbul was no longer the only institution to receive the finds of the numerous excavations carried out in that period. Consequently, the Istanbul collection was acquired through excavations, donations and special purchases. Newly acquired objects originated primarily from excavations of sites in the Istanbul area directed by the Museum's own staff. These new excavations were carried out mainly on classical and Byzantine sites, and brought to light a rich collection of artefacts. A few objects from other parts of the country and other periods, such as Hittite artefacts, were still becoming part of the collection of the museum, but only in minor parts.

Despite the different provenance of the newly acquired objects, the arrangement of the Museum's collection remained remarkably consistent in style from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. What changed throughout this time, however, was the classification of the objects, which became more scientific. The Museum's presentation, from its beginning in the late Ottoman Empire and over the first forty years of the Republic, was still derived from, and compared itself to, the famous European institutions. There was no particular emphasis on one single period of time and the Museum continued to display a large collection of artefacts coming from all the territories of the previous Empire.

Archaeological Museums in Ankara

In Ankara, the new capital of the state, all the archaeological objects were hosted in three different locations until 1966, when all the objects from different periods were assembled in the Archaeological Museum (Temizer 1966). Unfortunately, there are not many sources on these early examples of museums in the new capital, and only a few articles and images are available. The situation is best illustrated in the guide *Ankara*, written in 1933 by the Galatasaray Lycée teacher Ernst Mamboury (1878–1953). Through this account, which constitutes the first travel book about the city, the reader gains a glimpse of the display's organisation of the ancient past in the new capital in the early years of the Republic (Mamboury 1933).

The first collection started to be assembled in 1921, during the War of Independence, in the White Tower (*Akkale*) on the citadel, in a building that was previously used by the municipality as a depot. This first site was chosen as the safest location to preserve the works of art from the ongoing war. It did not have the ambitions to be a modern museological institution. The objects were not scientifically catalogued and there was no accompanying text. The collection was very heterogeneous in its nature, containing objects of different kinds and from different periods: antique items from Roman, Greek, Seljuk, and Byzantine times, such as coins and jewels, were put together with ethnographic items, inscriptions and embroideries, lacework, printed fabrics, and costumes (Bayburtluoğlu 1991: 98–99). At that time the archaeological items found in the province of Ankara were transported to the new capital and accumulated in the White Tower. According to Mamboury, the objects were divided into two categories - Islamic and non-Islamic artefacts - and they were hosted in two different small rooms with the presence of some glass cases (Mamboury 1933: 229).

In 1926, the new Ethnography museum was founded in the city and the ethnographic objects in the White Tower were transferred to it. In addition to those, a few archaeological items were also moved to this new location. As Mamboury states, the museum initially consisted of eight rooms, of which three were entirely dedicated to archaeological artefacts. Finds from the excavations of the regions near Ankara from the Hittite, Classical and Byzantine periods were displayed in the last rooms of the building (Mamboury 1933: 230). The Ethnography museum was mainly intended to display religious artefacts and common objects such as tools, furnishings, items related to village life and agricultural production in the Turkish countryside (Kezer 2000: 104).

In the following years objects started to be assembled in a new space, the Roman Temple of Augustus, located next to the Hadji Bayram Mosque, one of the main tourist attractions of Ankara. This location was only supposed to be temporary, until the opening of the new Archaeological Museum in the Bedesten (Mamboury 1933: 230). The area was initially excavated in 1926 by the German archaeologists Daniel Krencker (1874–1941) and Martin Schede (1883–1947) and subsequently by the Turkish History Society, which, in 1937, removed the houses that were obscuring the temple. This research brought to light a section of the colonnaded Roman road and later the so-called Baths of Caracalla (Güven 2010: 39). In this location, the objects were divided and displayed in two different open-air areas: the first one being inside of the temple and the area along its perimeter, and the second one the enclave of the temple. In both of the areas the display of the objects was arranged without taking into account any scientific

taxonomy and items from different periods and of different typology were lying in the same space. Inside the temple Roman and Byzantine sculptures from Ankara, and Greek and Roman grave stones from Kütahya, Eskişehir (provinces in the West of Ankara) and Ankara were displayed. Along the temple's right perimeter there were the most beautiful Hittite sculptures yet found, which would later constitute the nucleus of the Hittite Museum. A total of 106 pieces from the Hittite excavations of Boğazköy and Alacahöyük were displayed to the public. The enclave included sarcophagi discovered in Synnada (a Phrygian site on the south-west of Ankara) by the American archaeologist Butler and numerous pieces of broken works of art such as architectural decorations and sculptures.

At the beginning of the 1930s, with the increasing number of archaeological excavations carried out in the Ankara region, the government decided to establish a new museum, the Hittite Museum, which was intended to host the new rich Hittite collection. The Ministry of Education, with the collaboration of the German urban planner Hermann Jansen (1869–1945), the Hittitologist Eckhard Unger (1884–1966) and the Swiss architect Ernst Egli (1893–1974), started to examine possible new locations for the new institution. The chosen site was located in the complex formed by the Mahmut Paşa Bedesteni and the Kurşunlu Han, respectively the old Bazaar and Caravanserai of the city. In 1931 Jansen and Egli prepared a report on the restoration of the buildings and developed a proposal for their renovation (Bayburtluoğlu 1991: 100). Since their plan did not convince the authorities, the Director of Culture at the time, Hamit Zübeyr Koşay (1897–1984), and the Minister of Education, Saffet Arıkan (1888–1947), asked the German architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) to examine the state of these monuments and subsequently to give his professional opinion about it. Taut initially had concerns about the restoration of the building and suggested instead building a new complex, though he later changed his opinion and agreed to the restoration. Cleaning and restoration of the building began in 1937 and continued until 1945, under the direction of the minister of culture Koşay, the German Hittitologist Hans Güterbock (1908–2000), and the Turkish architect Macit Kural. Initially only the central hall of the Bedesten was the subject of restoration, and the other rooms of the Han were employed as temporary storage. In 1945 the museum officially opened its doors and hosted its first exhibition.

The Hittite collection was organised by Güterbock, who, in 1946, wrote the Catalogue of the museum. This was translated by Özgüç and published by the Ministry of Education. In this initial stage, the museum arranged the Hittite reliefs from Alacahöyük, Karkemish, Malatya and Sakçagözü in the central hall. In addition to that, there would also be reliefs from Ankara, but their interpretation at that time was still dubious: they dated back to the first millennium BC but they were neither Hittite nor Phrygian (Güterbock, Özgüç 1946: 51). Smaller finds were displayed in several showcases in the outer corridor. In 1960, the galleries of the building were expanded and the museum started to include objects from other periods. As can be observed in the catalogue of the museum (written in 1966 by Temizer), the museum at this point favoured a more chronological approach, and included objects from Neolithic, Palaeolithic and Urartian periods (Temizer 1966).

In 1968, the museum's task of covering all periods of the nation's history was implemented, as the galleries were reorganised to choreograph the visitor's journey through Anatolian history. The institution changed its name to "The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations" (*Anadolu Medeniyetleri*

Müzesi) and opened new galleries surrounding the central hall. After this date, the museum displayed archaeological finds from the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, Phrygian Greco-Roman, and Urartian periods. The displays were arranged roughly chronologically, with the Hittite finds still occupying the most prominent location in the central hall. The grand narrative of the 1968 museum deviated from that suggested by the initial Hittite exhibition. The new Museum of Anatolian Civilizations suggested a narrative of national unity, based on the historical continuity of civilisations that lived in Anatolia from prehistoric to modern times (Gür 2010). In this sense, the various civilisations were no longer conceived as distinct parts of the same past, but as one cohesive civilisation giving rise to the one “great history” of Anatolia.

Conclusions

The period after the establishment of the Republic in 1923 witnessed an enormous programme of archaeological excavation in Turkey. During these years, research into a new Turkish national identity was set in motion and different periods and civilisations were emphasised to legitimise the newborn nation. As Shankland observes, the relationship between archaeology and nationalism during the Republic can be considered as “tolerant” and “dynamic”, in the sense that instead of searching for a single and dominant past culture, Turkey favoured a discourse of a multi-faced and multi-period past (Shankland 2010: 226–227). In this essay, I have tried to analyse how the representation of Turkish archaeology was constructed and diffused through the use of a visual approach that included the employment of tools such as museums’ displays. Museums recontextualised archaeological artefacts and used exhibitionary techniques in order to fulfil nationalist discourses. In both of the cases of Istanbul and Ankara, we can observe how the visual representation of the past was incorporated into the historical and nationalistic narratives of the Turkish government.

In the case of Istanbul, the museum did not modify its display and arrangement of the different collections, and the items remained separated in the three different buildings established during the late Ottoman Empire. Although, in the majority of cases, new acquisitions were now coming from local excavations, the display continued to mirror the heterogeneity of the previous territory: in this sense, the museum was still trying to compete with European institutions. The activities carried out in the museum in this period were all directed towards the modernisation of the institution, which needed to be more “scientific”, and the different collections received great attention from numerous scholars: one example of this is the cuneiform tablets, which were catalogued, studied and published in those years.

In Ankara the situation was rather different: at the establishment of the Republic only a small depot existed, where objects were stored with the sole purpose of saving them from the destruction of the war. In the following years, antiquities from all periods (Hittite, Greek, Roman, Phrygian, Byzantine) were displayed in the different locations: the Museum of Ethnography, the Temple of Augustus and the Bedesten. In the 1930s, the formulation of the Turkish History Thesis encouraged the government to devote an entire museum to the display of the important Hittite finds from the new archaeological sites, whereas other antiquities were still accessible to the larger public, but displayed in other locations.

The museums' representation of the ancient past can be considered in the context of the nationalist theories: here the display can be seen as serving a wider political agenda of constructing Turkey as a "cradle of civilisations", in opposition to Europe. All the civilisations find a place in the display of antiquities in this period, and antiquities were appropriated by the government as a tool to instil a sense of national identity in the Turkish peoples.

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Colonialism and Ethnographic Narratives



The City of the Colonial Museum: The Forgotten Case of the *Mostra d'Oltremare* of Naples

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Abstract

The *Mostra d'Oltremare*, the great colonial exhibition that opened in Naples in May 1940 provides perhaps the most significant example of the evolution that took place in Italian colonial representations in exhibitions and fairs at home and abroad in the modern period. It was organized to celebrate the expansion of the Italian colonization by means of a multifaceted communication approach, abundance of financial resources, modern display techniques and the deployment of well-known propaganda methods to show the opportunities provided by Italy's overseas empire. Organized in the months following the conquest of Ethiopia, the *Mostra d'oltremare*, envisaged to be celebrated every three years, was presented as "the largest and most complete survey of the force of Italian expansion overseas, from Caesar to Mussolini". Indeed, rather than offering a narrowly focused presentation, the material was organized into different sections that presented the historical, geographical and economic dimensions of Italy's colonies, as well as offering a series of entertainment venues. The overall effect of this wide array of displays was a manifestly hybrid experience that quite literally transposed the colonial context into the metropolis.

Introduction

The *Mostra Triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare* (First Triennial Exhibition of Italian Overseas Territories, 1940) is one of the most spectacular examples of the exhibition of public and private colonial collections in Europe. The *Mostra d'oltremare* and its related imperial politics provide the final, and perhaps most meaning, example of the evolution that took place in Italian colonial representations in exhibitions and fairs at home and abroad. It was organized to celebrate the expansion of the colonized territory by means of a multifaceted communication approach, abundance of financial resources, modern display techniques and the deployment of all well-known propaganda resources concerning the opportunities of Italy's overseas empire.¹

The *Mostra d'Oltremare* was presented as the largest and most complete survey of the force of Italian expansion. Its aim was to contextualize Italy's colonial Empire in Africa in relation to the historical legacy of conquest and dominance in the region, thereby linking the accomplishments of Ancient Rome to the Fascist present. It was also the culmination of a process of development of colonial exhibitions in Italy and abroad that began around the time of Italy's initial colonial conquest of Eritrea in 1890, an evolution that, following Mussolini's rise to power, increasingly came under the influence of Fascist imperial politics.²

These representations were part of the Italian government's propagandistic effort to create a greater knowledge of these possessions and assert its image as a major colonial power in the international arena. These other activities, often undertaken with the participation of groups of colonial supporters like the *Istituto Coloniale Italiano*, included scientific, statistical and historical research expeditions, the organization of academic conferences, and the publication of books and periodicals reporting on the Italian colonies.³ Seen in this context, these exhibitions were a carefully measured political programme that responded to the lack of knowledge and interest of Italian society in its colonial empire in Africa.



Figure 1: Variant of the poster's main I Fiera Campionaria di Tripoli (1927). Published in *L'Italia Coloniale*, 12 (December 1926).

The intention of the Italian authorities was to raise support for its colonial activities by promoting awareness on the realities of the colonial process. This would effectively disarm preconceptions that Italy's colonies were barren lands with no natural or cultural value. However, these exhibitions were not solely intended to create popular support within Italy, as they were also aimed at the international public and particularly at other colonizing nations such as Britain and France. In this broader European context, these colonial displays can be understood as a metaphorical compensation for the complex of inferiority, which Italy, as the most recent colonizing nation, carried into the colonial enterprise, and a rhetorical expression of Italy's colonial destiny in Africa.⁴

The higher political stakes of this time are most clearly evident in Italy's representation at the *Exposition coloniale internationale*, held in Paris in 1931. This exhibition was the final in a series of international colonial exhibitions an event that enjoyed the participation of nearly all of the major colonizing nations. The exhibition was located in the Bois de Vincennes on the south-west edge of the city limits and organized in two distinct zones, the first being the Section métropolitaine which provided a transition from the city. The second zone was the park surrounding Lac Daumesnil, where the pavilions representing the colonial possessions of France, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United States were set within a rambling natural landscape. One of the most significant aspects of the Italian participation in fairs and

exhibitions was to demonstrate its connection to the process of modernization of these territories, a development that was viewed as an extension of the economic system of metropolis. The Italian colonies were represented through displays that illustrated the accomplishments of private and government sponsored companies that were active in the exploitation of natural resources and the organization of local industries. Although the viability of these industries, and the colonial economy in general, can be questioned, these exhibitions promoted the image of prosperous territories that were being systematically developed according to metropolitan standards.⁵

Alongside these exhibits the results of the substantial financial investment by the Italian government in infrastructures were presented, such as the creation of new road networks, the improvement of water supply and health systems and the establishment of public institutions. While neither the political dimension of these exhibitions nor their role as propaganda can be dismissed, they were more than just visual presentations intended to encourage further economic development; indeed, they were a marketplace in which the products of Italy's colonial possessions were both put on display and at sale.

A second and equally important aspect of the Italian colonial representation in fairs and exhibitions was that they were an important vehicle for the representation of the indigenous cultures. These cultures were presented in both the content of these exhibits, which included ethnographic studies of the local populations and the display of their indigenous crafts, and their means of presentation. From a stylistic point of view, the pavilions were hybrids of the indigenous architecture and the architectural conventions of exhibition design, invoking a complex negotiation between indigenous and metropolitan worlds. The identity of the local populations was simultaneously being constructed by the norms of anthropology and ethnography, just as their indigenous craft production was being subjected to a substantial redefinition by the Fascist authorities. These exhibitions can thus be understood as an extension of the direct manipulation and control of the native body under the aegis of colonialism.

The complex interaction between the political, economic and representational discourses in these colonial displays creates a powerful trajectory that builds up toward the *Triennale d'oltremare*: the first section dealt with the history of Italian conquest dating back to the Roman period in a series of tightly knit urban spaces that blended a subtle historicism with contemporary industrial architecture. The geographic section represented the culture of Italy's colonies through an eclectic arrangement of indigenous buildings loosely interspersed in a highly contrived landscape that was designed to transport the visitor to the colonial context. The industrial and economic benefits of Italian colonialism were communicated through the architecture of the display areas and a system of presentation that followed a utilitarian approach - not unlike that used in regional trade fairs in Italy.

The city and the colonial space: the creation of the mostra in 1940.

One of the strongest aspects of the creation of the *Mostra* is its integration with the surrounding topography of the historically and culturally significant landscape of the Fuorigrotta district in Naples. However, in so doing, this urban proposal radically transformed the existing landscape through a systematic program of transplanting species from Italy's colonial possession. The result of this effort was a hybrid of the metropolitan and colonial landscapes.

The fusion of metropolitan and colonial contexts is evident in the design and layout of the *Triennale d'oltremare*. These qualities can be seen in the arrangement of the various pavilions, which were linked through a complex structure of streets, fountains and landscape that lent an excellent quality to the site that was suggestive of the colonial environment. On the other hand, the generous use of landscape and relaxed spatial planning of the *piano regolatore* of Carlo Cocchia and Luigi Piccinato reflects contemporary planning principles, which sought a well-balanced interaction between building and environment.

For the organization of the Exhibition, the Fascist regime made a great effort. Under the Presidency of the Ministry of *Africa Italiana*, Vincenzo Tecchio was appointed National Director at the head of the team work. Each sector benefited from the work of counselors, such as for instance Carlo Zaghi for the historical sector, Pietro Badoglio for military sector, Giovanni Guerrini and Giorgio Quaroni for the artistic project. Around the Exposition many initiatives were designed, in a pattern familiar in the Fascist period not only for colonial exhibitions. The Bylaws the Ente Autonomo “Triennale d'Oltremare” was approved by Royal Decree of April 4, 1938, No. 2215. For its establishment the project received contributions from many different institutions, such as the General Government Africa Orientale, the governments of Libya and Somalia, the City of Naples, Naples Province, the Provincial Council of Corporations of Naples, and the *Banco di Napoli*.

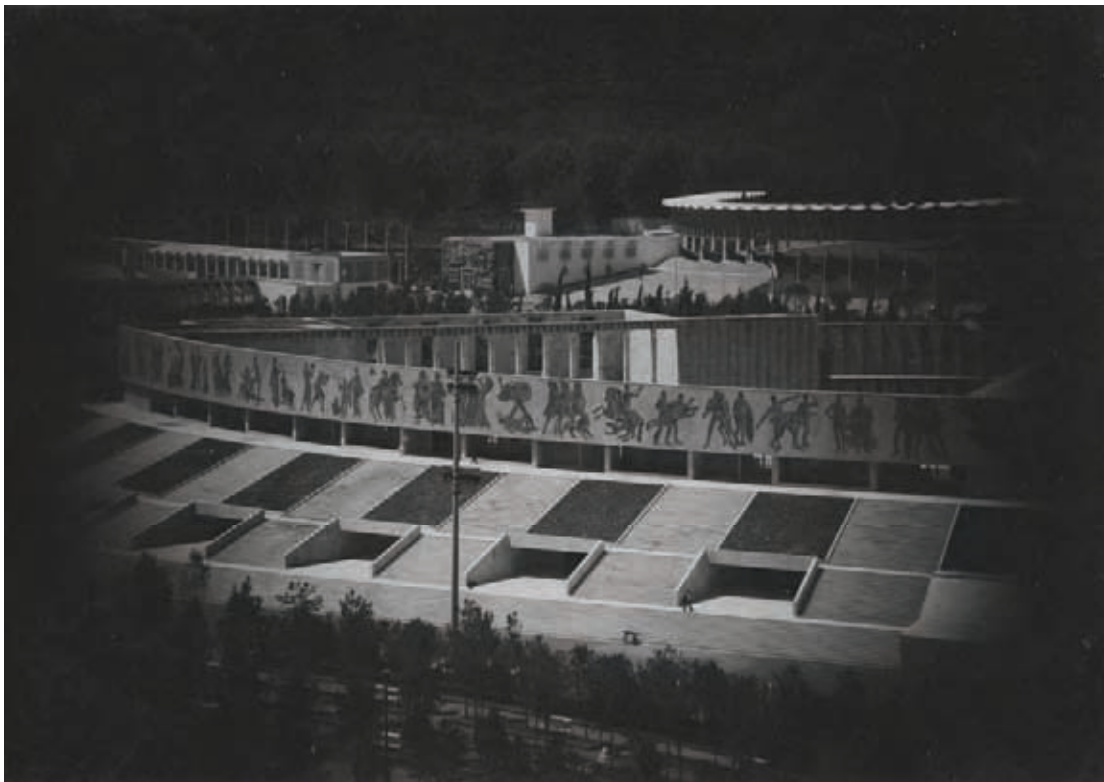


Figure 2: Naples, *I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare* (1940), The Arena Flegrea view from the terrace of the tower P.N.F. Archivio Plinio Marconi (Rome).

Naples, in the Interwar period, was historically and geographically disconnected from the debate in the field of art and architecture. The *Triennale d'Oltremare* offered the city the chance to develop a unique concept on territorial planning, on the role of the city as well as on the

ephemeral architecture and art features.⁶ The exhibition was not only conceived as the finalization of the intervention in the urban district Fuorigrotta but, mainly, as a future vision for the renewal the whole city.⁷ The *Mostra* became the amplifying core of the function of Naples in relation to activities closely related to the life of the empire: it was thought of as a real "idea of the city" whose trade and touristic sectors where going to play a key role.⁸

In the *Mostra*, both in 1940 and in 1952, after the post-war reconstruction, architecture and art played a fundamental role, not only in the general project, but also in the specific exposition choices, with the intent to reach full comprehensibility of its contents. The wide range of experiences undertaken by the designers of the *Mostra d'Oltremare* exhibitions, nowadays documented by a few fragments that have survived, became an exemplary model for an Italian exposition-design.⁹

These recurring subjects, combined with the mandatory standard display apparatus, did not restrain some artists and architects from achieving high-quality instances. The propaganda campaigns of the thirties and forties in Italy were mainly based on a couple of aesthetic tendencies: the first one on the model of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (1932),¹⁰ inspired by the experimental futuristic art and implemented through the extensive use of photomontages and typographic techniques on high plasticity, large size, expositive elements; the other one, a little later, inspired by the rationalism, was promoted by those artists and architects working in Milan Triennial Expositions, on the basis of the international examples of some artists such as Persico, Nizzoli, Terragni and Pagano.¹¹



Figure 3: Marcello Nizzoli, Dante Dini, *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista*, a wall of two rooms dedicated to 1919, Wolfsoniana (Genoa).

The *Mostra d'Oltremare* was designed and built according to the model of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (1932). It created a thematic exhibition and a subdivision into several sections,

each one devoted to a particular aspect of the Exposition themes. An historian and one or more artists or architects collaborated in the design of each section and accompanied the whole construction. By comparing the iconographic and textual documentation of the Naples Triennial in 1940, three specific types of exhibitions are detected.¹²



Figure 4: Naples, *I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare* (1940), *Ritmi Africani*, composition of different materials designed by Enrico Prampolini and realized by Tullio Mazzotti on Ristorante della piscina. Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan), fondo Patellani.

A major exhibition dedicated to the cult of Roman civilization, characterized by a dual propagandistic objective: the glorification of the Roman Empire, in close relationship with the foundation of the new Italian Empire, and the epic fascist conquest of overseas territories¹³.



Figure 5: Naples, *I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare* (1940), visitors in the hall of the Caesars in the Pavilion Roma. Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan), fondo Patellani.

Colonial exhibitions concerned, mainly, the geographical sector and were characterized by the overall eclecticism of the collections: memorabilia and photos of explorers, weapons and local products, objects, all were selected and exposed with the purpose of demonstrating the wealth of the conquered territories, as well as the existence of new territories, ready to be conquered by the "Italian genius".



Figure 6: Naples, *I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare* (1940), *Africa Orientale Italiana* exhibition (Cubo d'oro). Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan), fondo Patellani.

The core elements of these exhibits were pictures and photo-mosaics, which not only covered the entire walls of the expo pavilions, but were incorporated into the architecture, becoming an integral part of the exhibition design. The geographical section contained the anthropological and ethnographic documentation: each exposition was intended to show the life of the different regions of the Empire, from Africa to Albania and the Dodecanese Islands. Within each territorial partition, the variety of the social and material life was deployed¹⁴.

As in earlier colonial exhibitions, real natives were an essential element, craft shops, houses and public places reproductions evoking the atmosphere of Africa. Such simulations of scenes of African life were intended to seduce visitors emotionally.



Figure 7. Naples, I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare (1940), Pavilion Libya, Moorish café Archivio Melkiorre Melis (Bosa, Oristano).

The result consisted in a number of living shows, not intended to clarify the multiplicity the actual complexity of relationships in daily-life, but to depict the African countries as exotic lands for deeds and adventures. The merchandise exhibits, concerning mainly the production and work sectors, offered communicative, plastic-iconic inventions and unexpected space articulations. These exhibits, contained in permanent buildings divided into five sub-sectors, were meant to show both the economic situation of the Italian colonies and examine their reinforcing role in the Italian national plan for self-sufficiency.



Figure 8. Naples, I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare (1940), Alfa Romeo exhibition, Sector production and work, installation of Carlo Cocchia. Archivio Luce (Rome).

The exposition made the recurrent comparison between the pre-existing situation and the colonial one. The methodology used in the exhibition was based on a combination of data, photo-mosaics and decorative panels showing simulations of their production environments and the effects of "modernizers" on the traditional technologies.

The variety of exhibits of the Naples Triennial, either in a colonialist formulation or produced according to the logic of "spectacular" modernist settings and organized following the experimental peculiarities of the Futuristic movement, were not far away from the typical "propaganda aesthetics" intended for the dissemination of fascist myths and for the education of the masses: in those particular cases the exhibits were aimed at the exaltation of the myth of the Empire and of the colonial conquest. In such a context the exhibited documents were converted into purely symbolic elements capable of producing emotional reactions; the visitor was immersed in successive waves of environmental reconstructions, images, documents, photographs, stylized silhouettes, models, sculptures, murals, giant and mosaic photographs recalling places, events and protagonists of the colonial achievement.¹⁵

Taking into account the results of the documental investigations, carried out on the primary project of the exhibition space organization, it emerged the extent to which the whole complex was built with the substantial criterion of a "unity of the arts" as the fundamental assumption for determining the Exhibition Imagery.

The *Mostra d'Oltremare* developed its own brand of strong symbolic and evocative imagery, which perhaps exceeds the value of the architecture itself. Conceived in a historical context in which every creative act has to be a political gesture, its primary aim was to impress the observer

through its visual impact and seductive impression. The arts were organically integrated into architectural constructions as an essential contribution to most of the features. The exhibition's project was linked to decorative one and involved both the *architetti integrali* (full-architects) coming from the most prestigious Italian Schools and the leaders of the "Sarfatti movement" as well as Roman and Neapolitan artists, not excluding the Futurists. For this reason the main connotation of the *Mostra d'Oltremare* was not only the intrinsic architectural quality of the buildings, as the last twenty-years historiography tends to support: it had moreover a vital role in contemporary art and culture as it was one of the largest exhibition ever. It did not take place only on walls as traditional art exhibitions, (however the latter were implemented too) but it was meant with evocative and educational objectives towards the sharing of unambiguous principles.

To support the commemorative program, the historical documentation on a variety of fields together with painting, sculpture and decorative artworks, situated outside and inside the buildings and pavilions, provided symbolic or illustrative visual atmosphere. The arts were organically integrated into architectural constructions, defining their peculiar characteristics.¹⁶ In the *Triennale d'Oltremare* in 1940, the original quest for balance between architectural structures and works of art, emerged, giving birth, in some cases, to a style characterized by a claimed creative spontaneity, but which was actually functional in communicative terms to the context in which it would be embedded in the building. About 120 artists were invited to collaborate in the production of the artistic decoration of the *Mostra d'Oltremare*. An impressive repertoire of sculptures, wall paintings, large mosaics, interior decorations, ceramic carpets and panels was created and although it was almost completely destroyed shortly after, it did however gave a strongly artistic imprinting.¹⁷ Only a few works of this vast heritage remain, nowadays, since most of it, unfortunately, was destroyed by various historical and human events that affected the whole exhibition space in the subsequent years.

The simultaneous use of the "sisters" arts complemented the role of architecture in communicating meaning. The whole ornamental project was the core of the event and could be considered as an emblematic episode of that period, in which the government experimented with the ambitious path towards a social and political art through the use of the "great decorations". In the *Mostra d'Oltremare*, the governmental patronage of this public art, allowed the artists belonging to the *Sindacato Fascista di Belle Arti* (Fascist Fine Arts Union) but also the artists that were not part of a union, to participate in the large and small imagery development for the Exposition.¹⁸



Figure 9: Naples, I Mostra triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare (1940), *la costruzione dell'impero attraverso il lavoro*, mural painting by Tommaso Cascella. Wolfsoniana (Genoa).

Carlo Cocchia provided a compositional balance between "architectural nudity" and "decorative excess" in the design of the restaurant's pool, where this architect and Futurist painter, offered an original interpretation of the theme of "Mediterraneanism". In the building, the ceramic decorations produced at the factory Posillipo, had a crucial role in characterizing the interior of the restaurant. The ceramic decorations (internal and external) of buildings and pavilions, which "expressed themselves" through traditional craftsmanship and confirmed the compatibility of those with modern settings, can be regarded as the most significant and original contribution of the *Mostra*, to the controversy on the relationship between art and architecture.¹⁹

In the spaces of the *Mostra*, the original and innovative development of a dialectical relationship between architecture and ceramic decoration satisfied the communicative and functional request, and would influence artistic expression and the promotion of material design. As Italy entered the Second World War, the *Mostra* closed less than one month after its opening, suffering in the subsequent years many damages due to the incessant bombings over the city of Naples. The bombardments in August 23th, and 26th, 1943, seriously affected the area of the Triennial.

The functioning and vocation of the museum exhibition complex in Naples had been defined since its creation: its duration, the public, the spectacular combination of educational and recreational purposes, the scope and logic of a path that would make the content readable and understandable, it was a matter of pride for the citizens of Naples to make express in that

ephemeral event the dream of the colonialist drive, that it was to recreate every three years, becoming progressively an open-air museum.

Ave Fenix: the Mostra reborn (1952)

The *Mostra* reopened in 1952 with its new name *Prima Mostra Triennale del Lavoro Italiano nel Mondo* (First Triennial Exhibition of Italian Work in the World). It was strongly characterized by the connection between art and architecture. The new aim of the Exhibition was to create a center for the documentation of achievements by Italian workers overseas. This function was accompanied by the promotion of tourism and promotion of the economy still tied to the lands overseas. The Exhibition in fact had to reconstruct those economic and cultural ties with Africa, Asia and America that those had with the city of Naples; the first edition, opened on 8 June 1952 by the President of the Republic Luigi Einaudi, was dedicated to North America.

It lacked, however, the ideological and financial push of the previous "commitment" that had enabled the realization of the great decorative project in 1940. Relevant artistic interventions, with the initial project in mind were carried out by some of the same artists that had realized decorations and artworks for the 1940 edition contributed to the restoration of the *Mostra*, with a variety of intervention and art productions.

The most important works produced for the 1952 edition were conceived as subsidiary of the architecture. The program of the Exhibition was deployed by using environmental sceneries arranged with photographs supplemented by display strategies such as historical vestiges, paintings, sculptures and ceramics, metals and precious stones, tapestries, drawings, etching, dioramas, figured maps and diagrams, agricultural equipment, engines and various other models.²⁰

The interior arrangements had, on one hand, still a rhetoric expressionistic character and, on the other, a modern disposition with large utilization of chromed tubular elements and cages, as exhibition support with allusions to the Bauhaus figurative repertoire as well as the so-called Swedish style, especially for teak furniture and lamps. This demonstrates that the broad phenomenon of "rebirth" of the great decoration continued in the second post-war period and not only in the most important cities as Milan and Rome. In this context, the external and internal great wall decorations used in the *Mostra d'Oltremare* spaces can be considered as the last "step" on an artistic path related to the decorations and the monumental realizations in Italy, which developed in the thirties and forties of the twentieth century.²¹

As mentioned above, the ceramic decorations of buildings and pavilions were compatible with modern settings. After the devastations of the war, in 1952, Carlo Cocchia used ceramic decorations not just as a "comment" to spaces and buildings, but to develop a new identity of the *Mostra* in the reconstruction of the exhibition complex and completion of the ornamental cycle. The sculptor and ceramist Giuseppe Macedonio was involved in decorating the circular crowns of a big fountain: the *Esedra*. He covered the vast area of the fountain, over 1000 square meters, using irregular fragments of copper-green and cobalt-blue majolica tiles. From those, weaving ceramic figures emerged that, from the two extremities of the fountain, gradually thickened towards its central point.



Figure 2: Naples, *Mostra d'Oltremare*, particular of the ceramic decoration of the fountain *Esedra* realized by Giuseppe Macedonio in the 1952. Photo G. Arena 2011.

This decoration was preceded by extensive preparatory work to select the majolica elements (accurate investigation on the harmony of forms and colours with respect to the architectural environment). It fits into the surrounding greenery as a magnificent, vibrantly coloured, sculptural composition. On the four "levels" of overlapping ceramic walls of the large semicircle of the fountain, Macedonio gave life to the myth of the birth of man and the myth of love, using an artistic language full of metaphysical references.²² The continuous search, aimed at harmonizing the decorative elements and buildings, was applied also to the botanical garden greenhouses, designed by Carlo Cocchia. Those greenhouses, regarded as a prototype of rationalist language, were "supplemented" in 1952 by a large tiled panel located at the entrance, a shining decoration made by the ceramist Diana Franco.

The decoration that was harmonically inserted among the greenhouses volumes represented a floral composition with vivid colorful effects. The majolica, from the Factory Pinto, in Vietri sul Mare, was used for the inside covering of the entrance portico as well as inside the Wildlife Park to decorate several pavilions and animal cages.

Evidence of this conspicuous intervention remains today in a few compositions, two of them are signed: the first one is a twelve tiles panel with a light background where the mythological theme Orpheus, the animal enchanter, is set on a playful style, down left signed: "V. PINTO - VIETRI"; the second one, created by Giovannino Carrano, placed above the ticket-office, was an eighteen tiles line with a light-blue background, represented the landing Noah's ark animals. Among the animals a characteristic donkey is present, borrowed by the Sardinian landscape imagery, dear to Dölker and the Kowaliska. The panel first tile is down left signed: "V. PINTO - VIETRI" and in the last one, low right signed: "GIOVANNINO".²³ The art-architecture strict connection in the reconstruction of the *Mostra*, (1952) is also demonstrated by the external mural decorations, later destroyed, by Renato De Fusco for the Latin America Pavilion (formerly Pavilion of the Bank of Italy) and Guido Tatafiore, at the entrance of the Credit and Insurance

Pavilion (formerly Pavilion of Italian Expansion in the East) and in the exhibition space reserved to the Southern Italy Regions and Industry (former Pavilion of the Maritime Republics).

Today, the Exhibition faces dual activities, one of an exhibition center and one of a great open air museum, a complex and delicate coexistence which still awaits solutions to correct fruition of the pavilions and artistic heritage.

Notes

- ¹ F. Stocchetti, 'La Triennale d'Oltremare', *Le Vie d'Italia* 7, 1938), 832–836; L. De Lillo, 'Potenza imperiale dell'Italia fascista nei riflessi della Prima Mostra delle Terre d'Oltremare', *L'illustrazione Italiana* 28, 1940, 103–106 ; A. Pozzi, 'Orme di legionari sulle Terre d'Oltremare', *Le Vie d'Italia* 6, 1940, 601–614.
- ² The first colonial exhibitions were held in Milan and Genoa in 1895 and then in Ravenna in 1904 and Florence in 1906. All of these exhibitions were organized by the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri*. Although Somalia became a colony in 1905, they only presented the colony of Eritrea. For a fairly complete listing of these exhibitions, see: N. Labanca, *L'Africa in vetrina, storie di musei e di esposizioni coloniali in Italia*, Treviso, 1992, p. 35.
- ³ It was not until a year after the initial conquest of the North African colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911 that the Italian government created the Ministero delle Colonie (1912) and that Italy's participation in colonial exhibitions and its propaganda efforts related to its colonies was coordinated by a centralized authority. See: N. Labanca, *Oltremare, storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Bologna 2002.
- ⁴ J. Wright, *Libya*, London, 1969, pp. 120–121.
- ⁵ N. Labanca, *Una guerra per l'impero, memorie della campagna d'Etiopia 1935–36*, Bologna, 2005.
- ⁶ A. Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti, 'Cenni sulla Mostra', *Emporium* 548, 1940, 57–58.
- ⁷ A. Assante, *Funzione mediterranea del porto di Napoli*, Napoli, 1941; A.M. Puleo, 'Piano regolatore e progetti architettonici nella Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare', *ArQ* 3, 1990, 74–84.
- ⁸ Giornale Luce B1308, *Italia: Napoli, I lavori di preparazione per la Mostra d'Oltremare*, 25/05/1938; Giornale Luce B1644, *Italia: Napoli, I lavori della Triennale d'Oltremare visti in occasione del Congresso Demografia e Statistica indetto a Napoli*, 27/12/1939; Giornale Luce B1684, *Italia: Napoli, "Scoperte archeologiche nella zona della Mostra Triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare"*, 08/03/1940; Giornale Luce B1685, *Italia: Napoli, "S.E. Ciano visita la Mostra Triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare"*, 08/03/1940; Giornale Luce C0031, *Triennale d'Oltremare, "S.M. il Re imperatore inaugura a Napoli la Mostra delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare"*, 17/05/1940; Giornale Luce C0032, *Nove Maggio a Napoli, "Le cerimonie e le feste per la Triennale d'Oltremare. S.M. il Re imperatore inaugura un nuovo collegio della Gil, l'Istituto nazionale dei motori e la nuova sede del Banco di Napoli. Rievocazione celebrativa del centenario delle Ferrovie Italiane"*, 17/05/1940.
- ⁹ E.A. Mostra d'Oltremare, *I Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare. Napoli 9 maggio-15 ottobre 1940-XVIII. Guida*, Napoli, 1940.
- ¹⁰ D. Alfieri, L. Freddi, *Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista. Guida storica*, Bergamo, 1933.
- ¹¹ A. Pica, *Storia della Triennale 1927–1957*, Milano, 1957; A. Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale*, Milano, 1975.
- ¹² P. Marconi, 'Prima Mostra delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare', *Architettura* 1–2, 1941), 1–7.
- ¹³ A. Maiuri, 'Il segno di Roma alla Mostra delle Terre d'Oltremare', *L'illustrazione Italiana* 22, 1940, 34–38.
- ¹⁴ Bruno Ernesto Lapadula Archive (Rome), *Padiglione Libia*, designed for the architect B. E. Lapadula, 10 tables, 19 drawings; documents, 36 tables architect Florestano Di Fausto; Archive Central State (Rome), Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, years 1937–1939, dossier *Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare*, case 2483.
- ¹⁵ G. Arena, *Visioni d'Oltremare. Allestimenti e politica dell'immagine nelle esposizioni coloniali del XX secolo*, Napoli, 2011, pp. 117–145.
- ¹⁶ G. Arena, 'Allestimenti e apparati decorativi alla Mostra d'Oltremare: Melkiorre Melis e il Padiglione Libia', *Napoli Nobilissima II*, Napoli, 2001, 137–152.
- ¹⁷ M. Biancale, 'La prima Mostra Triennale delle terre italiane d'Oltremare', *Le Arti* I, 1940, 54–57.
- ¹⁸ L. Malvano, *Fascismo e politica dell'immagine*, Torino, 1988; E.R. Papa, *Bottai e l'arte: un fascismo diverso? La politica culturale di Giuseppe Bottai e il Premio Bergamo (1939–1942)*, Milano, 1994.
- ¹⁹ G. Salvatori, *Nelle maglie della storia. Produzione artistico-industriale, illustrazione e fotografia a Napoli nel XX secolo*, Napoli, 2003, 51–82.
- ²⁰ G. Russo, *La Mostra d'Oltremare*, Napoli, 1952.
- ²¹ P. Belfiore, 'A Oriente e a Occidente di Napoli nel 1952. La rinascita della Mostra dopo la guerra', *ArQ* 14–15, 1996, 257–264.
- ²² G. Napolitano, *Nuove identità, la ceramica vietrese protagonista del Novecento*, Napoli, 2011.
- ²³ V. Pinto, *Giovannino ceramista vietrese*, Salerno, 1997.

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Museology and ethnography in Italy: an historical perspective

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Abstract

'L'Itala gente dalle molte vite' ('The many lives of Italian people'): with these words by the poet Giosuè Carducci, Lamberto Loria summed up his project to collect the material evidence of Italian culture. This report aims to trace the ideology that accompanied the birth of ethnographical museums in Italy from the late nineteenth century to the present day. It will focus mainly on the period that follows Pigorini's efforts, as outlined in Maria Gabriella Lerario's report. The will of the founders of Italian ethnography to develop the collection of objects belonging to the rural world of the peninsula can be traced back to the First Congress of Italian Ethnography held in Rome in 1911 that accompanied the International Exhibition on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Italian unification.

However, the dream of a national museum was interrupted during the Interwar period. Indeed, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari was only installed in the 1950s thanks to the arrangement of the collection of objects gathered by Loria four decades earlier and the desire to put on display the multiple facets of Italian national identity and its regional and local specificities. This interest in the regional differences was maintained in the 1970s, when there was an unexpected social phenomenon: the establishment of local ethnographic museums created by local associations of volunteers helped by academic anthropologists and, in recent years, also by Italian law.

In the last 50 years some anthropologists like Alberto Mario Cirese and Pietro Clemente, have developed theories related to the exhibition of ethnographic objects and have provided an anthropologic analysis of this phenomenon, which was very different in the North of Italy compared to the South. The report ends with some examples of Italian ethnographical practice related to museums, which show the evolution of museographic theories in this field and the influence of new multimedia tools.

Introduction

Italian ethnography and the institution of museum, developed since the eighteenth century, have maintained close ties. They both arose from the collector's desire to collect objects of distant countries that became part of the Cabinet of curiosities as so-called *mirabilia*. The collection of curiosities seems to have preceded the development of knowledge about the collections. In the nineteenth century, the emerging discipline of anthropology, influenced by the positivist paradigm developed methods of collecting objects, such as taxonomies and evolutionary approach, so the museum became 'the place to see the main phases of human development represented and documented' (Lattanzi 1994: 83). Objects and human remains from around the world were collected during the expeditions of travellers since the sixteenth century. Those objects contributed to the development of natural history museums in the Americas and in Europe, therefore anthropology was linked to the development of the museum: the subject gave legitimacy to scientific study of human cultures by positioning anthropology as a natural science based on an experimental method.

The so-called 'museum period' (Jacknis 1985: 117) of anthropology is related to the figure of Franz Boas (1858-1942), who worked at the American Museum of Natural History of New York with a new method of collection, and built dioramas where the object was no longer considered in isolation but its presence used to recreate the living part of the culture of non- Western peoples. It was developed to attract a wider public not only composed of researchers but also the middle-class and students of all levels (Jacknis 1985: 129-130).¹

Otherwise, in Italy the relationship between anthropology and the museum developed later because of the study of Folklore², which mainly took into account the immaterial aspects of culture such as poetry, popular narratives or popular song and music. This was especially true under the Italian process of cultural unification after 1860 in which these elements, despite their distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from region to region, were seen in their unity as a means to reconstruct the socio-historical plots and common roots of Italian inhabitants. In the eighteenth century particular attention was paid to the *antiquitates vulgaris* (vernacular antiquities), ie the concepts and practices of the people considered as *consuetudines non laudabiles* or *errores* (unpraiseworthy habits or mistakes) (Cirese 1985: X). In this early period, the interest of Italian folklorists focused on oral traditions, such as the production of songs and the popular narration, and not on material culture. Besides this interest, in the late nineteenth century, physical anthropology studies became relevant. This gave life to museums such as the Regio Museo Nazionale Preistorico ed Etnografico in Rome founded by Luigi Pigorini (1842-1925) in 1875, the museum Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), established in 1876 in Turin, and the first university museum of anthropology in Europe founded in Florence in 1869 by Paolo Mantegazza (1831-1910) to document the evolution of humans and the development of civilization. However, in all these collections human remains or ethnological materials from other countries were partly present to be compared with prehistoric collections.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, ethnography in Italy shifted, as can be seen in the greater interest devoted to the material cultural aspects of Italian society, the focal point of the *Museo Etnografico Siciliano*, directed by the physician Giuseppe Pitré (1841-1916) in 1910 in Palermo. The most significant event was the creation in 1907 of a section of Italian ethnography in the museum of Florence by the folklorist Lamberto Loria (1855-1913) and the physical

anthropologist Aldobrandino Mochi (1874-1931), both protagonists of the future constitution of the Italian Society of Ethnography. Here the objects collected in Italy were compared with the ethnological collections. In addition, the debate in the early twentieth century highlighted the status of the ethnographic museum in relation to others as a political and social voice of a strong national identity (Puccini 1985). Inspired by Paolo Mantegazza's study titled *Gli oggetti metamorfici* (1902), Aldobrandino Mochi recognized the importance of the philological reconstruction of the object (in line with the tradition of the nineteenth century museology), seen as a valuable source of information in the social and psychological life of peoples of which anthropology had to provide an interpretation. Objects of Italian popular tradition were seen in the same perspective as those so-called exotic culture (and considered as archaic) and they came to be considered as documents for the reconstruction of the past (Mochi & Loria 1906).

In those years, there was a desire to develop programmed research on material culture: Italian anthropologists felt that what had been done in the century before for intangible expressions of culture such as songs and poetries should also be done now for material aspects. The idea that Objects could be used to show how the differences of Italian people from the North to the South developed throughout the centuries but also to discover a Unity in the diversity as the basis on which to build the Nation. So in the 1911 an ethnographic exhibition was organised by Lamberto Loria during the International Exposition of Rome that celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Italian unification.

The exhibition was the first step of a bigger project: the establishment of a national museum of ethnography. After five years of research a huge collection of objects had been amassed; Loria had expressed his intention to collect all of the most characteristic objects belonging to rural populations such as cloths, tools, instruments, furnishings and fittings, artefacts because:

the objects used and manufactured by ordinary people must be collected and studied as the mental products of the folk activity (Loria Mochi, 1906: p. 17).

In addition to the activity of collecting objects for the museum, the material life of traditional rural society was examined with careful observation in fieldwork by using instruments such as photography. Social life and ritual aspects were left outside the picture. This ethnographic approach was conceived as a safeguard operation *antelitteram* because the protagonists knew they had to work quickly to save the testimony of an endangered world:

the analysis of our people should attract us more than any other ethnographic issue, because it is a more familiar subject and of a practical utility. We should collect from everywhere what remains of the documents related to the typical local folk reality, if we do not want to risk having only altered remnants (Loria Mochi, 1906: p. 14).

The exhibition was inaugurated in April and it had all the characteristics of an Open-air museum, indeed it was described as such in contemporary accounts. Several reconstructions of sites and places of work and of local crafts, traditional houses, clothes and tools were shown to create an Italian identity and therefore a united people. However, they also demonstrated the regional differences of the *Belpaese* as in the verses of the Italian poet Giosué Carducci 'L'Italia gente dalle molte vite' ('The many lives of Italian people').³

The intention of the organisers was to allow each inhabitant of Italy to find a small piece of his own land in Rome. This was to promote a sense of belonging in the hearts of the people. The climate of the exhibition was strongly imbued with symbolic patriotism. In addition, the

readability of the exhibition made it the most visited event within the International Exhibition (Puccini, 2005: 156). However, the purpose was scientific research as can be seen in the display's way of following an evolutionary logic that presented the material as an archaic social form. The First Congress that took place in October laid the foundation for a reflection on the status of research in Italian ethnography, as well as its representation in museums.⁴

Loria's programme gave the museum a central role in the nascent discipline of Italian ethnography allowing it to become a tool for understanding of the cultural history of the nation as a whole. Discussions took place as to the structure of the exhibition: there were those who defended the organisation according to geographical areas where the object testified the specificity of local culture whilst others argued for a comparative display as the better method to show the continuity of cultural aspects.

Mochi became a spokesperson for the museum's educational role, while Francesco Baldasseroni (1878-1923), a historian collaborator of Loria, introduced some questions of modern museology, such as the reflection on the loss of vitality of the object and its fossilization when removed from its original context and placed in a museum. The museological organization into categories of objects, allowed the historian to dynamically analyse them, comparing the morphologic features and functions. However, the establishment of a national museum, whose purpose was to expose the material culture of a unified Italian people, to be an imaginary unifying narrative about the nation and the summary of all regional museums, was halted by the death of Loria in 1931. The museum was eventually to be opened in the 1950s.

Anthropology in the modern museum

The four decades that separate the two events were full of political, social and cultural changes. The ideology of Fascism had used ethnology to contribute to the promotion of its populist rhetoric and staged an archaic and pure peasant world. The museum was born after this period, in 1956 at the initiative of Paolo Toschi (1893-1974), already editor of the collection inherited from Loria, of which he had catalogued years earlier.

The denomination 'ethnographic museum' was changed to Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, because the term ethnography did not comply with scientific criteria that had inspired the Museum's organisation, where only the material related to the artistic and traditional folk products of Italy were to be exhibited. Moreover, there was an increasing interest in folk art, which in the nineteenth century had already been considered from a romantic point of view, and an increase in the use of expressions such as 'folk traditions', also in the fascist rhetoric. Alongside these reasons, the influence that had caused the separation of the Musée d'Ethnographie from the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, changing the name into Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires on a proposal of the museographer George Henry Rivi re also played an important role. However, even if a National museum on ethnography is today an important focal point for many activities in Italy, and the main institution for anthropology (IDEA, Istituto centrale per la demoeoantropologia), it is important to remember that the idea of a presenting a national museography, as conceived by the founders, has been definitely abandoned to highlight the multiple regional and local identities of the Italians.

It was only in 1964, that the Commission Franceschini recognized a legal definition of national cultural heritage.⁵ At the same time Tullio Tentori (1920-2003), director from 1956 to

1972, and chief of the National museum from 1968, defined the following tasks and functions: collection of the anthropologic heritage in Italy, divulgation activities, consulting services for the State and public authorities, analyses and research activities, training, and updating activities for the internal and external administrative staff. Yet, even after the 1960s ethnographic heritage was not legally recognised, and this caused a lack in its protection and conservation (Mariotti 1999: 105).

Official recognition came as a result of the restructuring of the *Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali* (MiBAC) in 1998 (Dlgs 368/1998), with the creation of a Superintendence for the tangible and intangible heritage that takes care of archaeological, historical, artistic and architectural heritage as represented in the *Museo Nazionale di Arti e Tradizioni Popolari*. In 2004 the *Codice dei Beni culturali e del paesaggio* (Dlgs 42/2004) was published setting out criteria for the recognition of this type of property. Finally the *Istituto Centrale per la Demoetnoantropologia* (Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica del 26 November 2007 n. 233) was created in 2007. However, a significant commitment came from the Regions⁶ that have encouraged the development of Centres for Documentation in collaboration with Universities (Bravo & Tucci 2006: 82). The academic interest towards folk art has increased since the 1970s, when a movement of rediscovery of local culture emerged.

From an historical point of view the social-cultural context after the war in Italy was particularly complex. On one hand the north was more and more urbanised and there was a strong economical development, on the other hand the south was marginalised, the style of life was still very traditional and there was a high rate of immigration to the north. Therefore the phenomenon of abandonment of traditional culture was much more pronounced in the industrialised regions and explaining the earlier creation of local museums in northern Italy.

Actually, since the 1950s people have been leaving the countryside and new generations have been neglected rural culture, considered as backward, whilst the conditions of life in the city were considered better and industry was seen as a more secure jobs sector. The elders stayed in the countryside, but the process of cultural transmission and other agro-pastoral aspects were lost. It seemed as though the economical boom had made all the rituals, usages of the traditional agricultural calendar disappear, to make room for the new models of mass culture society.

However, since the 1970s people started to be interested in the conditions of life in the past. Even if the urbanisation and industrialisation process did not stop, such phenomena as the energy crisis, pollution, and high unemployment rates, brought people back to the past (Bonato 2006: 21) restoring rituals and festivals (the immaterial aspect of the culture) and leading to the collection of objects that belonged to rural culture.

Living in a complicated society led to by a 'desire of the past' from the youngsters who, committed to an 'ethnography of recovery' (Clemente & Rossi 1999: 20), created local museums to display the traditional lifestyle of their parents and grandparents through its material culture and its changes in industrial society. In this case, the museography that developed has been described as 'spontaneous' (Bravo & Tucci 2006: 60-67), because it is often linked to the activity of communities. This movement has enabled the development of museums strongly linked to the local residents of a territory. They draw on the Open-air model of museums established at the end of the nineteenth century in Northern Europe with the aim of preserving elements of the rural environment, and of creating a reality closer in time and space, much like the Ecomuseums

established in France in the 1970s with the aim of giving a diachronic vision of territorial change connected to the local community.

The local ethnographic museum is a cultural project with specific connotations and particularities: first of all a founder, that could be a single person or local group naturally established and then transformed into an association, who create a group of local intellectuals, as organiser and defenders of this culture. (Bravo, 2006, p. 18) The museum gains its lively personality from their experience. Among those promoters of culture who have contributed to the establishment of important museums, there are Ettore Guatelli, founder of the house-museum that bears his name in Ozzano Taro (Emilia-Romagna), and Giuseppe Šebesta, who establish the *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina* in San Michele all'Adige (Trentino Alto Adige). These museums were established on erghologic (related to the 'old profession') and georgologic ('the rural civilisation') paradigms; the majority of the local ethnographic museums recalls pre-industrial manual work and are set into a wider context of etereogenic folk interests such as the creative revisitation of the traditional technologies and traditions, a phenomenon known as folk revival which includes singing, festivals and the Carnival (Bravo 2006: 17). Lastly, the language of these museums came from a reflection on the nature of time and from the nostalgia for what is an irrecoverable past.

At university level, such bottom-up phenomenon were studied by academic anthropologists who took interest in Italian traditions thanks to the rediscovery of Antonio Gramsci's theories on the hegemonic culture (see Cirese 1973). This allowed them to formulate an applied anthropology referring to the creation of participating museums and the interpretation of the objects on display (Turci 1999).⁷ Through these developments, folk culture started to be analysed as a science of 'cultural gradients' resulting from the difference between the dominant culture and the subordinate ones. Gramsci (1891-1937) believed that the subordinate social classes that define the people have a culture which reflects social diversity (different conceptions, costumes and uses, religion and morality). The consciousness of the social class in the context of the 1960s, has led experts Alberto Mario Cirese (1921-2011) to concentrate on the phenomenon of the ethnographic museums establishment, which analyses the subordinate class culture of the agropastoral world, as a result of a 'consciousness of the price paid' that refers to the birth of industrial society and post industrial, urban life that in a short time to the loss of a traditional style of life. Both Alberto Mario Cirese and Pietro Clemente elaborated museological theories that still condition the organisation of local museums. They privilege a central vision of the museum as an anthropological discourse on the issue of representation and on the function of the object as a document of different social contexts.

Alberto Mario Cirese was the protagonist of this new interest and also the founder of new museum studies in anthropology. He built a bridge with the past by adopting the arguments advanced in the Congress of 1911, referring to the passage of the object in historical document when it is moved from its context of use to the museum. Through his theory, that considered the museum as a meta-language (Cirese 1977), he addressed the problem of the object that loses its original use inducing a loss of vitality and becoming something dead. The museologist's task is to make the ethnographic museum a vital place because, by the characteristics of what it presents, it must recreate for the visitor life as it is beyond the museum: it means reconstructing social and functional contexts of use for the ethnographic object but also the comparison of the

morphological characters between objects of the same provenance or from other contexts. In Cirese's view, the museum continues to be a place of scientific research where exposure coincides with the most faithful representation of knowledge (Cirese 1977: 44).

In turn, Pietro Clemente theorized about, and subsequently put into practice, a method of display based on the evocative dimension of the object: meaning that the museum was no longer uniquely a place of scientific research but also a place where objects are at the centre of the exhibition. The visitor is then driven in the first person with his memories, his imagination and his life experience (Clemente 1996). What becomes important is the scenography that binds objects in the network of a social and cultural system: the display and the museum became the translation of scientific conventions in different languages that use all human senses.

Regional Outlook

The current study of ethnographic museums in Italy observes the strong local and regional identity of these institutions and the repetitive character of their collections, with a narrative based in particular on the peasant's work and traditional lifestyles.

The first analysis of ethnographic museums dates back to the 1985 (in Togni, Forni and Pisani, 1997: 11), with a recording of 150 institutions; a census led in the 1991 and reported by the Jalla (2003: 42-47). Out of 3311 recorded museums, the ethnographic museums made up nearly four hundred, a seventh of the total (Bravo 2006: 58). In the 1990s the number increased, confirming an unequal territorial distribution that showed the north ahead of the centre or south Italy: in 1997, in Piedmont there were 70 museums, a number that rose to 188 in 2007 (Bonato 2007: 64). The third edition of *Il Patrimonio Museale Antropologico, Itinerari nelle Regioni Italiane, Riflessioni e Prospettive* was promoted by the Ministry (MiBAC), the other two editions published in 2002 and 2004, had already recorded the increase of ethnographic museums: there were 1300 museums in Italy in 2009. The data from the census carried out during those years, shows the diffusion across the territory of museums, often private or local institutions run by volunteers.

Apart from major institutions such as the already mentioned Museo Nazionali di Arti e Tradizioni Popolari we find regional museums that occupy an important place for research, such as the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina, in the region of Trentino- Alto Adige, the Museo della Civiltà Contadina di San Marino di Bentivoglio and the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente di Romagna, both in Emilia Romagna: the latter two were founded in the 1970s, and promoted those popular movements referred to above: the material testimony to the past is saved from time only by putting it into a museum.

The work of Giuseppe Šebesta (1919-2005) is related to the Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente Trentina. He was an ethnographer, a writer and a painter (Kezich 1994: 71). He began a collection of objects in 1966, and only two years later he opened his museum dedicated to his region. By analysing this operation there is a strong contrast with the views that currently dominate in the anthropology of museum work. In fact, his work is the result of a holistic perspective on alpine culture that aims to present the totality of social and historical facts: Šebesta had more familiarity with the positivist studies and the tradition of evolutionary diffusionism, two approaches that had already been dropped from museology since the Second World War.

The ethnographic museum becomes an offshoot of the natural history museum: the primacy is given to material, to the technologies and to handicraft in view of a traditional museography of

the daily work of peasants, based on the reconstruction of the major processes and technical evolution, and on a vision of the museum as a research laboratory of the historical and technological territory (Clemente 1999: 16). In the course of his work, Šebesta favoured a display focused on specific technological networks, beyond a local approach, breaking with the Italian anthropology museum devoted to the agricultural cycle and to the calendar; this is so because the material culture of mountain people is inserted in the great currents of the circulation of cultural traits in a transalpine perspective and with a comparative analysis where he tries to trace its proximity with prehistoric man (Kezich 1994: 75).

Although rearranged, the museum still deliberately retains traces of its founder's work. It is currently one of the most lively in the panorama of Italian ethnographic museum, a reference point for studies in the Alpine area and for the safekeeping of anthropological collections. A Permanent Seminar on Alpine Ethnography (SPEA) is held each year and in July 2011 a summer school was inaugurated on museological and ethnographic issues.

The museum in San Marino di Bentivoglio (province of Bologna) was founded by a group of citizens called 'Gruppo della Stadura' in 1968. Initially, this group was devoted to the organization of meetings and debates on the rural world. Then, through their participation in festivals, carnivals and markets, a large number of objects, tools and materials of traditional rural life were gathered. Thanks to the intervention of the public authorities and with the University the museum was established two years later and it is still one of the best examples of spontaneous museography (Papa 1994: 551-552). Another example of this is the *Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente di Romagna* founded in the 1980s under the supervision of Giuseppe Šebesta in which the collections were made by researches in the field ten years earlier.

Today, anthropology thinks back on several attempts to found a new conception of the museum as a place for the intersection between tangible and intangible heritage as explained in the definition of ICOM (International Council of Museum):

a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (Statutes art.3 para.1).

One example to illustrate this might be the interactive installation *Montagna in Movimento*, located in the fortress of Vinadio in Piedmont and opened in 2007. The exhibition will provide an experience of the Maritimes Alps, once part of the *Occitania* region, and it tries to bear witness to the vitality of the mountain world as something that is not immutable, as it might be imagined, but is a dynamic world of cultural exchange. In this case the museum's work can be compared to that of a scenographer. Indeed nothing is set in advance and visitors can choose the direction of their visit and also interact with objects and multimedia products. Each question related to traditional knowledge, traditional calendar rituals, or material culture is explained with the help of sound recordings and movies. This kind of museum is the result of research on oral data and the participation of the ethnographer in the restitution of a life experience.

We have seen that one of the issues concerning the work of the anthropologist in the ethnographic museum is the field research for the constitution of a corpus of oral sources. These constitute the major vector of social communication and transmission of those cultural traits of the societies best represented in Italian ethnographic museum (Gandolfi 1994: 67). Through oral

sources it is possible to reconstruct the context and the dynamics of the social layer to which the objects belonged: they provide information on technical and ergonomic aspects of the objects, whose use is also connected to rituals, songs, tales, proverbs and stories.

The use of this type of data and its placing in the museum historicize the artifacts and cultural expressions by returning to a diachronic approach and introduce a communication between past and present. It follows that this methodology transformed the anthropology of museum into a science *engage*, the primary function of cultural transmission of lived experience (Gandolfi 1994: 68).

The emphasis placed on the use of oral sources allows the museum to go beyond the object and the diversity of its forms of documentation for the representation of the past. It tries to build installations and exhibitions based on ethnographic research based on the collection and the valorization of local oral sources and their translation into museum language: operations that can result only from a deep understanding of the reality in which anthropologists work. This kind of museum privileges the discourse at the expense of object, so the museum becomes a real space for 'writing ethnography'.

Conclusion

Italian anthropology in museum over the last thirty years has been through a series of experiences dictated by several goals, including the collection, preservation, cataloguing, and the exposition criteria that go beyond collecting and aestheticism. The new communication of an ethnographic museum seems to be problematic because it has a didactic character, aimed at training and educating the public, but mainly because the museums were involved in the recent revolution of communication technology that offers the possibility of new experiments by the authors of exhibitions and the visiting public.

Multimedia products, as hypertext, are characterized by non-linearity, by a writing and a reading that is non-sequential and that branches off in different directions, that is multisensory, combining different forms of learning and that is by nature interactive. The museological multimedia approach combines many types of communication: written pages of illustration of the argument as tables, cards, analysis, bibliographies, still and moving images and sound that reproduces music, songs, stories and interviews (Bravo 2004: 51). Multimedia dispositions can evoke the original context of objects exposed in the museum and constitute the foundation for an online museum system that allows network users to access the cultural content of local interest which, by their nature, are intended to be enjoyed by a few. The new technologies can therefore expand the knowledge and the potential spread of material culture and folk traditions of a given context but also preserve and comparatively analyse cultural heritage.

In their work, anthropologists look at various policies that support the local building of a shared heritage. In addition, they have an active role in the foundation of new museums and new collections based on field research and using a qualitative methodology and participatory planning by means of the involvement of local population. In this sense, anthropological sciences are increasingly called upon to aid in this participatory planning as mediation between different cultural contexts on the same territory as a transcultural approach.

In fact, the regional and local outlook persists in the request and in the preparation of new museums that demonstrate the plural inflections of the Italian identity. As we have seen

previously, since the 60s the terms "arts and traditions" or "the people", declined territorially at the regional borders, have been favoured (besides the already mentioned museums we can take the example of the *Museo delle Genti d'Abruzzo*). Now, with the evolution of this institution and the emergence of the eco-museum, the salient features of the museum narratives pass through the local crafts, the landscape or the traditional crops, which become new elements on which to invest in view of capitalizing on local cultures. These elements become the symbol of new identities, and the museum becomes their guardian and informant.

Notes

- ¹ For an overview of the developments of museological theories in anthropology also see Stocking (1985).
- ² Folk is used as a term in the study of folk traditions while ethnology is the study of extra-European cultures, a distinction created by the anthropologic sciences in Italian historiography.
- ³ The verse is part of the ode 'La chiesa di Polenta' in the collection of poetries *Rime e Ritmi* (1899).
- ⁴ One can find discussions on the *Lares* journal (published since 1912 until 1915 and directed by Lamberto Loria and then Francesco Novati).
- ⁵ Established with the *Legge del 26 aprile 1964, n. 310*, it recognizes cultural property as a value of civilization.
- ⁶ In the Italian law, Regions are responsible for the actions of promotion and preservation, while the State has the task of protection (Dlgs. 42/2004 art. 7).
- ⁷ The opening of the museum by anthropologists has been made possible by the establishment of the Section of Anthropology Museum at the Associazione Italiana per le Scienze EtnoAntropologiche (Aisea), while a contribution to the promotion of various jobs linked to anthropological museology was made by the Società Italiana per la Museologia e i Beni Demoeoantropologici (SIMBDEA).

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Rediscovering the Americas: the making of Latin American archaeological collections in Spanish national museums

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Abstract

This paper explores the gradual making and display of Latin American archaeological collections in Spanish national museums, and sets out to understand this process in the framework of the elaboration of national master narratives in Spain about the conquest and colonisation of the Americas. Two institutions in particular will be considered in this analysis: the National Archaeological Museum (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*), established in 1867 and the Museum of the Americas (*Museo de América*), inaugurated in 1965 as an offspring of the former, both located in Madrid. By studying diachronically these museums in their political and intellectual context, I aim to reflect critically on the changing meaning and the growing significance endowed upon Latin American collections in Spain throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. As this paper sets out to demonstrate, the way these collections were displayed reflects directly the interpretations developed by historians and thinkers on Spain's former role on the American continent, as well as its aspirations in contemporary international relations.

Introduction

The establishment and development of national museums can be explained as the consequence of two social processes: on the one hand the construction of particular areas of knowledge, which is at the same time a cause and a consequence of the formation of scientific and/or artistic collections; and on the other, the political decisions to promote (or eventually suppress) some particular field of knowledge due to its significance for different political projects. The history of the formation and display of Latin American archaeological collections in Spanish national museums, and their redistribution, is marked precisely by those two vectors of action: science and politics. Therefore, this process evinces not only the creation of knowledge on those areas of the world, but also contemporary readings on Spain's history, as well as political and diplomatic projects.

This paper reconstructs the history of Latin American collections in Spain through different stages. Latin American archaeological/ethnological artefacts were part of the Royal Cabinet of Natural History created in Madrid in the eighteenth century where they were displayed as scientific objects. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, that these collections were gradually conceptualised as the material evidence of a historical process, the colonisation of the Americas, which was increasingly interpreted as a crucial chapter in Spanish "national history". In the context of the 1892 American Historical Exhibition (*Exposición Histórico-Americana*), which celebrated the Fourth Centenary of the "Discovery", those collections gained particular relevance within the National Archaeological Museum (*Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, Madrid). Finally, the ideological reconsideration of Spain's imperial past in the first decades of the twentieth century and their subsequent appropriation by the Franco regime, inspired the establishment of a national museum dedicated to housing these collections in 1941, the Museum of the Americas (*Museo de América*).

History of collections and their display is thus to be considered in relation to the ideas developed by historians and thinkers on the past and present of Spain's interaction with the Latin American territories, ideas which in turn inspired the creation or reconfiguration of the discussed museums. It must be remembered that the national museums referred in this study are elements in a wider and more complex cartography of cultural institutions, which includes other national museums, libraries and archives, as well as public monuments, or national and international exhibitions. For this reason, this paper also explores, at least for the chosen case study museums, their architectonic and urban dimensions in as much as these contributed to the imaginary of Madrid as the capital city of the nation and the colonial empire. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Palace of National Library and Museums (*Palacio de Bibliotecas y Museos Nacionales*), where the National Archaeological Museum is located, for the nineteenth century liberal state, and the new venue of Museum of the Americas inaugurated in 1965, within the renewed Madrid that Francoist Spain promoted.

Latin American collections in the National Archaeological Museum (1867–1892)

The transfer of artefacts from the New to the Old World began with the first voyage of Columbus. In a scene often represented by the nineteenth century Spanish historical painting

school, in 1493 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella received Columbus in Barcelona upon the completion of his first trip; the Admiral presented them with several objects from the Caribbean islands and was accompanied by six natives. Years later, when the conqueror Hernán Cortés first set foot on the continent, he received as a present from the Aztec emperor Moctezuma a hoard of feather garments, which were subsequently sent to emperor Charles V. Even if no examples of those early modern collections seem to have been preserved in Spain, diplomatic practices of gift exchange explain the presence of some of these artefacts in other European courts; for instance, some Mexican antiquities from the Medici collections are currently on display in the Pitti Palace in Florence, and the feather headdress and some other elements that are believed to have belonged to Moctezuma are today preserved in Vienna.

In the eighteenth century, the process of formation and transfer of collections benefited from the decisive support given by the Hispanic Crown to the scientific exploration of its overseas territories, and it was also inspired by a growing interest for its human “primitive” peoples (Alcina 1995, Cañizares 2006, De Vos 2009). Natural and ethnographic samples sent from the American and Pacific territories of the empire were gathered in Madrid, particularly in the Royal Cabinet of Natural History (*Real Gabinete de Historia Natural*), created by Charles III in 1771 (Cabello 1998). As a display of the magnificence of the Crown, as well as its support for scientific research, King Charles IV (1786–1808) decided to construct a new venue for the Royal Cabinet in Madrid, which years later became the Museo del Prado.

Some of the naturalists expeditions sent from Spain to the Americas in this period collected “antiquities”, and the monarchy also promoted studies and expeditions, such as for example the one directed by the military engineer Antonio del Río (1745–1789) at the Maya site of Palenque (Cabello 1992). However, it is important to bear in mind that “American antiquities” were not considered strictly as “archaeological” collections; in the time of Winklemann and the pursuing of the ideal of Classical beauty, archaeology was mainly concerned with Mediterranean Classical civilisations. For this reason, those objects brought from the site of Palenque (for instance some Maya epigraphic stelae) were included in the Royal Cabinet of Natural sciences. It was only through a series of intellectual re-conceptions of these collections that they could become endowed with new meanings – these were brought about by the development of a new and more general concept of archaeology linked to anthropology and to universal human history and also by the transformation of the Royal Cabinet into a “national museum”.

The creation of the first national museums ensues from the emergence of the “nation” as an ideology and political programme. Whilst in Spanish historiography the start of the Napoleonic occupation of the peninsula (1808–1814) marks the end (albeit not the definitive one) of the *Ancien Régime*, 1812 has been considered the founding moment of Spanish nationalism. In that year, the representatives of the self-organised Spanish resistance met in Cadiz, the main colonial port in the Peninsula, and proclaimed the “Spanish nation”, which they defined as the “reunion of all Spaniards from both hemispheres”, referring to the citizens of both the metropolis and the overseas empire. However, this first liberal experience in Spain was hampered by the war against the occupying army, the imposed king Joseph Bonaparte (1808–1813) and his programme of reforms. One of the initiatives of the French king was precisely to create the first public national museums in Spain, among which a natural sciences museum, but the on-going war delayed those plans.

When the Bourbons regained the throne in 1814, the political structures of the *Ancien Régime* were restored. Nonetheless, the Crown was weakened, not just by the war's destruction but also by the process of independence of most of its American territories, which culminated in the 1820s. Cultural policy and particularly the promotion of arts and sciences was one of the means left to the monarchy to affirm its role in the definition of the national community: drawing on previous initiatives, King Ferdinand VII (1814–1833) created the Royal Museum of Natural History (*Real Museo de Historia Natural*) in 1815 (Barreiro 1992) and the Royal Museum of Paintings (*Museo Real de Pinturas*) in 1819.

One of the aims, imposed after 1833 by the new liberal state, was precisely to appropriate both materially and symbolically the legacies of the *Ancien Régime*. As a consequence of the policy of nationalisation of the properties of the religious orders, the liberal government decreed in 1835 the establishment of the National Museum of Paintings (*Museo Nacional de Pinturas*) in Madrid. This museum, gathering works of art from suppressed convents, was the first “national museum” created in Spain. Just a few years later, in 1838, the Museum of Natural History became a “national” institution as well (Bolaños 2008). American collections preserved in this institution were displayed in the top floor of the building that this museum shared with the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Compared to the growing relevance of the Royal Museum in Madrid (which was installed in the venue originally built for the Royal Cabinet), the Museum of Natural Sciences was in the first half of the nineteenth century a modest institution in both its capacity to promote scientific research and its displaying means, which affected its Latin American collections (Cabello 2007).

This might indicate that the study of these collections was as relevant as the study of “vernacular antiquities” for the definition of the nation. This new kind of archaeology was promoted by the liberal state and by the new social classes, in order to create a national culture, which could sustain the construction of civic nationalism. As a consequence, in March 1867 the National Archaeological Museum was established in Madrid (Marcos 1993); its collections extended from the origins of humanity to the Renaissance, and it was divided into four departments: Primitive and Ancient Times, Middle Ages, Numismatics and Ethnography. Through this display, the museum sought to place the history of Spain within a universal timeline of human progress, from primitivism to civilisation. For this reason, the first section of collected object from beyond Spanish borders, such as European prehistoric collections from France and Scandinavia and Near Eastern and Classical antiquities (Barril 1993).

In turn, medieval collections were predominantly of “national” origin; they were chosen from the different regions of the country in order to stress the medieval origins of the Spanish nation in the *Reconquista*, defined as the process of Christian “re-conquest” of the territory from the Muslim “occupiers”. As the foundational decree affirmed, “the monumental history of that brilliant period of constant struggle, which began with Pelayo and ended with Isabella the Catholic, should occupy the main space in our museum”¹. These ideas were rooted in the interpretation of Spanish history that liberal historiography was promoting; in his *Historia General de España*, Modesto Lafuente (1810–1866), dated the birth of Spanish national identity back to medieval times. According to him, it was this time of conflict that had created the Spanish national soul, under the leadership of the Crown and the ideological guidance of the Church.

Finally, the Ethnographic section received the American collections previously kept at in the Museum of Natural History. These materials were used to contextualise the Spanish / European collections, in the same way that the ethnographic collections were displayed in the French *Musée des Antiquités Nationales* in Saint-Germain-en-Laye or the *Museo Preistorico-etnografico* created by Luigi Pigorini in Rome. Unfortunately no visual sources seem to have been preserved of the display of these collections in the first venue of the National Archaeological Museum. Only some engravings in *Museo Español de Arqueología*, the scientific journal published by the museum provide some images of the pieces.



Figure 1: Peruvian antiquities present in the National Archaeological Museum collections in the nineteenth century. Plate published in Janer, F. (1872). "Vasos peruanos del Museo Arqueológico Nacional." *Museo Español de Antigüedades* 1: 211-218.

The role of the National Archaeological Museum in the creation of national imaginary was highlighted by the project to locate it in the premises of the new Palace of National Library and Museums (*Palacio de Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*) in Madrid. This was an ambitious project that aimed to gather in the same building all the main repositories of sources of national history, along

with the National Library and the National Historical Archive. Intended as a landmark of the liberal capital in construction, the Palace was located in the *Paseo de Recoletos*, on the same urban axis as the *Paseo del Prado*, in-between Old Madrid and the newly planned bourgeois extension. Similar in its general outline and distribution of spaces to the British museum and Library, this building was designed by Francisco Jareño (1818–1892) in the 1860s, and Queen Elisabeth II laid the first stone in 1866. Nevertheless, the works stopped and were resumed several times, and it was only completed in 1892 on the occasion of the celebration of the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America (Layuno 2004).

The Fourth Centenary of the Discovery and the Colonial ‘Disaster’ (1892–1898)

In the last third of the nineteenth century, European industrialised nations competed to extend their economic influence to other areas of the world and to create overseas empires. In a time when colonial power was considered a proof of the vitality of the nation, Spain was not in the best situation; after the independence of most of its American territories in the 1820s, only Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, and the Philippines and three archipelagos in the Pacific, were all that remained of the former empire. In 1868 the first War of Independence broke out in Cuba; it finished ten years later, in 1878, but the demands of the Cuban patriots were not satisfied. Moreover, the USA challenged the Spanish hold on the Antilleans and a new colonial power, Germany, ambioned Spanish possessions in the Pacific.

As a consequence of this international colonial context of competition, geographical societies were created in Madrid and in several port cities such as Barcelona, in order to foster the exploitation of the existing colonies, and new colonial endeavours were undertaken in Africa (Fradera 2005). In 1887 the Exhibition on the Philippines (*Exposición de las Islas Filipinas*) not only presented the economic potential of the colonial enterprise but also celebrated the civilising role of the metropolis in the Far East. On the occasion, some “native peoples” were displayed in Madrid for the entertainment of visitors, and one of the initiatives born of the Exhibition, the Museum-Library of the Overseas (*Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*) was turned into a permanent institution. Attached to the ministry of Overseas Affairs (*Ministerio de Ultramar*), it gathered information on Spain’s historical role in the discovery and colonisation of extra-European territories and was intended to encourage commercial ventures (Sánchez Gómez 2003).

In addition to these initiatives, late nineteenth century Spain’s official discourse, especially under the conservative driven Restoration (*Restauración*) period (1875-1903) drew mainly on a nostalgic reading of the bygone Spanish Empire for the purpose of fostering national pride. In this context, the Fourth centenary of the “discovery” of the New World was celebrated in 1892 with different events; for instance, that year the 12th of October was celebrated for the first time as a national day. Some of the celebrations took place in the province of Huelva (Andalusia), from which Columbus had departed in 1492; it was in the same city that the Ninth International Congress of Americanists was organized (López-Ocón 2005).

Meanwhile, in the capital of the kingdom, a double historical exhibition was programmed. In 1888, when the events were first announced in an official decree, the government proposed the celebration of an “American Historical Exhibition” (*Exposición Histórico-Americana*), intended to illustrate “the diverse degrees of culture that the natives had when the Spanish and the

Portuguese arrived there, as well as the remains of those ancient civilisations that were extinct at that moment”². The organisers hoped that in so doing, the exhibition would show the current state of progress of Latin America by comparison, underlining “the glory of those who planted there the European civilisation and the peoples who stem from it and who make them blossom”³. It was decided that both exhibitions were to be hosted in the Palace of National Library and Museums, a decision that hastened its completion (Bernabéu 1987).



Figure 2: Palace of National Library and Museums (*Palacio de la Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*), Madrid (© Ignacio Vleming)

Later on, the project evolved and a second event was added, the “European Historical Exhibition” (*Exposición Histórico-Europea*). This event was to be devoted to the display of the “examples of Iberian work” in a chronological span that went back to the formation of the different kingdoms in the Peninsula to the time “in which they searched and found across the sea vast territories in which to expand”⁴, that is from the beginning to the end of the Middle Ages. For the organisers by comparing both exhibitions “the respective degree of culture that had been reached, at the moment of the meeting, the conquered and the conquerors” should thus be evident⁵. The Jesuit Epigraphist Fidel Fita (1835–1918), member of the Royal Academy of History curated the European Historical Exhibition. It was installed on the second floor of the Palace, and it displayed mostly artworks coming from Catholic churches and cathedrals. The display confirmed the liberal historiographical model that recognised medieval times as the origins of national history, but it added the discovery (and evangelisation) of the Americas to affirm Spanish cultural leading role among other European nations, and its contribution to universal civilisation.

In turn, the display of the American Historical Exhibition was the result of the sum of the exhibitions organised by the participating countries, coordinated by a committee led by Juan de Dios de la Rada y Delgado (1827–1901), director of the National Archaeological Museum. The rooms of the first floor of the palace were distributed into “national pavilions” assigned to the independent states of the American continent. However, the invitation to participate was extended to European (colonial) nations; an invitation that was turned down by France and Great Britain, but it was accepted by Denmark, which sent a collection of materials from Greenland, and by Sweden with ethnographic materials from the university of Uppsala. Portugal played a particularly relevant role and its King presided the opening ceremonies, along with the Spanish Regent Queen.

The 1892 celebrations were used as part of a renovated effort by the Spanish government to reaffirm its hold on its Caribbean colonies and to reformulate its foreign policy with the Latin American republics. By the time the invitation was sent, the USA had organised the First International Conference of American States in 1890. From Spain, the growth of *Panamericanism* was seen as a competition, only to be aggravated by the decision to organise the Columbian Exhibition of Chicago (1893). If the exhibitions in Madrid aimed to root Spanish identity in historical deeds, Chicago’s event focused on technology and tried to show the world the rising power of the North American Union (Bolotin & Laing 2002). For the Latin American republics, the decision to participate in Madrid’s or in Chicago’s exhibition, or in both, became a matter of politics and diplomacy, and provoked large internal debates.

Latin American societies were torn along political lines, between progressive and conservatives programmes, and between an admiration for the values of the North American Union and the fear of its colonial ambitions. Similarly, the rapprochement to Spain was dictated by current politics and particular issues, as evinced by the case of the Quimbayas Hoard. When the president of Colombia, Carlos Holguín (1832–1894), received the invitation to participate in Madrid’s exhibition, he used public funds to acquire a hoard of pre-Columbian gold artefacts that had been looted and divided between different Colombian collectors. After being exposed as one set in both Madrid and Chicago, in 1893, the hoard was dismantled again: 74 gold artefacts remained in Chicago as a gift, whereas 122 pieces were donated to the Spanish government. This was justified at the time as a reward for Spanish support in a dispute over borders with Venezuela, settled in 1891 with the mediation of the Spanish Regent Queen. Moreover, the gift had symbolic value: it was only in 1886 that the Colombian Republic had established full diplomatic relationships with its former metropolis (Gamboa 2002).

Indeed, the 1892 celebrations inaugurated a period of improved diplomatic relations between Spain and the former territories, and confirmed the double international projection of Spain: both towards Europe and the American territories. In this context, the history of the conquest was rewritten in nationalist key; in 1892 the national history book series promoted under the auspices of the Royal Academy of History by its president, the statesman Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828–1897), leader of the conservative party, started to be published (Peiró 1995, Boyd 1997). This work responded to the ideological orientation of a political system, the *Restauración*, which favoured the ideological matching of Catholic faith and Spanish nationalism. In this context, Spanish imperial history was cultivated and celebrated in order to boost national pride,

and to disperse the phantoms of the present, such as the social unrest provoked by the workers movement.

After the closure of those exhibitions, the Palace was finally set up to host the institutions it was created for: the National Library and the National Archaeological Museum. Under the supervision of Rada y Delgado, the materials were installed in its new premises, which were inaugurated in 1895. Latin American collections were displayed as a subsection within the Ethnographic department, in five rooms, in which the collections were set according to geographical criterion. The rooms decorated with Pre-Columbian American motives, which included some of the elements present in the national pavilions of the Exhibition, such as plaster casts of Central American sculptures and friezes sent by the Mexican delegation (Ramírez Losada 2009). As opposed to this focus on the greater archaeological cultures of Latin America, the colonial period was not given much attention.

All these events celebrating the colonial past, present and future of the Spanish nation were promoted by the state in a period of instability marked by crisis in the colonies. In 1895 a new uprising in Cuba claimed independence, followed by a rebellion the next year in the Philippines. The USA entered into the war between the Cuban revolts and the Spanish monarchy in 1898 after three years of conflict, which had in Spain provoked inflamed nationalist discourses in the Parliament and in the press, and a bitter feeling among the popular classes whose sons made up the majority of the soldiers. In a quick battle, the US navy defeated the old Spanish ships in Santiago de Cuba, and in December the Peace Treaty was signed in Paris, in which Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines as the remains of the Spanish empire were sold off. Finally, in 1899 the Spanish government sold the last remaining territories of the overseas empire in the Pacific, the Marianas, Carolinas and Palaos archipelaghi to the German Empire (Fusi & Niño 1996; Balfour 1997; Pan-Mantojo & Álvarez-Junco 1998). As an immediate consequence, the Ministry of Overseas was suppressed (and with it the Museum of Overseas) enacting symbolically the end of a colonial enterprise (Carrero & Blanco 1999).

“Hispanidad”, Re-conquering the Americas for the Spanish national project (1900–1936)

The colonial crisis of 1898 was perceived as a blow to Spanish national identity. The idea of the decadence of the national body obsessed a generation of patriotic intellectuals in the first third of the twentieth century, who proposed scientific improvement to regenerate the political, social and economic structures of the country. They regretted what for them was a long chain of historical wrongdoings, which had separated Spain from the path of European civilised nations. As a remedy they proposed the “Europeanisation” of Spain. These ideas informed a process of development of the country’s cultural and scientific structures in the first three decades of the century, which has been named the “Silver Age of Spanish culture” (Varela 1999; Gómez-Ferrer Morant, G. & R. Sánchez 2007).

This early twentieth-century Spanish nationalism continued to consider the country’s history as a process of centralisation and homogenisation of its different territories, in which the Castilian language and tradition constituted the backbone of national identity. Nevertheless, in the last third of the nineteenth century, cultural nationalist movements had begun to develop in several areas of the country, to be transformed into political parties in the first decades of the

twentieth century in the Basque Provinces and in Catalonia. It was in this context that the memory of the empire and the links with the Spanish-speaking world were stressed in order to reaffirm internally a unitary national identity. As the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) argued, Spain had united precisely to conquer its position in the world; the American empire became the justification of the nation, just when its identity was shaken as a result of the loss of the colonies and the rising of alternative nationalist projects (Forcadell 1998, Taibo 2007).

These ideas combined with a renovated interest in the people as a depositary of national essences. For this reason the history of the Hispanic Empire was redefined as the evolution of a civilisation based on language and traditions, particularly in the work of the historian Rafael Altamira (1866–1951), who developed the school of *Hispanoamericanismo*. If *Hispanismo* was the study of the Spanish civilisation, a term coined by French scholars in the last third of the nineteenth century, which implied a symbolic appropriation of Spanish past, and *americanismo* was the scientific study of the Americas, *Hispanoamericanismo* implied the spiritual “re-conquest” of those territories and was based on the assertion of a shared “civilisation” on both sides of the Atlantic (Valero 2003). Nonetheless, as Sepúlveda has studied, twentieth century *Hispanoamericanismo* was divided in tendencies along political lines: on the one hand, progressive *Hispanoamericanismo*, and on the other *Hispanidad*, developed by conservative thinkers (Sepúlveda 1999 & 2005).

As Carlos Serrano has studied from the point of view of the public monuments, the conversion of the colonial past into a key element of national identity was developed in exactly those two decades that followed the 1898 defeat. In just a few years, the memory of the bloodshed of the colonial war in Cuba was transformed by the desire to reconstruct the ties with the American territories. The vitality of the nation and the race, symbolized by the young King Alphonse XIII (1902–1931) had to be fostered by remembering the deeds of the past. This rapprochement was to compensate for the marginal position of Spain in the 1919 peace treaties signed at the end of the First World War, which had confirmed the pre-eminence of colonial empires, France and Great Britain, the beginning of USA’s international power, whilst also fostering the dissolution of multi-national monarchies in Central Europe (Serrano 1999).

However, the rapprochement with Spain was partly seconded and partly contested by Latin Americans. In 1913, the celebrations of the 12th of October were launched in both Spain and the Latin American Republics as “Day of Race” (*Día de la Raza*) and in 1918 it was declared Spain’s national day (Barrachina 2000). Whereas conservative politicians and Catholic hierarchies supported the celebration of the 12th of October, others, such as the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969) denounced Spain’s attempt of *Reconquista espiritual* of the Americas (in clear reference to Altamira’s formulation) as a form of neo-colonialism, and affirmed that what for Spain meant *europización* was for Cuba *americanización*, meaning learning from the USA and imitating its technological development (Ortiz 1911).

During Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship (1923–1930), conservative thinkers shaped the concept *Hispanidad*, highlighting the role of Spain not just in the conquest of the New World but also in its conversion to the Catholic Faith. The Hispanic-American Exhibition (*Exposición Hispano-Americana*), organised in Seville in 1929, sought to stress the alleged fraternity with the former colonies, in the city that had monopolised the trade with the Americas in early modern times.

Though the celebration of the American past was not the reserve of the right wing, the Republican authorities that ruled the country after 1931 fully supported it.

In 1935, a collection of Peruvian antiquities amassed by Juan de Larrea (1895-1980), a Spanish poet and man of fortune of Basque origins, was exhibited in Madrid. He travelled in 1930 to Perú and in a few months gathered a rich collection, which he managed to ship to Paris. The collection was exhibited in the *Musée d'ethnonographie du Trocadéro* (nowadays *Musée de l'Homme*) in 1933, before being taken to Madrid. The 1935 exhibition triggered the interest of the Spanish government, and that year, it signed an agreement with Larrea, so that the whole collection was loaned to the National Archaeological Museum. Finally, in the midst of the Civil War, Larrea, a supporter of the Republican government, donated his collection to the “Spanish Republican People” on the significant date of the 14th of April, 1937. In September of the same year, the Republican authorities decided to create a *Museo-Biblioteca de Indias*. However, the war context impeded the realization of the project (Gutiérrez 1995).

The Museum of the Americas (1941–2011)

In summer 1936, a coup by a group of generals supported by the high ranks of the Catholic Church and the industrial and banking sectors, aimed to overthrow the Republican government. The subsequent Civil War (1936–1939) was an important period for the reframing of the old liberal Spanish national master narrative, which interpreted the history of the country as the fight for independence from foreign domination. Whereas the Francoist claimed that they fought a “crusade” against the enemies of religion and the fatherland, the Republicans denounced the support that Franco obtained from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Nevertheless, what both sides had in common was the idea of the American empire as a crucial element of national identity; this was so well established that in 1937, both warring sides tried to enforce the creation of a Museum of the Americas (González & Limón 1988).

It was finally General Franco, who officially created the *Museo de América* in 1941; in a country socially and economically devastated and diplomatically isolated, the imperial myth was exalted as the central element of the fascist ideology that characterised the first years of Franco’s dictatorship. The holdings of the museum and even its location had been already determined in the 1937 Republican decree; however, the dictatorship used it in its own benefit. The inaugural decree favoured “the heroic deed of the Discovery”, and it set out to promote the knowledge of Spain’s civilising mission. The new museum was firstly located within the premises of the National Archaeological Museum; it was not until 1962 that it was transferred to a purposed-built museum in the university campus of Madrid (*Ciudad Universitaria*), on the North West exit of the city. The *Ciudad Universitaria*, constructed in the 1920s, had been totally destroyed during the siege of Madrid in the Civil War. After 1939, reconstruction began, and in 1956 the dictator erected a gigantic arch of triumph (*Arco de la Victoria*) in commemoration of his victory (Chías 1986; Diéguez 1992).



Figure 3: Museum of the Americas, Madrid (© Ignacio Vleming)

The new museum was inaugurated by General Franco on the 17th of June 1965. Situated right next to the Victory arch, the *Museo de América* was part of the urban propagandistic programme of a regime, which defined itself as *nacional-católico*. Not surprisingly, the purpose-built museum designed by Luis Moya Blanco (1904–1990) and Luis Martínez-Feduchi Ruiz (1901–1975), was inspired by sixteenth century Spanish monastic architecture, stressing thus the role of Spain in the extension of Catholicism to the New World. The museum received the archaeological / anthropological collections from the National Archaeological Museum and the Museum of Anthropology (*Museo de Antropología*), but also a large number of artworks and handcrafts dating to the colonial period, which came from different public institutions. Finally, the research library of the museum also received the library collections that had belonged to the *Museo-Biblioteca de Ultramar*.

The new Museum of the Americas paid particular attention to the colonial period, leaving a much smaller display area for the archaeological collections; it included several historical rooms devoted to Christopher Columbus or to Isabella the Catholic, to the Institutions created by the Spaniards or the Laws that were implemented to rule those territories. The aim was to celebrate the conquest, colonisation and evangelisation as another step in the diffusion of Western civilisation to the rest of the world (Fernández 1965).

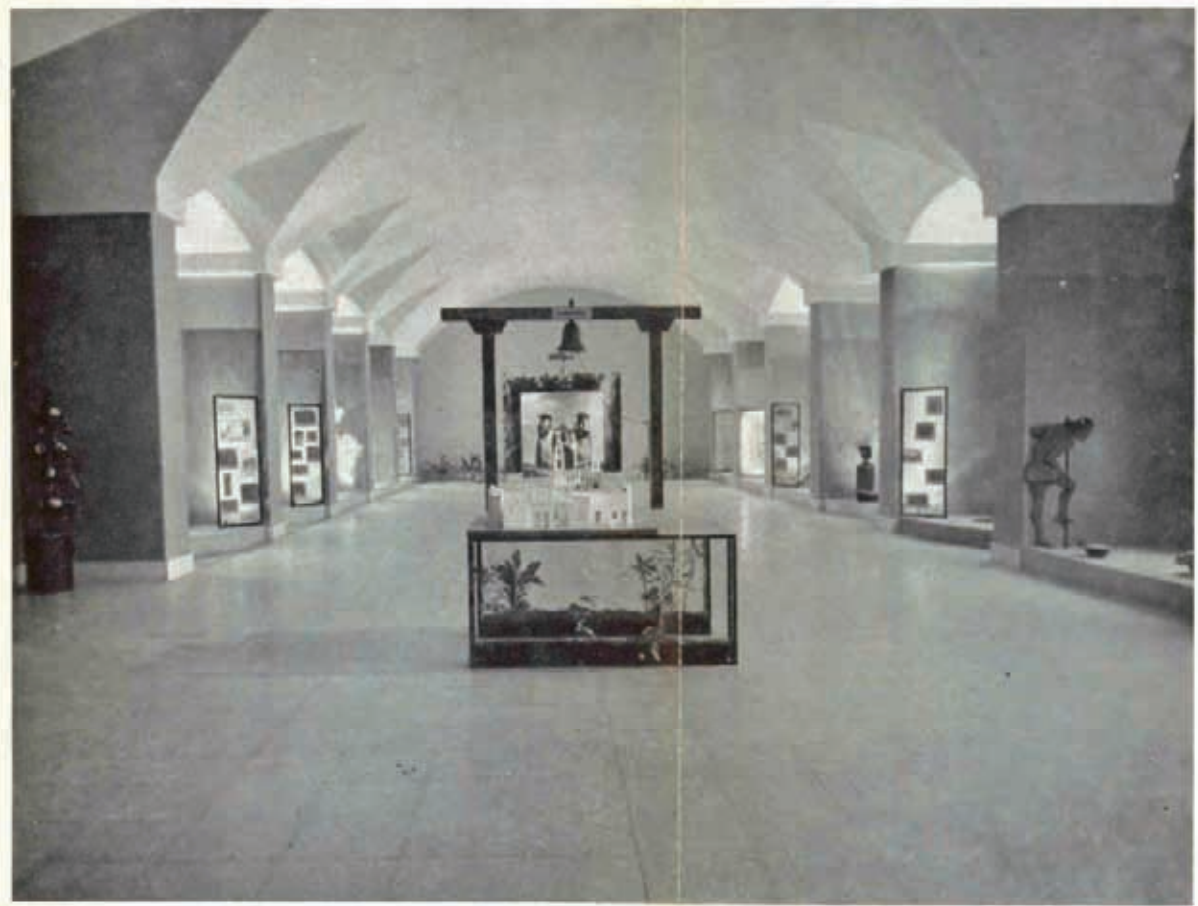


Figure 4: Museum of the Americas, Madrid. View of Room XI: “Room on Institutions”. Taken from Fernández Vega, P. (1965). *Guía del Museo de América*, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Dirección General de Bellas Artes.



Figure 5: Museum of the Americas, Madrid. Two of the dioramas in Room XI: “Institutions”. Translation of the texts: First diorama “España brought wheat to the Americas”. Second diorama “Maize was brought from the Americas”. Taken from Fernández Vega, P. (1965). *Guía del Museo de América*, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Dirección General de Bellas Artes.

In 1981, six years after Franco's death, the museum closed its doors to the public in order to undergo the renovation of its premises. The idea was to complete the renovation for the Fifth Centenary of Colon's arrival to America in 1992, which was celebrated with a World Exhibition in Seville that served as a showcase for Spanish modernity, but also for its international projection. In 1988, the Social-Democrat cabinet had confirmed the 12th of October as the national day, consolidating a name that for many had too much of a Francoist connotation: *Día de la Hispanidad* (Barrachina 2000). Democratic Spain also sought to construct diplomatic ties with Latin America, and in 1991 the Mexican city of Guadalajara hosted the first Ibero-American summit, which gathers together every year the representatives of the countries of Spanish and Portuguese official language. In this context, the Museum of the Americas is one of the pieces, albeit not the central one, of a larger strategy of cultural diplomacy oriented towards Latin America, which includes the *Casa de América* established in the very centre of Madrid in 1990; different cooperation programmes directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs complete this trend of cultural policy.

The new Museum of the Americas was finally inaugurated on 12th October 1994, and since then it has not undergone major reforms. Since then, the museum's discourse is structured in five main sections; the first one, "The knowledge on the America" (*El conocimiento de América*) gives a historiographical overview on the formation of collections, and on the historical sources of the "discovery". In this way it provides a dialogue between image and text and guides the visitor's gaze towards the appreciation of the creation of knowledge. The next section, "Geography and Landscapes" deals with the natural setting in which human societies developed. The third section, "Society" is the longest, and it is structured following the classification of human societies provided by anthropology –Bands, Tribes, Chiefdoms and States–, in which it considers both the history of the pre-Columbian peoples and the colonial times. The last two sections, "Religious forms", and "Communication" focus on the cultural expressions. In this way the museum reflects a historical materialist view in which the study of the infrastructure (the environment) is followed by the economic and social structures and finally by the ideological constructions, such as the languages and religious beliefs (Jiménez 1995).

The display is classically object-orientated, and in so doing the museum does not render any historical master narratives explicitly but camouflages it in scientific theory, anthropology in particular, without reflecting critically on it. The museum stresses the creative mixing of peoples and cultures and the legacy of Spanish civilisation to the New World, while avoiding any discussion on the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise. It thus seemingly reflects the motto that dominated the 1992 celebrations: "The Meeting of Two Worlds" (*El encuentro de dos mundos*). In the last fifteen years, Spanish society has undergone major changes in its composition due to the arrival of waves of immigrants from Latin America and other parts of the world. As a consequence, the Museum of the Americas tries to fulfil a role in contemporary society by the organisation of activities that address Latin American immigrants in it.

Other initiatives have contributed to the historiographical re-addressing of the colonial period, such as, for instance, the exhibition organised by the Museo del Prado and the *Patrimonio Nacional* in October 2010-January 2011, "Pintura de los reinos. Identidades compartidas en el mundo hispánico" (Painting from the kingdoms. Shared identities in the Hispanic world"). It attempted "to bring the European public closer to an area of 16th- and 17th-century painting that has

generally been excluded from the art historical literature on painting, while demonstrating to what degree the Spanish monarchy was a motor for artistic and intellectual stimulus” (<http://www.museodelprado.es/en/exhibitions/exhibitions/at-the-museum/pintura-de-los-reinos/la-exposicion/>).

Conclusions

Descubrimiento, Hispanoamericanismo, Hispanidad, Encuentro, those ideological constructs have characterised the evolution of the relationship between Spain and the Latin American territories in the last two hundred years, as well as determining the creation and display of Latin American collections in Spain’s national museums. By following the arrival and display of those collections, it is possible to analyse the changing relationship between Spain and those territories. When the first collections arrived in Early Modern Times, they were considered scientific objects or curiosities, clearly different from European artworks. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that American collections started to become relevant artefacts for the writing of Spanish national narrative. The 1892 “Discovery” celebrations inaugurated new relations between Spain and the former colonies, but also a reconsideration of its material and cultural legacy. The creation of the Museum of the Americas in 1941, although charged ideologically by the dictatorship, followed the trends marked by liberal historiography since the early twentieth century. In this long process, Latin American collections became the material evidence of a historical process, the conquest and colonisation of a continent, whose control determined the evolution of the Iberian societies in the last five hundred years, and still nowadays guides their international geostrategic position.

Notes

- ¹ “la historia monumental de aquel brillante y dilatado período de perenne lucha, que comienza en Pelayo y termina en Isabel la Católica, debe ocupar el principal compartimiento de nuestro Museo arqueológico”. Royal Decree of 20 March 1867, creating the National Archaeological Museum, published in *Gazeta de Madrid*, issue 80, on 21 March. See Marcos Pous 1993.
- ² “los diversos grados de cultura que tenían los indígenas cuando españoles y portugueses llegaron allí por vez primera, así como los restos y vestigios de antiguas y ya entonces extinguidas civilizaciones”. Original document quoted in Bernabéu 1987: 153. Documental Appendix. Document 1: “Preámbulos y reales decretos creando la comisión de 1888”.
- ³ “aparecerá representado el estado actual de la América neolatina”, “para Gloria de los que trasplantaron allí la civilización europea y de los pueblos que de ella proceden y que la han hecho florecer”. Original document quoted in Bernabéu 1987: 153-54. Documental Appendix. Document 1: “Preámbulos y reales decretos creando la comisión de 1888”.
- ⁴ From the moment in which “se empezaron a formar las nuevas naciones de la península” to the time “en que buscaron y hallaron territorios inmensos por donde extenderse a través de los mares”. Original document quoted in Bernabéu 1987: 157. Documental Appendix. Document 2: “Preámbulo al real decreto de la junta directiva de 1891”.
- ⁵ “el respectivo estado de cultura que, en el punto de encontrarse, conquistados y conquistadores alcanzaban”. Original document quoted in: Bernabéu 1987: 157. Documental Appendix. Document 2: “Preámbulo al real decreto de la junta directiva de 1891”.

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Tradition and Ethnographic Display: Defining the National Specificity at the National Art Museum in Romania (1906–1937)

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Abstract

After a long period of debates and several unfinished projects, the National Museum of Romania was founded in 1906. Under the direction of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcas (1872–1952), the newly created institution aimed at being the expression of the Romanian civilization and a depository of local traditions. It was also intended to be a documentary basis for study and research about Romanian art and culture. This paper aims at analysing first the strategies deployed by its director for the construction of a patrimonial collection, then the way it has become more visible through the selection of the objects, the structure of permanent display and the museographic practices. The project for the *Muzeul National* developed a complex narrative that mixed antiquities as well as religious, folk and modern art in order to define a national specificity and to support the idea of unity and continuity of the Romanian culture, from pre-historical times to the present. Despite its consequent historicism, Tzigara-Samurcas' museographic conception nevertheless granted a central role to ethnography in a time when folk art unanimously appeared as an authentic production, the very expression of the 'Romanian spirit' and the main source of a new regenerated contemporary art. We intend to explore the relationship between the patrimonial practices developed at the National Museum in Romania and the dynamic and multifaceted concept of 'specificity'. Finally, we will pay attention to the National Museum exhibitions that took place in Paris during the inter-war period as the promotion of an identity profile that revisited national stereotypes, myths of origin and local authenticity. By considering several critical texts, exhibition catalogues and diverse acquisitions, we will try to understand how the foreign audience pictured Romanian 'national art' during this period.

In June 1912, the new building of the National Museum was inaugurated in Bucharest, in the presence of the Royal Family and high-ranking civil servants. The goals and program were explicit: to ‘honor our ancestors’ art with a shelter worthy of its significance, for the education of the people and the strengthening of the patriotic feeling’ and to ‘gather the art collections which are scattered at present, in order to leave for the future generations a perfect mirror of the whole artistic treasure of the Romanian land, starting from the prehistoric period until today’ (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1937: 3).

The above-mentioned decree staged a certain idea of national heritage as it contemplated the encounter of two perspectives: first, that of the heritage to be protected, then, as the souvenir to leave for posterity. The artistic treasures thus gathered in a coherent and complete ensemble had didactic value and were supposed to stimulate patriotism. However, later on, they would also come to represent a specificity found in the peasantry, as a factor of identity. Mostly based on the writings of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcas (1872–1952), Romanian art historian and director of the new institution from 1906 to 1948, this paper offers a new approach to understanding the type of museum that was intended to be a ‘national museum’. The question is: how do the expectations that found the creation of a national museum determine the selection and exhibition of the collections? Moreover, taking the nature of its collections into account, how was the ‘national specificity’ at the National Museum in Romania imagined? This text aims at analyzing, first the strategies deployed by its director for the construction of a patrimonial collection, then the way it became more visible through the selection of its objects, the structure of permanent display and the museographic practices. Finally, we will discuss the question of tradition and local authenticity, both at the level of the national discourse conceived for a foreign audience and from the perspective of the critical response to exhibitions abroad.

The Invention of the Romanian National Museum

Historians who have studied the Romanian National Museum usually present it as an ethnographic museum, mostly composed of rural art, at the root of any form of national art (Thiesse, 2001: 215; Popescu, 2001: 289). This approach, without being wrong, needs to be qualified. Indeed, at the start, the institution, which was supposed to house the artistic treasures of the nation, did not limit its interest to folklore. Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcas, disciple of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl and Heinrich von Brunn at the University of Munich and assistant of Wilhelm von Bode at the General Direction of Royal Museums in Berlin, imagined a complex narrative that mixed antiquities with religious, folk and modern art in order to define a national specificity and support the idea of the unity and continuity of the Romanian culture from prehistoric ages to the present.

Tzigara-Samurcas’ museum project, as it appears in his writings between 1906 and 1912, is linked to a first distribution, organization and appropriation of the Romanian heritage. In *Muzeul nostru national*, written in June 1906, he deplored the state of the collections of the National Museum of Antiquities, which was basically the only museum the capital hosted at the time, an institution with a varied and mixed collection where no coherent narrative was possible:

In front of the door, there is a window showing old Romanian rings, bracelets, earrings and an ivory crucifix [...] ; then the reproduction of the Vetersfelde Treasure ; and a metal clock, all of those are displayed without the slightest trace of an indication. [...] Right next to this,

stands a cupboard with 'firearms and gods from savage populations of South America', idols from China and the Batavian Republic and other curiosities all bearing very detailed labels. On the wall, over the cupboard, you can see Curtea de Arges frescoes! Another cupboard holds 'national costumes and boyar clothes' which are represented by modest and uninteresting items. [...] In the middle of the side wall hangs the Kulbach cardboard picturing the Christian persecutions under Nero. Underneath it, you can find the icon which comes from the Vieiros monastery. On its side, the collection of Romanian musical instruments given by Mr Burada is displayed [...]. I would like to stress the fact that this is one of the rooms of the *Romanian* National Museum.

He then concluded:

One could not imagine a better combination to make the thought foggier, rather than more informed. One could not be more mistaken about what the mission of a national museum should be. (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1906: 2–3)

After acquiring some experience in Berlin museums and convinced that the Romanian museum institution needed to be rebuilt, back to Bucharest, Tzigara-Samurcas pleaded for the creation of a genuinely 'Romanian' museum where the *bric-à-brac* of the Museum of Antiquities would be replaced by a carefully selected narrative built around history and tradition. He then resumed several unaccomplished projects, such as Romanian minister of Culture and Public Instruction Titu Maiorescu' (1840–1917) proposal of 1875 to create a national museum, or the one of the colonel Dimitrie Pappazoglu (1819–1891) who, in 1884, pleaded for the construction of an establishment, which gathered libraries, archives and a religious art museum. Tzigara-Samurcas imagined an ideal institution, its building designed according to the national style and uniting a museum, a picture gallery as well as a glyptothek in order to represent *all* domains of native art. These artistic institutes will only be different sections in a unique national museum. In 1907, in the periodical called *Convorbiri literare*, he explained in greater detail the plan and missions of his future museum. Tzigara-Samurcas' museography follows an organization of the collections revolving around the religious art section, hosted on the upper floor of the central part of the building, in several vaulted rooms especially designed to remind the visitor of the old churches' architecture. Thus, the most important section of the institution was conceived of a reconstitution of 'at least part of the lost splendors of ancestral churches and monasteries' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1907: 7). Ethnographic and decorative artistic collections on one hand, prehistory and Greco-Roman sections, with their archaeology and numismatics collections and the paintings gallery, on the other would occupy both lateral parts of the building. Each section was to be organized around a reference object, loaded with a high memorial and symbolic impact and to constitute a chapter of a 'demonstrative history':

Set in such conditions and harboring all the artistic and cultural treasures of the peoples who lived on our land, from the most ancient times to today, the museum will constitute the most truthful and telling history of Romania. (Ibid.: 8)

The building was made up of an interior square courtyard surrounded by galleries that were to convey, through their structure, a monastic atmosphere. The courtyard was to have the function of accommodating a selection of stone objects [fig. 1–2].

The effort of exhibiting a whole range of art and draw lessons from it required examples from all times and all lands ever inhabited by the Romanians. These criteria for selection, similar to

those used at that time at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, included any piece that might illustrate the national history, being archaeological items, paintings, popular or decorative objects. Thus conceived, the intended display stressed the idea of a cultural continuity of the nation from prehistoric ages to the present, a crucial concept of the process of construction of Romanian identity and its affirmation in the public space. The use of history for political and moral purposes was reflected in the pedagogical aim of the institution, created as an instrument of national education. It was meant to instruct the people about the life and artistic centers of interest of their ancestors in order to create a collective awareness of the past and strengthen patriotism. However, these collections were also to raise the soul of the people, thanks to the respect of tradition. One of the principles of the institution, set out from 1906, was to get to know the heritage, systematically study it and exalt the potential power of its lessons for the public through colloquiums and demonstrative conferences organized in the rooms of the museum. It was more precisely conceived as a place where the elite could find artistic instruction and scientific tools. To this end, Tzigara-Samurcas gathered in a single place the National Museum, The Art School and a series of areas dedicated to study and research: a library, study and copy rooms as well as conference and exhibition halls.

In 1907, the Ethnographic and National Art Museum opened its door to the public with a temporary display: four rooms showing everyday life and artistic objects produced by the Romanian peasantry and only an ethnographic and an ecclesiastic section [fig. 3]. The first one, which had been recently constituted, presented several sub-sections. The most interesting artefacts were the textiles, wood pieces and ceramics. The second one was not systematically organized since it was based on the collections of the reserves of the Museum of Antiquities, along with pre-historical and Greco-Roman antiquities. Thus, the new institution, as it opened in 1907, was only the starting point of the 'large storage of Romanian culture' it was intended to become (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1910 *apud* Tzigara-Samurcas, 1987: 213). As its accomplishment depended on the whole range of its collections, in *Suntem vrednici de un muzeu national?* (1908) then in *Muzeul neamului romanesc. Ce a fost, ce este, ce ar trebui sa fie* (1910), Tzigara-Samurcas insisted on the final separation between the Romanian Museum and the Museum of Antiquities, the latter being in complete opposition to the missions and his vision of a national museum. Tzigara-Samurcas thus stressed the need for the specialization of the collections and the selection of objects to classify in the National Museum:

...that the Museum of Antiquities will keep only antiquities whereas the new Museum will exhibit all the native art (*arta pamanteana*). The former will include prehistory, the greco-roman period with the rich epigraphic treasures, as well as ancient numismatics. The Museum of National Art will be comprised of all the art of the Romanian people, from the most simple products of the peasants to the costumes of our princes, as well as the art which could be found in monasteries and churches through the country (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1908:6)

The plan and mission of his ideal museum were widely explained in his 1907 article and constantly reevaluated in the following five years, although they were to be only partially fulfilled. In 1937, the collections of the National Museum were still not gathered and the construction of the purpose-built venue had not been completed. In the preface of the *Catalogue de la section d'art paysan* published that same year, Tzigara-Samurcas reminds the reader, with the same fervor and conviction, of the constitutive act of 1912, and the role of the National Museum, and finally compares it to the current incomplete state of the project:

Following the constitutive act signed by the three kings of Romania, 'this National Museum is dedicated to gather the art collections which are scattered at present, in order to leave for the future generations a perfect mirror of the whole artistic thesaurus of the Romanian land (...)'. Before the other collections can be gathered in the new palace of the Museum, we install the section of peasantry art temporarily... (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1937: 3)

Therefore, Tzigara-Samurcas' museum project pertained to a consequent historicism, which determined the objects selected, a complex display and developed curatorial practices. The museum, conceived as *loci memoriae*, whose collections convey a strong memorial and symbolic power, was to revisit the local tradition through the strong moments of the national history.

Where Does Ethnography Belong?

In 1936, in the introduction to his *Romanian Museography*, Tzigara-Samurcas claimed that the central idea for his project was to 'give to the native art (*arta pamanteana*) - the peasant art - the place of honor that it deserved' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1987: 163). Let us then remark first, that the creation of the National Museum mostly relied on rural art; secondly that 'native art' was exclusively limited to the creations of the Romanian peasant. We would like to analyze this change of paradigm in the museographic discourse of the time and to identify the causes of this change.

In *Muzeul nostru national*, Tzigara-Samurcas deplored the fact that official collections did not represent all aspects of the local arts, such as ceramics and popular pottery (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1906: 6). Filling this void became then one of the priorities of his new institution. This ambition can be traced back to 1874, when the National Museum of Antiquities received, through private donation, a collection of folk art, then again, at the turn of the century, when a series of fabrics and popular costumes were donated. Furthermore, through the decree promulgated in December 1875, the secretary of Culture and Public instruction of the time Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), suggested the creation of four sections in the National Museum: industrial, historical paintings, cameo and a special section

to exhibit works on textiles, produced in the countryside : costumes, carpets, fabrics, etc. The objects are gathered geographically so that they form a complete and permanent exhibition of Romanian costumes and different regions of the country. (Nicolau, 1995: 414)

After several failed attempts, Tzigara-Samurcas succeeded in gathering and enriching the existing folk objects. He implemented a strategy to build a collection of national material culture based essentially on gathering items in the field. The institutionalization and growth of ethnographic collections came about in a harsh context, marked by insufficient and misused state funds. Nevertheless, the numerous donations of the King, amateurs or peasants rapidly help this fond grow. In 1907, Tzigara-Samurcas acquired, for the Museum, the peasant house of Antonie Mogos from the village of Ceauru in Oltenia [fig. 4]. Two years later, he added a wood church from Tiurea, Transylvania. By 1910, his efforts had helped the museum to acquire the makings for four rooms presenting, among other things, popular costumes and tools, wood objects and furniture and a rich collection of terra-cotta pieces. The collections and new acquisitions, carefully described in *Muzeul neamului romanesc. Ce a fost; ce este; ce ar trebui sa fie* (1910), had two functions: to offer a complete picture of the social and cultural life of the people and to bring 'our ethnic issue' to light, through the comparative study of items found in territories inhabited by the Romanians. (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1987: 221–232).

The National Museum opened at a time marked by the debate about tradition and national specificity, as Romanian society was experiencing modernization as an effect of the industrial development that was eroding native traditions and values (Demetrescu, 2010: 162). After a century of synchronism with Western cultural values, the Romanian society turned back to local heritage, and found in the world of peasants the foundations for cultural renewal. The political union of all provinces inhabited by Romanians in 1918 was to feed, once more, the patriotism based on the prominent rural civilization. The peasant then appeared not only as a 'champion of authenticity' (Cabanel, 2001: 14), but also as a real identitarian emblem. This conception of the peasantry came from the Romanian idea of the 'nation' which based its political aims for a Nation-State on the idea of a cultural nation rooted in its traditions and past. The nation, in the sense of linguistic and cultural community, which existed before the constitution and organization of the political State, this nation is, first, a matter of common origins, and then, of a common future within a united state. Thus conceived, it is defined by the irreducible singularity of a culture that gravitates around the concept of *Volksgeist*, deep-rooted in a heritage, almost a determinism of a shared memory, a common culture and even a common race – these notions are at the heart of nationalist theories in Romania (Popescu, 2004: 18–19). Historical and linguistic scriptures, social sciences, then archaeological and ethnographical studies stressed the idea of a spiritual unity of the people, the valorisation of this specificity, through the question of continuity and origins. The belief in an organic and vitalist durability of the Romanian people made the peasant the central figure of history, he was the one ensuring the continuity of a nation defined geographically on the belief that its origins were in the Daco-Roman fusion, and beyond that, in the Thracian tribes. The arts also struggled to define the unique content of the national identity, shaped from cultural values that lent authenticity by a return to roots (Demetrescu, *op. cit.*: 162). The dialog with tradition nevertheless remained complex as this notion of specificity could be put into question by the heritage of Greco-Roman influences mixed with Byzantine, Oriental and Occidental ones. Thus, to really comprehend the thread of tradition, one had to go back to the antique and prehistoric origins of the nation.

After 1918, several works dedicated to Romanian folk art were published in the country and abroad. In *L'Art populaire en Roumanie* (1923), the famous interwar historian Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940) supported the existence of a direct filiation between the Romanian peasants and the Thracians, the most remote ancestors of the nation. He claimed that the trace of the ancient Thracians' which could be found at the populations of the same race in the Balkans, survived in Romanian villages until about 1800. He built his demonstration on the comparative study of residence and primitive objects on one side, and the house, fabrics and tools of the peasant on the other. Despite the fact that the most ancient objects produced by peasants only date back to the end of the 18th century, the similarity of geometrical ornaments and linear and abstract style are witnesses of their direct relation with Neolithic productions.

The display of the National Museum in the interwar period resumed this ideological construction imagined around the folk object, which emphasized a Romanian multi-secular tradition. For the ceramics section, Tzigara-Samurcas imagined a scenography that placed at the center of the room various folk objects around a large Roman piece from Niculitel, an archaeological site situated in Dobroudja, in the East of Romania. All around them, he placed Neolithic vases from the sites of Sipeinit and Monteoru as well as contemporary peasant pottery

'hardly recognisable from the ancient pieces' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1937: 25). The windows standing against the walls showed 'characteristic specimens' of the contemporary pottery from the regions of Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldavia, Bucovina and Transylvania, as well as Neolithic ceramics and figurines from the village of Ariusd [fig. 5]. By presenting 'primitive' items next to contemporary ones, he illustrated the desire to link formal and decorative resemblances in order to prove at once the high antiquity of the Romanian culture and its survival in peasant handicrafts (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1938, 'Izvoade de arta taraneasca': 97–99). Furthermore, the interwar writings of Tzigara-Samurcas repeatedly resumed the idea of an ideal continuity between folklore and modern culture through rich illustrative material where Neolithic vases and figurines were presented next to contemporary folk pottery [fig. 6–7].

In the context of the radicalisation of the discourse on tradition and national specificity of the 1930s, Tzigara-Samurcas and museum curator of the time Francisc Sirato (1877–1953) defined the specificity and character of Romanian national arts through the scientific study of ethnographic collections. In *Muzeul de arta nationala* (1932), Francisc Sirato claimed that the mission of a national art museum was to present 'the synthesis of elements of style, shape and color to highlight the necessarily typical elements in the establishment of the plastic character of artistic expression of national ethnic groups' (Sirato, 1932: 75–76). Tzigara-Samurcas supported this claim, as he believed that 'any museum with a national characteristic was supposed to set establish the artistic specific' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1930: 4). To accomplish this mission, one must begin by gathering materials from all regions of the unified country and from all periods of time, that were necessary to the comparative and analytic study of the traditional material civilization. This step was followed by a selection of originals, 'typical' elements from those coming from elsewhere ; once the selection was made, and the originals were identified, one could finally proceed to the study of the ethnic character in art (Sirato, *op. cit.*: 75–76).

Exposing local art in all its forms is the same idea as in 1906; at this time, the museum was supposed to show the course of history through a group of strong pieces of the national heritage. However, in the 1930s, these collections became 'ethnic referents'. The interwar period also gave a new significance to the concept of 'native art' (*arta pamanteana*). At the start, the National Museum was meant to show 'all native art'; it gathered the artistic productions created on territories inhabited by Romanians and referred to any object that showed the country's culture and civilization. In 1925, in *L'Art du peuple roumain*, the distinction between the art of Romania and the art of the Romanian people appeared for the first time. The former stood for the art of the populations that inhabited or passed through the land defined by the political borders of the Nation-State, whereas the later was the one made by the people - the peasants, and that was 'the only one that can be called national art' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1925: 3–4). This new definition implied a shift towards the ethnic group. The writings of Samurcas at the time kept highlighting the concept of 'purely Romanian' as applicable to an object created by a peasant in his solitude and intimacy, sheltered from all influences, hence 'its originality', 'its clear personality' and 'its specific character' (Ibid.: 1–2).

Peasant art, which was a genuine depository of local tradition, became the model to follow and the foundation for a new national art [fig. 8]. Since its creation, the National Museum had a practical purpose: supplying artists with models to inspire modern creation, and more specifically, the applied arts. As it encouraged the return to 'good tradition' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1987: 229),

the peasant objects were to contribute to the rebirth of a 'splendid national art' (Ibid.: 242), which was to find its place in the museum as well. This new national art was, as Ioana Popescu argued, the purely intellectual construction of the elites and laid in a careful selection of 'typically Romanian' elements (Popescu, 1995: 400–402). Its success was due to the propaganda made through albums of 'national' decorative motives, catalogues of the peasant art section and the diffusion of the productions of the craft industry. The promotion of peasant art and the aim to advertise the collections of the National Museum abroad are illustrated by the numerous participations of this institution to exhibitions, international colloquiums and by the various publications. Contrarily to his pre-war production, between 1925 and 1937, Tzigara-Samurcas mostly published books that were accessible to a foreign readership: in 1925 and 1928, at the exhibitions of Romanian art in Geneva and of carpets in Paris, he published respectively *L'Art du peuple roumain*, *Tapis roumains* and, in *L'Art vivant*, a study of folk art in Romania; three years later, appeared the album that illustrated the temporary sections of the National Art Museum, with a title in French. In 1937, still in French, the catalogue of the peasant art section was published in Bucharest: it included a meticulous description of the collections and a long introductory text. At this level of our analysis, the question is : how was this art perceived from abroad? Did its voluntarily specific character convince the foreign audience?

The *Muzeul National* at the Exhibitions in Paris

Between 1906 and 1937, the National Museum participated in twelve exhibitions organized in several European capitals, three being in Paris: the ancient and modern Romanian art exhibition housed by the Jeu de Paume Museum (1925), a carpet exhibition dedicated to Eastern and Northern Europe organised by the Decorative Arts Museum (1927) and the World Fair of 1937. This chapter will analyze these participations in terms of the official promotion of an identity that revisited national stereotypes, myths of origin and local authenticity. Besides, through several critical texts, exhibition catalogues and diverse acquisitions, we will try to understand how the French audience pictures Romanian cultural specificity during this period.

On May 24th, 1925, *Le Temps* announced the opening, at the Jeu de Paume Museum, of an exhibition about Romanian art. It was the fourth and last exhibition of foreign art programmed by Léonce Bénédite after the war 'and which let us enter so deeply in the character and the soul of races' (Thiebault-Sisson, 1925: 4). Clearly retrospective, it offered a comprehensive look at the Romanian artistic scene 'from the *primitive schools* (icon paintings, frescoes, sculptures, decorative arts, goldsmith's trade, fabrics, carpets, etc.) to the 19th century artists and a selection of contemporaries' (Anon., 1925: 3). The National Museum was presented in the first room of the exhibition with tapestries, fabrics, embroideries, costumes and ceramics coming from all Romanian provinces, dating mostly from the second half of the 19th century.

Critics were very enthusiastic about the richness of 'antique' treasures - rustic objects - but also about religious art which monopolized most of the papers written about the Romanian exhibition. Embroideries destined for religious services, icons and shrouds with portraits of the Valachian princes were noticed by Louis de Meurville, Henri Focillon, Thiebault-Sisson and reproduced in *L'Art vivant*, *L'Illustration* and *Le Figaro* [fig. 9]. However, the break between ancient art, of Byzantine influence, and 'the modern western school' (Dezzarois, 1925: 579) made it

difficult to define the specific character of the Romanian school and to seize the thread of tradition:

Will we find, amidst the current works of Romania, the continuity of this mystic and resonant art, of this realism in impression that is so serious and yet so picturesque! Yes, in popular works, in these delicate embroideries where the geometrical rigor of the motives is mitigated by the harmonious simplicity of the tones and fabrics used. (...) Yes, in the rustic approach of the ceramics. No, not in painting itself. There, you will find no prolongation, no point of transition... (R. R.; 1925: 739)

Facing this real diversity of orientations, the Romanian elite tried to push forward the elements, which could best show local tradition and its specificity. It was described as a kind of popular sensitivity, a unity of feeling thanks to which the Romanian school managed to keep its own physiognomy through the centuries (Cantacuzène, 1925: 65). The answers from the French critics were again diverse. To the columnist of *Europe nouvelle*, the characteristic Romanian art was its religious art, which finds its continuity in the simplicity, charm and rusticity of popular creation. Other critics questioned the specific character of the whole Romanian school. In his account of the exhibition, Louis de Meurville wondered: 'Has there ever been such a thing as a Romanian art?' and lingered a long time on the numerous Byzantine, Eastern, Venetian, Russian and Western influences it underwent through the centuries. As for the folk art, it was 'not less typical, borrowing from all its neighbors and building itself an entity of harmonious colors and various drawings' (Meurville, 1925: 4). Pierre Courthion also noticed a carpet from the region of Bucovin for its Eastern influences (Courthion, 1925: 29). In this sense the exhibition was interesting to both critics: for its richness in 'antique' treasures, these were nevertheless not specific, as they were the product of a heterogeneous cultural space.

Thiebault-Sisson also pointed out, that Asian and Mediterranean influences could be found in rural art but, contrary to Meurville and Courthion, he considered that they were 'incorporated in the Romanian sensitivity and disciplined by it...' (Thiebault-Sisson, *op. cit.*: 4). Furthermore, he put forward the idea of continuity between the peasant pottery and fabrics and contemporary creation:

Modern and ancient, all these pieces are treated in the same spirit and ruled by the same formula. The present respectfully and naively follows the path of the past. (Ibid.)

In the catalogue of the exhibition, Tzigara-Samurcas insisted on the idea that the exposed items, despite the recent dating, reproduced far more ancient models. Moreover, books published in Paris in the 1920s resumed the same clichés about the remnants of 'high antiquity' that characterised the folk fabrics and 'pottery adorned with spirals which still survive in our peasant pottery' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1928, *Tapis roumains*: 34). Those were pieces that bear a clearly distinct identity, as it was indeed made by the peasant 'according to local tradition', they transmitted 'the poetry of its soul' (Ibid.). Thus an effective tool for propaganda was born and taken up by the Western press that launched the image of folk art as faithful to a several-thousand-year-old tradition, conscientiously granting the recognition of continuity:

In the history of this Romania, which was open to so many exchanges, influences, popular art represents the major agreement, the strengths and charms which, throughout time, have the least changed. (Focillon, 1925, 'L'Exposition de l'art roumain au Jeu de Paume': 167)

To Henri Focillon who, besides, knew of the recent work by Nicolae Iorga on this matter, popular creations presented in Paris were 'as ancient as the tribes settled in the Transylvanian regions in times past'; as one studies them, 'sometimes on the splash of a jar, in the hollow of a plate, one can recognize the turn or the rose of ancient Hellenic civilizations' (Focillon, 1925, 'L'exposition d'art roumain': 16). Thus, the peasant was the element of continuity between the past and the present and carried the 'genius' of the people. In the magazine *Revue de deux mondes*, Focillon blessed the 'ingenuity' and the 'primitivism' of popular art. It bore witness to a patriarchal society, which had preserved ancient themes, techniques and inspiration for centuries. In the intimacy of its universe, the peasant created his objects spontaneously, his only landmark being his artistic feeling, hence the purity, originality and freshness of his artistic productions. Thus, the exhibition organized at the Jeu de Paume testified 'not only to the richness of the antique treasure but also to the continuity of this creative energy, the charm of a refined and robust sensitivity' (Ibid.). Despite the cultural, political and social diversity of the Romanian countries, Focillon claimed the existence of a unique 'Romanian spirit', as well as a unitarian thought characterized by a 'native charm', a 'refined sensitivity' (Ibid.), an 'air nostalgia' and a 'dreamy subtlety' and of a Romanian art which expresses it through the centuries (Focillon, 1925, 'L'Art et l'histoire en Roumanie': 19). The Romanian soul, which could be detected in the artistic productions of the peasant, became the argument of a specificity, the specificity of the race.

In 1937, the rural world was valorized as a major unitarian and identitarian factor and the ethnic soul as a fundamental component of the national specificity. The artistic continuity and the fusion between popular civilization and orthodox culture were the main elements of the identity image, which promoted a 'profound and organic Romania' (Vlad, 2007: 199). The peasant products exhibited in Paris were numerous: in the Romanian pavilion, sociologist and general curator of the exhibition Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955), offered two reconstitutions of the inside of a peasant house from Transylvania; then, at the exhibition of rural housing at the Porte Maillot, Henri Stahl (1901–1991), Romanian cultural anthropologist, ethnographer and sociologist, presented the results of the monographic campaigns of Gusti in the Romanian villages and the model of the Village Museum, which opened in 1936 in Bucharest. Finally, in the international pavilion, Tzigara-Samurcas organized, with different objects from the three sections of the National Museum, an exhibition about peasant art. He wanted to 'give a summarizing character' and offer 'a synthesis of peasant art' (Tzigara-Samurcas, 1938, 'Muzeul National Carol I la Expozitia din Paris': 104). The display as he conceived it, housed *de facto* the 'National Museum'. He resumed, almost identically, the scenography from the ceramics section of the museum in Bucharest. Here one could again find the idea of gathering, in the middle of the room, the antique pieces and contemporary peasant pottery, while placing other objects around it: carpets, costumes or wooden objects [fig. 11].

On the whole, the Romanian participation benefited from an excellent reaction (Lepretre, 1937: 1–2). We will only focus here on two texts that deal with the exhibition of the National Museum: the first one was published in *Beaux-Arts* by George-Henri Rivière and André Varagnac [fig. 10] and the second in the paper *La Flèche* by F. M. Calmont. Rivière and Varagnac were excited by the variety, the richness, the archaism of a popular art that transported them back to prehistoric worlds:

Ah ! what a singular intoxication it is to be dreaming one moment in front of this many-colored geometry, these flowers, these stylish birds picking festoons, and to think about the surprising bible of our popular European knowledge... (Rivière, Varagnac, 1937: 12)

They appreciated the beauty of the setting of the exhibition, which reached ‘a grasping scale in the embroidery of ancient noble and peasant ceremonial costumes’ (Ibid.). As for the crafted objects and elements of popular-orthodox culture, they noticed the influence of antique, Balkanic and Eastern decorative themes, more specifically from Asia. The prehistoric motif of the double spiral could be seen on peasant pottery and antic symbols ‘of our European people’ such as the horse, the rooster or solar wheels were noticed on door casements, on the porch of sculpted wood. The great passion of Rivière for folklore was evident from his attempt to complete the collection of ethnographic Romanian art of the former museum of the Trocadéro. That is why he asked the director of the National Museum of Bucharest for a few pieces, such as potteries and the large wooden porch, which became the pathway through the Romanian and Yugoslavian section ¹.

Like Rivière, Lassaingne or Focillon at the time, F. M. Calmont praised the vestiges of a thousand-year-old humanity, highlighting the Neolithic tradition of Romanian popular art. He pointed out the ‘naive and harmonious execution’ of the votive wood cross, which reminded him of those ‘from home’. However, through the analysis of the four costumes exhibited, he concluded that peasant art, because it drew its inspiration from indigenous tradition, was an authentic and representative production for the country. To sum it up, ‘the small folkloric museum’ where the items exhibited were not ‘simple anecdotic curiosities’ but ‘the most elegant and refined art’ appeared to him as ‘one of the marvels of the exhibition’ (Calmont, 1937; *apud* Tzigara-Samurcas, 1938, ‘Muzeul National Carol I la Expozitia din Paris’: 107).

Conclusions

The national specificity as it is defined by the National Museum of Romania relies on a complex and contradictory approach to local heritage whose domain of reference is progressively restricted to the ethnographic object. That is why, after a first stage of accumulation and institutionalization of all areas of artistic inheritance, the national process determined a selection in favour of folkloric heritage that emphasized its nationalization. Museographic and official rhetoric are then grounded in the collective conscience of a nation as mostly defined by ethnic criteria. The museum became then the author of the national narrative. Making an inventory of and inventing its heritage, it made the course of history visible, traced the artistic specific and contributed actively to its affirmation in the local and international public space.

Notes

¹ Bucharest, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, fondul ‘‘Aur’’ Archives, inv. 8 National Art Museum Carol I. Correspondence, the 1st of January 1933-13th of December 1939: p. 66; inv. 36, 28th of August 1937, Donation Project to Ethnography Museum of Trocadéro after the World Fair of 1937, p. 75; inv. 65, 5th of January 1938, Details about the return of the objects of the National Art Museum, with a list of those offered to the Musée de l’Homme, Palais du Trocadéro.

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Ethnoscripts and nationographies: imagining nations within ethnographic museums in East Central and Southern Europe

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Abstract

The article highlights comparatively several major steps in producing national master narratives within museums of ethnography and folklore heritage in East Central and Southeastern Europe. Drawing references to different countries since the end of the nineteenth century, it analyzes the role of ethnographic museums in the production of narratives about ethno-cultural specificity of national communities and in organizing the visions of national pasts along the notions of the “authenticity” and “uniqueness” of folklore traditions. The author points out the various initiatives in establishing such museums (imperial projects, nation-building agendas, cases of transferring examples from Western Europe, etc.) and outlines the influence that Herder’s ideas of the “Volk” had for the people of East Central and Southeastern Europe in pursuing ideas of national identity through representations of folklore heritage. Tracing the main points in the appearance of ethnographic museums in this region, the latter are regarded as closely related to the symbolic construction of nations and as core elements of imagining national communities until today. In the context of newly emerging nation states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the interest in folklore traditions as repositories of national values appeared to be both an element of reasserting national specificity and an anchor of intransient cultural characteristics at the face of the evolving modernities and rapid social change. After a detailed attention to this function of ethnographic museums at the turn of the twentieth century, the article dedicated a separate attention to their input in maintaining policies of national representation during and after the communist regimes in the countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe – with an emphasis on the ideological appropriation of the ideas of the “Volk” in communist times and the revived interest in folklore heritage in contemporary world.

Introduction

An important element in the different national and regional history museums in countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe has been the special place held by representations of the past dedicated to folklore traditions and ethnographic heritage. Whether possessing the status of separate institutions, or being involved as units within larger museums, such exhibitions customarily follow a specific mode of representation that comprises ethnographic items, which are organized in separate collections and refer to a no longer existing everyday life: houses, household items, agricultural tools, ceramics, jewellery, weapons, folk costumes, musical instruments, transportation means, etc. Different attributes of rituals and festive ceremonies are also presented and they generally include artifacts related to religious practices, beliefs, wedding rites and other social and cultural activities. Whenever occupying an outdoor exhibition area, the variety of folk architecture is presented alongside water and wind-mills, buildings for craftsmen's activities, stone-paved paths and artificial streams crossed by small bridges. When prepared indoors, they focus mainly on housing interior and indoor maintained crafts. As the Museum of Ethnography in Cracow instructs us in its information bulletin, 'On the ground floor there is a chain of rooms, each one an authentic reproduction of a folk interior from different regions of Poland. Upstairs there's a dizzying array of folk costumes, whilst the display of painted Easter eggs could trump many a contemporary artist. Other outstanding displays include a rather splendid 17th century wayside shrine. Lovely reconstructions of traditional buildings which make up rooms on the ground floor, whilst upstairs the visitor is greeted by a corridor full of various traditional country dress and along the corridor is a maze of exhibits regarding school life, farming, various skills such as woodcarving, leather tooling, weaving, fishing, musical instrument making... then on to traditional Polish festivities in marriage, Easter and Christmas... very thorough and interesting.'¹

Such presentations can be seen in many similar museum units that display ethnographic and folklore heritage across Europe, and particularly in its East Central and Southeastern part, where they are widely spread and occur in almost every existing town as part of national and regional museums. These exhibits of vernacular heritage that is characteristic for a specific geographical area usually demonstrates the pride of the local population and the related state institutions; for other visitors, they pose the chance to observe realms of the social and cultural history of the "nation" – through artefacts and practices, which in their majority are no longer used or performed. Recreating aspects of a "traditional" way of life of ordinary people (most of them actually village inhabitants), the objects are destined to exhibit the representative elements of this traditional culture, one that is frequently supposed to possess "authenticity" and represent an "absolute aesthetic expression." The majority of these exhibitions promote the idea of uniqueness – both in terms of the collection, and of the special skills implied in the creation of the objects and the complex craftsmanship which had been carefully guarded by the masters of the past, have been handed down across generations and which have been unfortunately lost in the encounter with modernity.

Both through their research activity and through the policies of exhibition, museums of ethnographical and folklore heritage emphasize the role of inherited traditions and the clues for "genuine" self-identification, which people of the present would carry out with communities and

groups of the past and would embrace them as identical, albeit so distant. Providing outlets to cultural realms that have largely disappeared in the twentieth century (and in many cases already in the nineteenth century or earlier), such museums emphasize the value of tradition that they imply has remained preserved over centuries. Furthermore, they outline the significance of cultural specificity, which – despite the multitude of variants and shared expressions across regions and ethnic groups – insists on uniqueness and authenticity. No matter their involvement in overall expositions of history, most of these museums are, however, deeply a-historical by their nature, particularly by presenting a certain realm of the past as spanning across long temporal frames and by positioning communities and individuals within an ever-lasting temporal continuum. This not merely prolongs the voicing of such traditions in contexts where they have obviously disappeared, but also projects images and notions of ethnic and cultural peculiarity, centuries before most of these practices were documented in the ways they emerged in ethnographic exhibitions. More importantly, museums represent this heritage by customarily failing to reflect on the discourse that had motivated their construction, namely on their uses as identity tools and elements in the nation-building processes.

It is the bracketing of an important constructivist stage in the representation of such museum units, which attracts my attention here: as illustrating an approach that essentializes ethnographic and folklore heritage and refuses to acknowledge the elements of appropriation and utilization of this heritage for purposes closely related to the realm of the political. In my understanding, this appears both a symptom of the interpretation of traditional culture in the face of modernity, and a symptom of the region of East Central and Southeastern Europe, where the sensitivity to the preservation of this culture in the midst of several empires in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, gained special resonance. In a paradoxical way, for the people of this region, folk culture and folklore traditions were both core elements, on which collective notions of national specificity were grounded, and the passwords that enabled these communities' entrance into modernity.² In the context of enhancing national awareness and a strengthened will to adhere to the circle of modern European nations, the notions of “the people” and “the folk” showed up as tools to bridge the void caused by the accelerated temporalities and the symbolic clusters of meanings through which traditional collective identities could acquire their modern “hypostases.” They were those niches, which – as outlined by both European and local intellectuals, store both the traits of genuineness and the potential for making the modern nation, both the conservatism of traditions and the impetus toward social and political modernization.

The purpose of the current text is to shed light on several major points in the development and production of national master narratives within museums of ethnography and folklore heritage in East Central and Southeastern Europe. Touching upon several examples from different countries from the end of the nineteenth century until today, I will highlight the function of ethnographic exhibits in producing narratives about ethno-cultural specificity of national communities, in organizing national pasts according to the notions of the “folk,” and in guiding collective imagination within the parameters of centuries-old cultural traditions. Whilst regarding the development of these museums as closely related to the symbolic construction of the nation, the article will outline their role in essentializing folklore traditions and depicting them as repositories of intransient “national” values. The major objective of this text is to attempt to consider the practices of representing ethnographic heritage as expressions of a ‘homemade

hegemony' (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1992) which enables the independent nations in this part of Europe to remember their own pasts, to poeticize their cultural roots, and to facilitate their encounter with modernity.³ Whilst outlining particularly the input of ethnographic heritage in the birth of national museum in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the text will pay attention also to the uses made of ethnographic discourses during and after the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, thus emphasizing the peculiar projections that it constructed in the face of recent ideological, technological, and societal transformations.

The establishment of ethnographic museums

A look into the history of museum institutions in this part of the continent reveals the key role of ethnographic collections in the process of identifying the nation and in the political efforts to define it within geographic territories and in ethnographic peculiarities. The creation of ethnographic museums occurred during the long time span of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries that saw the construction and crystallization of national identities. The appearance of museums of ethnography in East Central and Southeastern Europe was closely connected with the establishment of ethnographic collections related to imperial ambitions that resonated in the demonstrations of people and cultures within the empires at the time (see Barringer and Flynn 1998; Aronsson and Elgenius 2011). Whilst the British Museum developed special departments of Africa, Oceania and the Americas to represent the cultures of the indigenous peoples of four continents, the Russian Ethnographic Museum (founded in 1901 as a branch of the Russian Museum) sought to unite the peoples who lived on the vast territory between the Baltic Sea in the West and the Pacific Ocean in the East. In the territories within the Habsburg monarchy, during the nineteenth century, a number of provincial museums – Landesmuseen – were founded to register the characteristics of each region and its inhabitants (see Bentz and Raffler 2012). In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the last imperial power impacting on the Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the nineteenth century, it developed a major program of collecting various antiquities in its territory, which it exhibited in the Museum of the Empire, created in 1852. The documents they displayed were basically intended as sources of information for future rulers, so that they could gain knowledge and understanding over the land they were designated to reign. Encompassing large varieties of peoples, cultures and language, empires of the nineteenth century presented this variety through its representative forms within museum premises in imperial centres of power. By showing the treasures of folk culture, arts and crafts, they actually put on display their most important treasure – the vast number of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups accommodated by the widely stretched imperial realm.

An even more important factor in the development of ethnographic collections and exhibitions was the one coming from the grass-roots level (that is, from various ethnic groups within the existing empires and from their intellectuals), and this clearly reflected the impulses of various national communities for self-affirmation within the imperial domain. Forming the core of what would later become “national history museums,” many of the ethnographic collections that appeared throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were expected to assert “national” (e.g. ethnic and cultural) specificity and to promote a vision of common identity and unity of the respective population groups. Propagated vehemently by intellectuals throughout

the region, these visions found epistemological grounds in Herder's notion of the "Volk," which dominated the European philosophical and cultural space in the nineteenth century. According to this notion, the nation existed as something organic; it was distinguished with a unique "folk spirit" (Volksgeist) and a "character," which were clearly outlined and preserved as essential and long lasting traits throughout history. For Herder, language and thought had to be considered as unique for a given group of people – hence all the verbal folklore, dances, songs, music, etc. were inherently specific and marked by inherent peculiarity. All nations were themselves "unique" and "authentic" and they could hardly be merged in-between, hence the finding out, collecting, and studying of folklore traditions facilitated the maintenance of national identity and distinguished it from that of other nations. Guided by an emphasized Romanticist pathos, Herder insisted on the return to the rural culture, to the traditional, and the natural. The presentation of this culture in collective volumes and museum collections was perceived as enabling the possibilities of revealing the roots of the "Volk", of preserving the national spirit authentic, and safeguarding national specificity.

Herder's ideas were instrumental in triggering a tendency that quickly spread across all of Europe, where the Napoleonic cult to the Roman and Egyptian antiquities was gradually joined and sometimes substituted by the cult of antiquities, medieval heritage, and the archaic values of folklore and folk art. Within this process, the representations of the "national past" – through the selection and exhibition of ethnographic heritage in museums, was part of the entire process of development of modern European nations. At the end of the nineteenth century, nationalism and politics visibly interfered in the process of creating and developing museums in general, and particularly those hailing the cultural traits of the nation. In that period, however, most of the national groups in East Central and Southeastern Europe were within an imperial domain, so the interest in folk culture was inseparable from the goals of national autonomy and political independence, as pursued by the agenda of modern nationalism. Unlike other museums, however (e.g. the British Museum, the Hermitage, the Louvre, the Museum of Stockholm, etc.), which were created mostly on the basis of royal collections and which aimed to express universal values for the glory of the nation, most museums in this part of Europe had the idea of presenting mainly the "nationally specific," that found expression mostly within the traditions of the peasants communities. The latter was perceived as culturally specific, to the extent that it was related to the enormous peasant communities and it was considered to be "unpolluted" by foreign influences of neighbouring national communities or of the dominant groups within the imperial realm.

However, despite the romantic national inventions and the grass-roots initiatives for setting up ethnographic collections, throughout most of the nineteenth century in the territories and national groups of East Central Europe and the Western Balkans, museum policies were marked mostly by royal initiatives – of the Austrian Empire (1804-1867) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918). By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, splendid buildings had been created in the capitals and major cities to host ethnographic collections. But in parallel to these institutions, many regional/ provincial museums were also founded, reflecting the specific relationship and – sometimes, tensions between the national and the provincial with regards to the imperial centres. The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest – one of the oldest institutions in Hungary, was founded as a subdivision of the Hungarian

National Museum in 1872, with a gradually developing focus on the disappearing values of the Hungarian culture (see Marosi and Klaniczay 2006). Around the same time, the study and the preservation of folklore traditions of the Hungarian population in Transylvania was a possibility to represent nationhood and to demonstrate self-differentiation in the imperial context by means of traditional artefacts surrounded by discourses of archaism and cultural uniqueness (see Szabó 2009). One of the first museums in the region – the Slovenian museum in Ljubljana was founded in 1821 with the purpose of developing the cultural life of the region. Including from the very beginning ethnographic collections (mainly costumes), it was soon perceived as a possible site for the promotion of the idea of a common past and heritage of all Slovene speaking inhabitants, and thus an expression of visions of pan-Slavism and Illyrism (see Lozic 2012: 81–82, 92). In a similar way, the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, which was founded in 1888 (ten years after the Austro-Hungarian Empire obtained the administration of the region) sought to promote Bosnia's cultural heritage and separate identity, as a means of taking the region out of the orbit of Serbian and Croatian nationalist claims (Ibid.).

For most of the Southern Slavs, the practice of collecting ethnographic materials evolved already in the 1840s, but it only developed as a significant phenomenon after the Pan-Slavic Exhibition that was held in Moscow in 1867. Although all collected items stayed in the Russian Empire, the exhibition had enormous importance, particularly for the people in the Balkans, where it initiated systematic collecting of ethnographic items and explorations across this region. The latter involved initiatives coming from different fields (history, archaeology, ethnography, and geography) in a common effort to recreate the historical past of a given national group and to provide self-explanatory demonstrations of its roots and cultural specificity (see Detchev 2010: 211-214, 256). Having gained enormous popular resonance on a grass-root level (e.g. in private collections and amateur studies), the desire to revive the bygone ages through the contribution of ethnographic traces critically increased as these states began to gain national independence during the nineteenth century or in the first quarter of the twentieth century. As independent nation states they invested enormous efforts into building up their educational and cultural institutions and developed large-scale campaigns for the preservation and popularization of historical and cultural heritage as a national value. In so doing, a range of state institutions (ministries, universities, public associations, etc) were involved and special instructions were distributed for gathering materials related to the nations' historical and ethnographic pasts. In Bulgaria, the establishment of a museum institution started immediately after the national liberation of 1878, leading to the creation in 1892 of the *Naroden Muzej* (People's / National Museum), whose ethnographic collection evolved into a separate institution in 1906. In Belgrade, the Ethnographic museum was established in 1901, after half a century of organized collecting of ethnographic items. Permanent exhibitions of major collections of ethnographic heritage were formed soon after the establishment of these institutions, and although the gathered material in the collections was from the entire territory of the Balkans, the exhibited items were exclusively those related to the “national heritage,” i.e. the one belonging to the ethnic and religious majorities in the respective nation states.

From a certain perspective, the creation of museums of ethnographic heritage in the nineteenth and early twentieth century responded to the need of learning what existed as cultural traits and traditions within state territories, and of expressing this through the exhibited material

objects. However, the major emphasis in these collections and exhibitions was on the illustration of ethnic and cultural specificity. The diversity of ethnic and religious groups that existed as motley patterns under the garments of centuries of imperial rule fell apart into ethnic and national labels – each laying claim to a single “national” identity and claiming centuries-old “rooted-ness” in the respective geographic territory. By itself, it reflected a peculiar policy of time and space – one that posed a given “nation” along an indefinite teleological axis and onto a concrete geographic territory where it was seen as if having lived forever. This intertwined in a curious way the project of modernity with the project of conserving the specificity inherent in “folk culture”: by preserving the age-old forms of traditional culture each of these nation states could imagine its involvement and place among the ranks of modern nations. More importantly, it included the citizens of these states in what B. Trencsenyi calls an ‘ethno-pedagogy,’ i.e. educating the people by confronting them with their past, however, a past that would bear clearly outlined ethnic parameters and an emphasized “culturally peculiar” character (see Trencsenyi 2009). Furthermore, the creation of ethnographic museums in East Central and Southeastern Europe was accompanied by the discourse that this reflected the advancement of these countries – as being able to establish institutions that would reflect the distance that they have maintained to their pre-modern past.⁴ In a curious way, the practices of exhibiting ethnographic heritage in museums of the region revealed a condition for the respective states to embrace with modernity and to join the company of other more advanced nations. Ethnographic museums were thus not only territories where different national groups sought to produce differences in-between, but also spaces where the tension between modernity and traditions constituted the core of national representation.

The turn of the 20th century and the collection of folklore heritage

Another important impetus in the development of ethnographic museums as hosting age-long and pristine national identity was the practice of open-air museums of late nineteenth century, which hosted ethnographic objects of arts, crafts and household materials within a village of especially established houses that often represented the architecture of different regions (see Chappell 1999). The first such museum was founded in 1891 in Skansen neighbourhood in Stockholm, and was followed by the ethnographic village of Szentendre near Budapest (1896), and by many other similar museums in the other Scandinavian countries: in Norway – Bigdoy (founded 1894) and Lillehammer (founded 1887), in Finland – Seurassari (founded 1909), etc. The idea of these museums was to recreate the traditional life and crafts of the populations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, presenting them in “live” demonstrations. At the beginning of the twentieth-century, open-air museums appeared in most European states, presenting traditional ways of life before the industrial revolution. The new forms of industrial production gradually displaced traditional crafts and the appearance of these museums was a guarantee for their preservation for generations to come. A visible tendency existed, however, of outlining a particular province as epitomizing old and traditional values and of labelling it as representing a “national” tradition that would surpass local specificities and would preside above regional variations within a given country.

The appearance of these museums and the gradual spread of their examples to different countries of the European continent, outlines the importance of yet another issue – of

“ethnographic urgency” – that has particular resonance in East Central and Southeastern Europe. This emergent need to undertake ethnographic research – as stated by D. Sherman, “comes from the impending disappearance of the culture under study” and poses thus the ethnographer as “a rescuer of the threatened or dying culture” (Sherman 2004: 691). And indeed, for most of the nation states in the region, the persistent appeal for recording representative examples of the quickly changing traditional folk culture under modern influences was a reaction against the perceived threats to cultural identity, as resulting from both the cultural impact from the West and the contestations with immediate neighbours. In late nineteenth century, initiatives for preserving “genuine” forms of folk traditions appeared in all parts of the region and the latter were propagated as holding crucial significance for the nation and the future generations. However, the idealization of selected representative forms of the tradition led also to a somewhat distanced approach to folk culture as an exotic realm. A prevailing attitude was that the emblematic examples of folk art showed the exquisite aesthetic sense of the people. The political romanticism and the tendency of aestheticizing the national past urged ethnographers to collect mainly examples with special artistic qualities, sometimes – as in the frequently exhibited national costumes – combining elements from different clothes to form a real aesthetic set. Furthermore, many of these items found representation in various paintings that sought to depict the folk life style and to form a major ingredient in the imagination of the national past. On an international level, the cultural self-representations of nations formed a particular highlight in world exhibitions at the threshold of the twentieth century, where national cultures selected separate elements of their traditional cultures and exhibited them alongside those of other nations, seeking appreciation about the beauty of their cultural traditions (see Stoklund 1994). Taken out of their context of existence, they attained the status of works of art with special value that could justify a nation’s lag in terms of political or technological development, science or the arts.

In the interwar period, the affirmation of autonomous “national identities” – as reflected in museums of ethnographic and folklore heritage, gained its momentum after the dissolution of the three great empires in the region – the Habsburg, the Russian, and the Ottoman ones. A particularly interesting case was the newly established Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), where the policies of ethnic and cultural self-identification were in parallel (yet, very often in conflict) with the construction of a common identity under a South-Slavic label. In 1919, the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb was established, with holdings presenting exclusively “Croatian” ethnographic heritage stretching across the territories of three cultural zones – Pannonian, Dinaric, and Adriatic, and “purging” its links with other areas in this part of the Balkan peninsular. The emphasis on the three main nationalities – Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was accompanied by a relative neglect of the cultural heritage of other ethnic groups in state territory, most notably amongst them being those of the Bosnia and Herzegovina regions. Whilst, a Museum to present this heritage was created in Banja Luka only in 1930, it had a clearly regional status (unlike the “national” ones in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana) and was an object of rigid reframing alongside Croatian or Serbian identity in territorial and political shifts during World War II, as well as afterwards (see Lozic 2012). A question, which has still remained unexplored with regards to most countries on the European continent, is the state of ethnographic practice during the Second World War, particularly in states with totalitarian regimes, where the new interest in

promoting the ideas of the folk was closely connected with new political instrumentalization of the visions of nations' cultural peculiarities.

The communist period and after

The establishment of the communist systems in the countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe after World War II led to a new upsurge of interest in the culture of the “people,” and in ethnographic heritage as epitomizing both the national spirit and the role of the “masses” in historical development. Folklore was perceived as bearing particular importance not only as a valuable heritage from the past, but also as a factor in building up contemporary culture, as a main ingredient of its popular and “mass” character, and a central point for the propagated link between the ruling ideology and the people (see Vukov 2011). This conditioned the flourishing of ethnographic museums in all the countries of the socialist bloc, which was expressed in the opening of numerous local and regional museum units dedicated to traditional culture and involved a range of specialists, for whom collection and preservation of ethnographic heritage turned into a major form of professional activity.⁵ During the entire communist period, ethnographic museums were transformed into an element of the propaganda system of the totalitarian states – as reflected in the postulate that folk culture was a creation of the “working people,” in the overall neglect of religious themes in ethnographic exhibitions, and in the emphasis on the Slavic elements in folk culture. An especially important point was the understanding that traditional folklore culture illustrated well the “democratic” and inherently “socialist” ideas well before the beginning of the nineteenth century. The impetus of preserving the traces of this culture resulted in creating numerous open-air museums and complexes with “traditional” architecture, where to demonstrate again – as if in a display case – the valuable objects of an already extinguished culture.

With regards to the national element in ethnographic exhibitions of the communist period, it is important to note that under the label of ideological brotherhood and joint struggle of accomplishing socialism, most of the museums of ethnographic heritage of the communist period, maintained a strongly ethnocentric and sometimes overtly nationalist discourse. Affirming the regional and local specificity of exhibited items, they insisted on a presumed “authenticity” of the ethnic and cultural groups, which was asserted as finding its highest expression in the culture of the nation, already the communist nation. The spread of these nationalist policies of rootedness and ever-present ethno-cultural specificity could be seen throughout the entire region, with a climactic application in Ceausescu's Romania, Tito's Yugoslavia, and Zhivkov's Bulgaria in 1970s and 1980s. A widely shared characteristic throughout the region was that within the national territory, minority groups hardly found due attention in ethnographic exhibitions on both national and regional levels. When they were at all presented in ethnographic collections, it was mainly to introduce a nuance of cultural diversity, but they were never permitted to take on a more representative character – even in regions where minority groups may have had a significant presence. This also guided the specific approach to regions and regional museums representations of ethnographic heritage during communist times. Whilst regional identities were stimulated and promoted as following unique cultural specificity, they were also believed as variants of a core model – the one of national culture. The dualism between the regional and the national identity was particularly well expressed in the case of the Socialist Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia, where each of the six republics carried out their national and regional politics within the collective framework of the federal state. There could hardly be a surprise that since the 1990s many of these densely knit strategies of embedded-ness within the national and the ethnically autochthonous were objects of systematic debates that searched for overcoming and rigid exclusion, and thus triggered new trajectories of rethinking the nationally specific in the existing ethnographic collections of states that belonged to former Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

Interestingly enough, the communist period showed again a reproduction of a pattern that was established a century before, and which demonstrated a resistance to modification in the course of time. The “nation” indeed proved to have a lasting and “timeless” occurrence – at least as seen in such collections and exhibits. It is particularly interesting to observe the contemporary attempts by post-socialist societies to distance themselves from the policies of the communist period without discarding the nation-guided representation in ethnographic exhibitions. In some respects, there was a visible tendency of perceiving the ethnographic discourse as a niche where museum policies might find refuge in their estrangement from politicized and historically sensitive topics. The end of the communist rule in countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe marked thus a starting point not only for the re-evaluation of the ideological policies underlying ethnographic exhibitions during communist times, but also for the revival of the presence that folklore heritage could have in the contemporary world. A major expression in this regard was the emergence of exhibitions dedicated to cultural diversities and to traditions of different ethnic groups within the nation states. While being a reaction against the decades of silencing about these “alternatives” to the national (and sometimes nationalist) discourse, it also tells out about the significance of traditions carried out and exhibited in present-day museum contexts. An important point was that these collections were surrounded already not by the appreciation of their utmost value for the “nation,” but rather by their input in the cultures developed historically within a given territory. Thus, aside from providing possibilities to exhibit diversity within the national map of ethnographic heritage, such new initiatives helped also to disentangle this heritage from its national embedded-ness and to view traditions as protean realms, where the national being has been only one of its hypostases.⁶

A key problem faced by museums of ethnographic and folklore heritage nowadays is not so much what resources for representation to find in their no doubt abundant collections. Rather, it is a matter of how to transform their spaces to appeal not only to foreigners and exoticized visitors, but also to locals; how to “de-orientalize” ethnographic exhibits, and how to make their messages adequate to a world that seeks to exit the national frames of interpretation. In ethnographic museums, the link with the present has become largely invisible. In the context of rapidly changing societies and cultures, they are often perceived as a conservative milieu. Reminding about the past, such museums prefer do not address issues and contradictions in contemporary world, they are as if “outside reality” and demonstrate a discourse that is oriented exclusively towards oneself. As D. Sherman phrases it, in them, we are ‘frozen in a perpetual ethnographic present: the time of the other’ (Sherman 2004: 698). The overcoming of this self-complacent character of ethnographic museums in East Central and Southeastern Europe is the

major stake that would create the conditions of their dialogue with the constantly changing world in which the boundaries of nations, cultures, and technologies are constantly at stake and overcome.

By means of a concluding remark, I would like to raise again some of the questions that this politics of “time–space” that is demonstrated in ethnographic museums of East Central and Southeastern Europe poses to present-day visitors and researchers. What motivated the turning of namely the ethnographic heritage in the centres of collective identities for the people of East Central and Southeastern Europe? Was it only a compensatory mechanism to make up for the relative lack of other resources in terms of available collections in the periods of their nation building, or it was rather an impulse to prove states’ origins in a contested geographical territory?! What was so “unique” in objects, which in the vast majority of cases appear on the contrary as widespread and similar in appearance and tend to demonstrate a shared cultural pattern that existed throughout the entire region? What made, and still makes, the reproduction of this model possible and what maintains this “self-evidence” of ethnographic exhibitions – the right of the local and the national to tell its own history in the way it considers proper, and to preserve it unchanged for a long time period? What nurtures the seeming “neutrality” of ethnographic collections and their pretence of staying aside from political considerations? The question is furthermore pertinent when bearing in mind that each of these exhibitions was inherently political, and that the very discourse of the nation was a political construct. But, as the purpose of every representation – especially the one in museums – is not only to exhibit, but also to conceal, we can regard these exhibitions as instances of creating certain narrative fictions, which nation groups would not cease to entertain, but which researchers would have as their duty to question.

Notes

¹ http://www.cracow-life.com/culture/culture_details/666-Ethnographic_Museum

² For a thorough elaboration of this thesis, see Mishkova 2009, particularly her introduction to the edited volume.

³ For an overview of the policies in representing the nation in museums, see Boswell and Evans 1999; Cuisenier 1980; Kaplan 1994; Löfgren 1989. On the multi-faceted relationship between museums, modernity, and new forms of social and cultural memory, see Bennet 1995; Crane 2000; Herzfeld 1996; Huyssen 1995; Sandberg 2003.

⁴ For a subtle analysis of positioning communities along temporal continuum, and particularly between the axes of progress and backwardness, see Fabian 1983.

⁵ For an overview of these tendencies, see Sharenkova 2010.

⁶ For general overviews of the challenges in representing diversity in contemporary museums, see Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1997.

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Intersecting Authorities,
Territories and Narratives

The Regional and the National



Local religious art exhibitions, between heritage and evangelization: the case of *Las Edades del Hombre*

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Abstract

This article examines the narrative and the museographical model of the exhibition cycle named *Las Edades del Hombre* in Castilla y León (Spain), through the study of the first display in Valladolid (1988-1989). It analyses how a religious and evangelical exhibition became one of the major components of the cultural scene of the region for the past thirty years and a model for other autonomous regions or cities in a country affected by secularisation.

The cycle *Las Edades del Hombre* tended towards the mode of an « exhibition-show ». Various types of objects from the religious heritage of the local Church are displayed in religious buildings transformed into “ephemeral museums”, using unprecedented means of display. Presenting works of art in such exhibitions defines them as heritage to be preserved.

It appears that the aim of the exhibition is to remember that the Church plays a heritage role model in local history and collective memory. Furthermore, often accused of not taking enough care of its cultural heritage, by playing the role here of the guardian that preserves and restores its heritage for the local population, the Church improves its image,

Although these exhibitions are, for the Catholic Church, a new way to evangelize people, they are also a way of attracting a national audience and contributing to the development of regional tourism. Moreover, the coalition of local government and the Church in the financing of the exhibitions establishes these events as a privileged means of building a sense of community and a means of letting religious heritage become a tangible witness to the regional past.

Las Edades del Hombre is a cycle of exhibitions that has been a major component of the cultural scene of the region of Castilla y León (Spain) for the past thirty years. The sixteen exhibitions composing the cycle have welcomed nine millions visitors, while religious art museums struggled to find an audience. It has been such a success that other provinces and autonomous regions have followed this model and welcomed either punctual exhibitions or regular events related to religious art. *Las Edades del Hombre* exhibitions display various types of objects from the religious heritage of the Church in religious buildings, with unprecedented display means. All the cathedrals of the eleven dioceses (as well as the churches of some cities) of the region have welcomed an exhibition of *Las Edades del Hombre*. These exhibitions aim at having a “social impact” and are “intended to restore the feeling of its existence and identity to a group”(Davallon, 1986: 9). The initiative of these events first came from the “episcopal representative for faith and culture” of the diocese of Valladolid, José Velicia, after he visited in Barcelona a retrospective and temporary exhibition in the diocesan museum: “*Thesaurus. l’art als bisbats de Catalunya (1000 / 1800)*”, directed by the Catalanian priest and historian Josep Maria Martí i Bonet. As in the Catalanian case, their goal is to combine the local religious cultural heritage with its Christian roots.

Las Edades del Hombre is based on three points defined by its organisers:

- To show through art the presence of the Church in Castilla y León
- To recover the collective memory and identity as well as the Christian roots of the regional history
- To recognise the region of Castilla y León as a creator of Art and History (González Cuadrado, 2010: 410).

To achieve these goals, all aspects of the local heritage are displayed around religious themes. Some events were based on a specific kind of heritage, like books in Burgos (1990) or music in León (1991-1992), while other were based on religious topics, like the exhibition that closed at the end of 2011 in Valladolid’s province, named *Passio*, about the Passion of Christ.

The first exhibition of the cycle, which took place in Valladolid from October 24th 1988 to April 2nd 1989, is, in some ways, the organisers’ statement of interest, because it was there that they implemented the terms that have been systematically repeated over the last 24 years and have been reproduced in the other regions of Spain. They offer a template, which tends to the « exhibition-show » (Drouguet, 2011: 89) immersing the visitor into the event, in order to reinforce its message. The purpose of this paper is to highlight how this elaborate museographical model translates the conception of the region of the Clergy of Castilla y León and analyse how it develops the components of its program. From the choice of the exhibition location to the choice of the works of art and their presentation we will look at the means used by the organisers to implement their narrative.

Between church and museum: the transformation of the place of worship

As previously stated, Valladolid was the location chosen for the first exhibition. Besides being the diocese where Jose Velicia worked, it is also the capital of the region of Castilla y León. The idea was to use a space with a strong symbolic value and large enough to host a major exhibition. The cathedral was chosen by default as indeed no other structure could fulfill these criteria. However, as a landmark built in the 16th century by the architect Juan de Herrera, it is a protected

monument, and so, the cathedral quickly became a trump card to be integrated into the exhibition narrative. The use of places of worship as exhibition venues became one of the major features of the cycle. For the organisers the purpose was to immerse the spectator in a place for which the works of art had been made, in which they could be explained according to a religious message. Those works of art, which had left the places of worship for the museums, came back to their initial location, and thus the cathedral represented the will of the local Church to be the place of both worship and culture.

To carry out their project, the organisers asked the scenographer and architect Pablo Puente Aparicio to lay out the exhibition. He structured the space into four levels of organisation that was to structure the exhibition's interpretation (Puente Aparicio, 1995 : 206).

The first level was the cathedral itself (fig. 1). Prior to the exhibition, it had been closed for five months for restoration. During the exhibition, the interior space of the cathedral was redistributed; picture rails and white partition walls defined the vertical space. Moreover, some elements, like the altar, were hidden or moved in order to create an “ephemeral museum” (Haskell, 2000), which is the second level of reading.

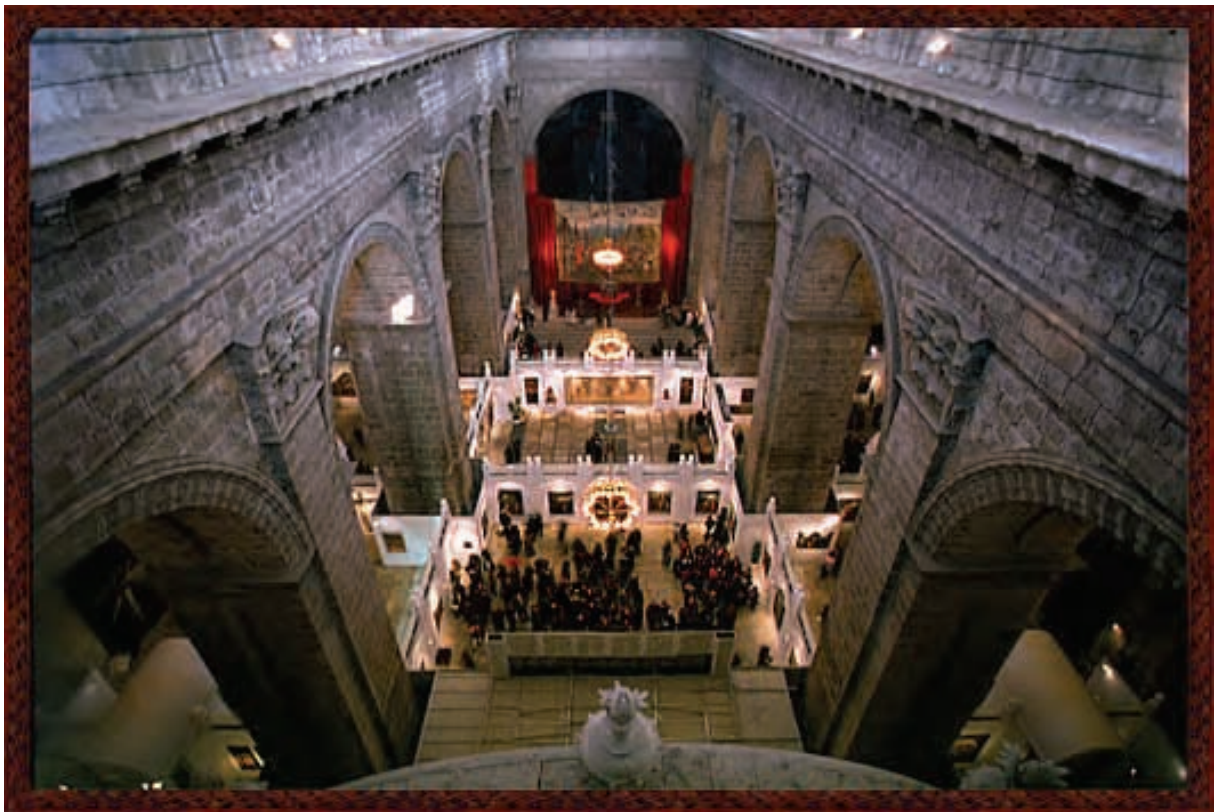


Figure 1: Central Nave of Valladolid's cathedral (6th January 1989) © 1989 Fotografia www.michael-reckling.com

Above these temporal white walls, the cathedral structure was still visible, as if the white parts, reminder of the museum, matched the earthly things, while the cathedral stones referred to the sky and Celestial Jerusalem. To give the illusion of an architecture inside another architecture, some rooms were defined by the partition walls, and matched the different sections of the exhibition. Little tunnels, called “transition tunnels” by Aparicio, allowed visitors to walk around the exhibition (fig. 2). They were equipped with a vaulted roof, to recall the context of religious architecture, but

also to prevent visitors from gazing at the cathedral's architecture. Walking through the tunnels, visitors enter directly into a new world, that of the exhibition, that the organisers want them to be immersed in. Thus, visitors were directly projected into the universe of the exhibition, without taking into account the environment. They could concentrate on the third level defined by Puente Aparicio as that of the works of art themselves.



Figure 2 : Transition tunnel and exhibition scenography© 1989 Fotografia www.michael-reckling.com

A way to memories

One of the goals of this exhibition was to show the historic role of the Church as a patron of art. In fact 80% of Spanish heritage, whether built heritage or catalogued objects- is composed of religious heritage: inside of this figures, Catholic heritage from Castilla y León represents 50% of all national Catholic heritage. The organisers wanted to show the Church as one of the most important institutions for the development of national and obviously of local art. To achieve this goal, they presented works of art created between the 10th and 18th century, corresponding to the most active period of the artistic patronage by the Spanish Church.



Figure 3: Pedro de Mena, Immaculate, 17th century © 1989 Fotografía www.michael-reckling.com

The works displayed were paintings, sculptures like the Immaculate Conception (fig.3), by Pedro de Mena, representative of the 17th century Spanish religious sculpture school, books, liturgical and devotional objects. The organisers combined works from masters of Spanish art to more unrecognised works of art: for instance the *Saint Sebastian* by El Greco (fig. 4), which can be seen in the cathedral of Palencia, or works by 15th century painter Fernando Gallego, were displayed alongside works by local anonymous artists, which can be seen in parish churches.



Figure 4: El Greco, Saint Sebastian, 1577-1578 © 1989 Fotografía www.michael-reckling.com

The works of art displayed came exclusively from the region of Castilla y León: 192 items, coming from the eleven dioceses of the region, were displayed during the Valladolid exhibition. In the previous years, José Velicia visited museums and small parish churches to find the works to exhibit. Most of them belonged to the Catholic Church, and were restored for this occasion. If

we have a look at the figures, 38% of the works of art in Valladolid's exhibition came from museums of the Church (diocese, parish or cathedrals), 31% were directly chosen in churches and parishes of the region and 21% belong to cathedrals.

The aim was to display the works in a different perspective or setting from that provided by religious service for worship: 55 % of the works shown during *Las Edades del Hombre* in Valladolid had never been exhibited in a museographical way before. The organisers aimed at showing all the works of art of the Church as heritage while highlighting the local creative genius.

The idea was to attract a local audience with works that belonged to their parish churches and therefore had an emotional charge for them. In this way the displayed works of art were doubly acknowledged, by the institutions that chose them, and by the visitors who gave heritage value to the objects and thus developed a sense of pride. The organisers sought the public's acknowledgement of the artistic value of each work on display, but also the role of the Church in their creation and their preservation.

The local Church relied on emotions and mostly on the popular religious feeling of the region dwellers. The *Virgen de la Vega* displayed in Valladolid illustrated this approach and its limits. This late 12th century woodcarving, plated with bronze and gems, represents the Virgin Mary on a throne; the Holy Child on her left knee holds a book in his left hand and gives a sign of blessing. The display of this work in the exhibition sparked a lot of comments. The *Virgen de la Vega* is the patroness of the city of Salamanca, and she is popularly believed to give blessings, only if the carving stays in the city. Therefore extracting such a work of art from its home city and displaying it as cultural object was a challenge, for the Church. The danger was that its displacement would affect popular religious feeling due to the loss of "magical marks" provided by the place of preservation, and that the added cultural value would modify its function, until then unique and iconic.

The exhibition's goal was defined as a response "to a strictly religious feeling, but contrary to other exhibitions on the same theme, to also aim at showing the real reason why the works were originally created" (*Las Edades del Hombre*, 1988: XIX). For the Church and the organisers of the events, the challenge was that the works of art were difficult to understand for an audience lacking religious culture. Indeed, according to them, the secularisation of the Spanish society had led to a misunderstanding of the principles and the history of Christianity. For the Church, religious art should unveil the Truth contained in the Gospel. José Jiménez Lozano, writer and co-organiser of the project *Las Edades del Hombre*, explains in his 1989 essay "Los Ojos del Icono", the relationship to art in modern society and particularly insists on the fact that the perception of the beauty and the history of the objects cannot be fully understood, when detached from their religious meaning. For example, in museums, the religious message is overshadowed by the aesthetic value. According to him, one has to bring together all the elements of understanding necessary to reconstruct the relationship between religious art and the visitor. He refers to the principles of the Second Vatican Council and the Message to the Artists of Pope Paul VI to assert that the perception of beauty and history of the works of art can allow the visitor to integrate religious principles.

According to these principles, and thanks to the dialogue between the visitor and the work of art, the didactic mission of the exhibition was defined. The resources and the scenography of the exhibition were used to promote this dialog. It also matched the fourth level of reading created

by the architect Aparicio: "A dreamt space', a world of reflection, made by the use of models which are part of the collective memory and claim to be the result of the exhibition" (Las Edades del Hombre, 1988: 356).

In Valladolid, this "dreamt space" was conceived of as a book. Divided in ten sections, named "chapters" by the organisers, the exhibition was conceived of as a "story told by the works". In order to allow the public to experience the forgotten religious experience, the tour was thematic and mixed different levels of narrative. The first level of reading was artistic; the visitor was offered a choice of works that represented the artistic evolution of the regional art. Some chapters were about specific periods like chapter VIII "The dream of Death and Glory" based on baroque art and the Counter-Reformation.

The second level of reading was about the biblical narrative, as developed in the exhibition script developed by José Jiménez Lozano. For the organisers, the exhibition "flees from academic criteria, chronology, art styles, author or time" (González Cuadrado, 2010: 409-410). It is closer to catechism lessons because it recalls the main events of the Bible. The first chapter "The Dream of Paradise" was dedicated to the Genesis, the beginning of mankind and reminder of man as a creature of God. It was then followed by various chapters telling Jesus Christ's life, from his birth to the Passion up to his death and resurrection. The chapter titles chosen by Jiménez Lozano, like "The Smile and the Pain", "The Silence and the Poverty", or "The Master of Life and Death" are enigmatic, almost mystical. They contributed to emphasizing the tragic side of the works of art. The visitor, about the meaning of the titles, had to focus on iconography and the message of works of art to understand them. Thus, the exhibition took advantage of the characteristics of the place of worship. Visitors were immersed in the soft light of the cathedral while some objects were surrounded by softened light. Besides, a peculiar sound environment also surrounded the visitors; religious music was being played during their tour, designed to emphasize the solemn and dramatic side of the exhibits. The goal was to immerse the visitor in a parallel world that should be familiar to him: the religious word.

A third level of reading, more philosophical, was about the meaning of life. The exhibition recounted the stages of human life through the life of Christ: birth, life-trials, death and judgment. The organisers intended to make visitors reflect about the meaning of life from a religious viewpoint. Jesus was seen as the «Master of History» in the second chapter but also as the «Master of Life and Death», title of the chapter X. This last chapter ended with a depiction of Doomsday (fig. 5), the Reckoning day when, according to Christian belief, everyone is to be judged by God. In this way, the way through the exhibition could be related by a believer to the Stations of the Cross: the visitor was invited to follow the different stages of biblical life, to meditate just like during this religious event.



Figure 5: Doomsday (Anonymous 16th century) © 1989 Fotografia www.michael-reckling.com

Beyond the presentation of the regional works of art, the exhibition tried to show the intellectual headways made thanks to the influence of religion in the region. Chapter IX entitled “Silence, Poverty, Enchantment and Spirit of the Small” was a reconstruction of Saint-Theresa’s convent cell in Valladolid. Saint Theresa life belongs to the imaginary of the regional and national genius of Spain; she was indeed promoted as early as the 17th century to the rank of patron saint of the entire country. Inserting her image in the exhibition showed how much the Church, and particularly the Church of Castilla y León, had produced talents of many sorts. This reconstruction, together with others works of arts, were the means to make the faith of the past live again. In the exhibition there was an idealisation of the past, a time before secularisation, when the Church played a major role in regional history. Through all these elements, visitors were invited to travel to back in time through this heritage, to better consider the major role of the Church and to remember the advantages of Catholicism. Used in this way its heritage allowed the Church to become, in a prophetic way, the main mediator that visitors must follow to access a memorial experience.

Towards a definition of the regional identity

Keys to the success of these exhibitions were the use of a cathedral as an exhibition space and its transformation into an «ephemeral museum» according to a carefully conceived scenario, and works of art that for the most part, do not belong to any outside cultural institution. The local Church uses all the modern means to conquer the audience. Over the years, the most spectacular aspects of the cycle exhibitions were emphasized; the creation of a daunting museography became one of *Las Edades del Hombre* principal traits. For instance, the city of Ponferrada, who welcomed the

exhibition in 2007, does not have a cathedral, so the event took place in two different churches, separated by a street. To build a path from one church to another, the architects thought of a bridge (fig. 6). This path was a direct reference to the “via lactea” that one must follow to the way of Saint James of Compostela, and reminded more of a planetarium or a theme park than of a fine art exhibition. The organisers do not hesitate to use every museographical resources available, whatever its type, to create a religious experience for visitors. The aim is to erase any critical distance between the visitor and the content of the exhibition in order to gain support.



Figure 6: Inside the path in *Las Edades del Hombre* exhibition in Ponferrada, © Nathalie Cerezales.

Moreover, to exalt sense of community, entry to the exhibition was free; for the organisers, these works that legally belong to the Church were made for the inhabitants of the region and bear witness to the population’s faith. So, the local population should not pay for it. It should be noted that access to most religious buildings and museums belonging to the Church is not free in Spain. With *Las Edades del Hombre*, the organisers expressed a will to give free access to religious culture. This specific initiative happened a few years after a debate concerning the preservation of Church property. After the dictatorship, a press campaign accused the Clergy of not taking enough care of its own artistic heritage. The exhibition establishes the Clergy as keeper not only in charge of its preservation but also of its cultural diffusion. For the organisers the success of the events lies in the fact that the people of Castilla y León are the true protagonist, because the cycle and the works of art exhibited belong to them. For the organisers the exhibition had to be a tribute to local people. The idea to give the heritage back to the public in a sacred environment is expressed from the beginning of the cycle by the use of a religious building, which, even stripped

of some of its features was used to create a hybrid place, where works of art could be presented in a museographical way as heritage and as religious works.

This hybrid place combined the use of all the museographical resources available in order to seduce an audience larger than the typical audience of regional art museums, and more particularly of museums of the Church, and who, moreover consider them as an elitist place, that's why the Church wanted "to get heritage closer to a largest audience" (González Cuadrado, 2010: 410).

As the project evolved and gained success, the exhibitions became a sort of «label»; visitors do not necessarily come to see the local works, but the exhibitions for themselves, because they are branded *Las Edades del Hombre*. Furthermore, the prolongation of the cycle, when it should originally have been a 'one-time only event', points to the conclusion that the local Church follows a global project towards the promotion of its local cultural goods. It called on professionals of the cultural domain like Pablo Puente Aparicio, at the same time as on the national Church, that created specific entities like the Asociación de los museólogos de la Iglesia (1988).

This local project also integrates the cultural policy of the Church towards its heritage. For example, the idea to uncover the Christian roots of a specific territory appeared first in the speech of Pope John Paul II in Santiago de Compostela in 1982 where he invited Europe to rediscover the Christian roots of its culture. Cultural Catholic heritage is, for Vatican cultural institutions, a way to emphasize the Church's role in History. It is also a method of "inculturation of faith", meaning the use of local cultural means to renovate catholic faith.

Moreover, *Las Edades del Hombre* cycle was described in the "Action plan 1990-1993" named "Promote new evangelisation" of the Spanish episcopal Conference (which gathers all Spanish bishops and holds concerted pastoral actions): "Studying, making a catalogue, showing the Church's religious heritage, we must not only focus on how and when it was created, but also specifically on why this historic heritage was created, to quickly find the reasons and the deep roots, which are to announce the Salvation story" (Rodríguez Domingo, 2009: 259). Church heritage, a controversial topic in the 1970's, became a favoured medium to show the Church's role in local history, and its preservation and its promotion made the Church a full actor in the establishment of the local memory.

Las Edades del Hombre is endowed with a foundation, "to manage its own fame" (Bolaños, 2008: 496). This foundation is aimed at continuing and at amplifying the dialogue between Faith and Culture in all its aspects with appropriate evangelising mediation" (Fundación *Las Edades del Hombre*, 1995: 76). The foundation, which is housed in a monastery in the Valladolid region, has developed a research centre that organises scientific conferences on local religious heritage. A specialised restoration centre takes care of the works of art before their display and collaborates with Valladolid authorities to lead preservation missions devoted to the heritage in the diocese. Furthermore, the foundation uses all modern means available to promote its actions: it has a web store, a web television and its website proposes a virtual visit of the last exhibition *Passio*. The foundation is well differentiated from other cultural institutions of the Church; its council is composed of the eleven bishops of the dioceses as well as representatives of the autonomous government of Castilla y León, which also finances the project with the credit institutions, the Cajas de ahorro (Caja de Duero, then Caja de España).

If the Francoist dictatorship was very close to the Catholic Church, the democratic Spanish Constitution declared in the sixteenth section that «No religion shall have a state character». One of the factor which can explain the coalition between these two institutions is that the first exhibition of the cycle took place five years after the edition of the Castilla y León Estatuto de Autonomía, held in 1983, authorized by the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Spain is composed of regions named “autonomías”, which have political competences. They have specific roles in cultural matters. Every Spanish region promotes its own cultural particularities. *Las Edades del Hombre* offers a way to promote a common culture in the region and gathers all the provinces and people around the same project.

Las Edades del Hombre cycle also became a way of promoting the image of Castilla y León outside its borders. Based on the proposal of Juan Vincente Herrera Campo, president of the autonomous government of the region, an exhibition was set up in Saint John the Divine Cathedral of New York in 2001 (*Las Edades del Hombre*, 2002).

Each exhibition welcomes an average of 500 000 visitors, and the event in Valladolid itself welcomed 1.5 million visitors. These exhibitions attract local population and consequently make use of the tourism resources of the city. *Las Edades del Hombre* exhibitions help the development of touristic facilities and a new economy based on tourism. For the Foundation, thanks to the cycle, the region has found a new situation in the current touristic panorama of the country.

Las Edades del Hombre cycle produces benefits for all the actors implicated in the project. It helped community identity undergoing construction to strengthen while Democracy was being established in the country. Christian roots became a favoured way of building a sense of community and a way to allow religious heritage to become a tangible witness to the regional past

Conclusion

Las Edades del Hombre phenomenon used modern media to conquer the local audience. The exhibitions play on the emotional impact created by the display of the works of art from a different perspective in a cultural setting. Not only do the spectacular means used to present the works of art attract a local audience, but they also relate to a national audience and lead to the development of regional tourism. The cycle emphasizes, through the display of the local artistic genius, the role of the Church in making the local heritage and its efforts as the guardian that preserves and restores its heritage for the local population. *Las Edades del Hombre* ultimately aims at reminding the model role that the Church played in local history and collective memory and uses heritage as an agent of the “New evangelisation” of the region.

Las Edades del Hombre cycle sparked off the increase of religious art exhibitions and has contributed to defining local religious objects displayed in the exhibition as heritage to be preserved. A total of 34 exhibitions of this type have taken place in the entire country, and for example an almost identical foundation, in Valencia’s province has been created to preserve regional religious heritage.

Nowadays, the cycle is at a turning point, the template has been modified since the two last events. The foundation has already used all large place of worship of the region, the exhibitions take place in two churches in different cities or villages and the last exhibition entrance was not free, because of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, the cycle (1988-2011) has enjoyed a long lift that leads us to consider these exhibitions as a traditional cultural event, which although strongly

promoting religious teachings, are integrated into the local cultural field and help to define the community identity like the museum.

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Representation and Regionalism: Moderna Museet and the Construction of a Narrative of Swedish Women Artists

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Abstract

The relation between Stockholm's Moderna Museet and regional developments, with a focus on women artists, was the interest of a recent research project. The aim of the research group Representation and Regionalism was to shed light on the situation in Sweden and to compare Moderna Museet with regional museums with substantial collections of 20th century art: Göteborgs konstmuseum, Malmö konstmuseum, and Norrköpings konstmuseum. Representative of government authority, Moderna Museet is responsible for 20th century and contemporary art made nationally and internationally. But a closer look at how the collection had largely been acquired – namely at Stockholm art galleries – does not represent art production nationwide but rather one that is centered in the capital. This might provoke further probing into the question of the museum's display of national art, as well as what art history it re-presents – adhering to the center and neglecting the periphery. Furthermore, we focused on the absence of women artists in the collections. Our intention has been to contribute to diverse aspects of gender studies and to facilitate another take at representation and regionalism. Nevertheless, we have been able to pinpoint many problems that concern all artists (i.e. the fact that most artists are represented through no more than a single work) – especially working in a country whose art scene is more or less dominated by one city. Questions regarding national identity are closely linked to how an image is constructed in the capital. The project *Representation and Regionalism* is the starting point for this article, it aims to highlight future possibilities that will help to understand the development of great historical narratives.

The Origin of the Research Project

It is hardly a new observation that women artists are represented with less works in art museums than their male colleagues. However, it might be of greater interest to learn that imbalance can be seen in other aspects as well, such as where the art works are acquired. I want to bring up this often-discussed gender topic, by considering it alongside other adjacent questions of representation. It has been the interest of the recent research project *Representation and Regionalism* – to question, how representation and region can be articulated with a discussion on gender.¹ In a centralized country such as Sweden, the national museum for modern and contemporary art, Moderna Museet in Stockholm, has played an influential role since 1958. What I want to present is how this national museum might be analysed in relation to three regional museums by taking women artists as a comparative issue with a close look on how the collections developed during the 20th century.

Let me begin by situating the context of the research project. When Anna Tellgren (curator of photography at Moderna Museet) and I (then research assistant at the museum) discussed possible collaborations with Jeff Werner, at the time head of research at Göteborgs konstmuseum, we agreed to have a closer look at the development of art museum collections in Sweden. The problem, as we saw it, was that a Stockholm-perspective and -focus was prevalent in art criticism and general art histories of Swedish art, despite the fact that Swedish regions and their museums have different stories to tell. The project emanated from a previous research project at Moderna Museet that looked at women artists whose works had recently been acquired as part of the project *The Second Museum of Our Wishes* – launched on the occasion of Moderna Museet's 50th anniversary in 2008.² Our research focus began to shift – from the art works themselves to the positions of the artists and their relation to collections and museum politics in general.³ In a way, this shift mirrored the general shift in gender studies – i.e. as visible in the pioneering works of Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock and others.⁴

We decided to pursue a gender perspective when looking at the four different museums. In addition to Göteborgs konstmuseum and Moderna Museet, we chose Norrköpings konstmuseum and Malmö konstmuseum. Our objectives were to examine how the collections had developed: What reasons may have conditioned these developments? What particularities could be found and how could these be compared? Finally, how Swedish art history was presented in relation to its regions? As all four museums have significant collections of Swedish art, this became our focus whilst international art played a minor role. Three researchers were invited to participate: Linda Fagerström for Malmö, Andrea Kollnitz for Norrköping, and Eva Zetterman for Gothenburg, while I was responsible for Stockholm. We collaborated closely with the museums, which were all very helpful in the difficult task of sourcing archive material and in overcoming documentary problems. For instance, the installations of the art works in the permanent collection are not as well documented as that of temporary exhibitions. In many respects archival groundwork had first to be carried out for each of the museums. A synthesis of this individual research has yet to be undertaken. So far, a list comprising all women artists in the four collections has been compiled. This paper, therefore, is a first step towards a more comparative perspective and will hopefully highlight some important questions.

The Collection of Moderna Museet

A Foundational Myth

As a government authority – as national museum – responsible for 20th century and contemporary art, Moderna Museet's stipulated goal is to collect and present art from Sweden as well as Nordic and international art.⁵ The museum was inaugurated in 1958 and was a result of the fact that Nationalmuseum, which had been responsible for all art historical periods since its beginnings in 1792, did not have enough space for contemporary art. Moderna Museet was to collect and show art since 1900 while Nationalmuseum took care of art prior to 1900. The collection was thus divided chronologically between the two museums.⁶ This is obviously a challenging task and processes of selection and rejection are constantly necessary, resulting in a specific narrative of what is considered important (Swedish) art. Thus, the museum presents its own narrative, a version that – as I will show – adheres to the capital and neglects the periphery – that is, the other Swedish regions. To promote and legitimise this story, what you might term *myths* are created and used. These myths serve the purpose of explaining the choices made – in some ways, it is a covert defence. Maybe one could argue that the necessity to choose is one reason behind the invention of myths. I will use one such myth as a starting point: *Önskemuseet, The Museum of Our Wishes*.

This was an exhibition mounted in 1963 and organised by The Friends of Moderna Museet (Moderna Museets Vänner). The aim was to show art, available on the market, which would fit perfectly in the collection and allow the museum to mount a display of distinguished 20th century art.⁷ Artists included famous men – of the 176 works displayed, three were by women artists.⁸ Of the more than thirty works bought, not a single one was made by a woman artist.

The imbalance of representation is of course obvious in this case. However, what I want to consider, is the role that this exhibition played in the future development of the museum. It became a consistent reference in the literature on the museum, the works acquired are presented as *the* masterpieces, and the concept itself has been reused recently in *The Second Museum of Our Wishes* as well as in other museums internationally (such as *Museum der Wünsche* in MUMOK in Vienna in autumn 2011).⁹ *Önskemuseet* established a strong relationship between exhibition practice and collection development policies. Designed as an exhibition to influence the enhancement of the permanent collection – it came to be treated as a foundational myth. In the case of Moderna Museet, temporary exhibitions have always played an important role in defining the museum's policy. Rather than styling itself as a classical museum, structured around the display of its permanent collection, it can better be understood as a *Kunsthalle*. Since the split in 1958 from Nationalmuseum, there has always been a difference between the museums: whilst Moderna Museet prioritised temporary exhibitions (in terms of visibility, funding, focus in general), research on the collection was neglected; Nationalmuseum on the contrary remained closely engaged with art historical research.¹⁰

Acquisition of Contemporary Art

The interest in contemporary art can be observed by considering the date of purchase of works by women artists. Acquisition dates are close to the date the work was made, which means that Moderna Museet always acquired works around the time of their first public exhibition, i.e. in a

gallery. It is rare to find works with long time spans between their making and their purchase. Moderna Museet was always quick to buy and incorporate new art into the collection. This is important when it comes to the construction of a narrative, especially since contemporary artists are less well known. Instead of following previous narratives, the museum was actively involved in creating its own framing narrative, rather than let it be defined by the already existing collection.

However, the historical narrative can only be constructed in retrospect. To choose established artists is less of a risk, but it also limits the possibilities of creating a frame since much is set already. Still, it seems odd when the museum buys directly from art schools, as was sometimes the case, but then desists from continuing to pursue their careers. What information did the museum rely on to make its choices? Art criticism surely played an important role. This relationship would be interesting to address in future studies – so as to see if there is a correlation between what was on view in the galleries, what was reviewed by art critics, and what was purchased. And what did Moderna Museet ignore and why? Women artists were not exhibited at the museum as often as male; therefore few purchases were made in connection with an exhibition. It is furthermore of importance to note that even though Moderna Museet was quick to acquire new art, what might be termed *contemporary consecration*, it only rarely followed up such acquisitions through further purchases.¹¹ Indeed few artists have many works in the collection; mostly they are represented by no more than one or two pieces. There is a small number of artists of whom there are many works in the collection, and who have been or have become established, and so have been bought over several decades.¹²

Place of Purchase

If one considers all the purchases made during the 20th century of works by women artists alone – be they Swedish or international – one can observe that almost every purchase was made through a gallery in Stockholm. This was one of the results that intrigued me the most. Situating Moderna Museet in a national context, this clearly begs the question: is the national museum a regional museum – dedicated to the art of Stockholm and surrounding area? How representative is the collection when it comes to art from the whole country? And what about international art not shown in Stockholm's galleries?¹³ This focus on the capital has never changed. It can be easily understood during the first decades when Stockholm was the most important for Swedish art, but at least since the 1980s the art scenes in Malmö and Gothenburg have been flourishing – with close connections to important art schools; not to mention the changes brought about by enhanced mobility and information culture. Even though this is a result that needs closer scrutiny (for instance one needs to consider what the galleries in the capital do represent), one can safely assume that the galleries in Stockholm do not equally represent all the artists working in Sweden.

Even during the last decade the acquisition procedures have not changed much for women artists. Even though they are included more frequently in group exhibitions and even though solo exhibitions are mounted to a much greater extent than during previous decades, the amount of acquisitions has not risen correspondingly. Neither has a project such as *The Second Museum of our Wishes* made a great impression in terms of works. Be that as it may, impressions can be made in many ways: There is greater awareness and one work can make a great difference – it can lead to

new displays and narratives in the collection (Carolee Schneemann), it can trigger the desire to organise exhibitions (Lee Lozano), and it can motivate new research in general.

Politics and Social Relations

The relation to women artists resides on a tradition going back to the early directors' whose importance is already visible in *Önskemuseet*. From the beginning, these directors were art critics or artists, i.e. with direct connections to the contemporary art world. Except for one all directors at Moderna Museet have been male. Furthermore, the agenda was set right from the start by Otte Sköld, then director of Nationalmuseum and one of those who made Moderna Museet happen, and during the formative years in the 1960s by Pontus Hultén. They promoted art with a political edge. Otte Sköld wrote in 1957: "It is of course fully legitimate for an artist to experiment and seek for new aesthetic effects in new materials and forms, but this simple aesthetic play and the good taste shall not simply be mistaken for art that has, I dare say, a higher cause than the merely decorative and ornamental."¹⁴ Sköld thought of the museum as a place for "art propaganda" – the political connotation is deliberate. Moderna Museet always valued art with a political, leftist, touch and preferred art with figurative-narrative qualities to conceptual and abstract/decorative art. This is all the more interesting as the 1970s was a highly politicized time in the history of Moderna Museet. It was the decade when feminist art and exhibitions were on the agenda everywhere in Sweden. Yet it is also the decade that proved least favourable for the acquisition of women artists by the museum and Moderna Museet hardly showed any works by women artists in temporary exhibitions during these years. Important Swedish touring exhibitions were turned down because, according to Barbro Werkmäster – a leading Swedish feminist art historian –, "there was no Picasso among the women artists"¹⁵.

The agenda set by Sköld in the 1950s, followed up by Hultén until he quit in 1973 and moved on to Paris and the Centre Pompidou, has persisted until today. Nordic art was initially important, but it soon became surpassed by international and especially American art.¹⁶ The only clear break from these initial policies came with the nomination of a foreign director, the British curator and art historian David Elliott. He directed the museum from 1996 to 2001 and with him a new focus on international art became obvious, i.e. not as focused on America anymore. Whilst politics was still on the agenda, the questions addressed in exhibitions such as *Wounds* (1998) and *After the Wall* (1999) were of global/East European interest.

Social relations of another kind matter when it comes to donations. Artists whose works have been purchased were keener to donate works as well.¹⁷ The Friends of Moderna Museet have played an important role in the shaping of the collection. But when it comes to women artists, they have hardly played a role at all. They only donated some few works by Swedish women artists once, in 1953 when the association was founded. The number of works privately donated has been constant over the years and not very high. However, when it comes to international art by women artists, donations are equal to the number of acquisitions. This might be related to the fact, that international art often is more expensive than Swedish art. Fewer purchases can be made by the museum itself therefore private funding is more important. But it may also indicate that it might be more rewarding, or prestigious to the eyes of the general public, if a donor provides funding for international art.

Catalogues and Icons

Scarce documentation makes it more or less impossible to reconstruct how the collection was presented and how the display varied over the years. Other sources, like catalogues, become important and give some answers on how the work of women artists has been discussed. The fact that only one catalogue raisonné has been published of the collection – back in 1976 – underlines the self-understanding of Moderna Museet as a Kunsthalle rather than as a museum.¹⁸ That is, work on the collection has been carried out in silence. It is no surprise that reproductions of works by male artists dominate – a constant fact in the books published on the collection between 1957 and 2008.¹⁹ However, what is remarkable is another tendency: as Swedish male artists are replaced by and by through international male artists, they are also replaced through international women artists. For instance, Eva Hesse with only two works in the collection is deemed more important for the museum's image than Hugo Zühr or Torsten Renqvist – two random examples of male artists with more than a hundred works each in the collection.

Some women artists, such as Meret Oppenheim and Niki de Saint Phalle, are closely associated with Moderna Museet and their works in the collection are often on loan and reproduced. In fact, the joint project *She – A Cathedral*, built in 1966 by Saint-Phalle, Per Olof Ultvedt and Jean Tinguely, has made an international public not only aware of the museum, but also established a positive view on it and of Sweden generally regarding its openness towards women artists. Niki de Saint Phalle could be described as *iconic*, overcoming the gender gap in terms of significance. Interestingly enough Moderna Museet did not collect her work to a great extent: two works were bought in the 1960s, a retrospective was organized in 1981 (to celebrate the 15th anniversary of *She*) whilst other works were donated by the artist herself and later on by Hultén, her long-time friend. No doubt, her relation with Moderna Museet has been good and continuous.

These results make it clear that Moderna Museet sees itself as an international museum, and it ignores its regional basis. Or, the regional basis is not acknowledged and denigrated as a fact through an international profile. It also makes clear that the amount of works is not always relevant to judge an artists' importance, and that the museum uses its collections in different ways to create a profile of its own.

Moderna Museet in Relation to Three Regional Museums

The other participating museums in Malmö, Gothenburg, and Norrköping are smaller and regionally funded, with different aims and responsibilities. There are certain similarities, i.e. most artists are represented with few works, their careers have not been followed over time, and women artists are underrepresented in temporary exhibitions. Also, personal ideologies have played an important role and meant a lot for the museum, not least if the director was a woman herself. Even though this did not necessarily lead to more purchases, it put women artists on the agenda in different ways and also made them more visible in the collection.²⁰

Most important for future comparative work is a list we have compiled comprising every woman artist in the four museums including the number of pieces present in each collection.²¹ To merge four lists is simple enough, however it provides an important tool for future research. It provides data for comparisons on new levels and it sheds a different light on Moderna Museet as a national museum.²² Of the almost 1,500 women artists in the four collections, only 3 % are

represented in all four museums. Some of them are canonised (i.e. part of Swedish general art histories, as Lena Cronqvist and Sigrid Hjertén), others are not and mainly known for their graphic works (as for example Annie Bergman and Elsa Björkman-Goldschmidt). It is a notable fact that only nine of all artists can be found at all three regional museums but none at Moderna Museet. One might interpret this as a sign that Moderna Museet's collection is representative of artists from all these regions. However, one must add that, 50 % of all artists are not found at Moderna Museet. They are represented in one or more of the other museums. So, even though Moderna Museet represents many artists (35 % of all women artists are found at Moderna Museet only), many are left out. Furthermore, there is no need to distinguish between the museums on the east or the west coast since the numbers indicate no such geographic difference.

In order to draw more certain conclusions from the list, much more research is necessary. At this point, it seems hard to claim that Moderna Museet is a "regional museum" (it is, of course, the capital region and as such of great importance in Sweden), even though it is evident that many national artists are missing in its collection. As shown, the local purchases remain difficult to understand and point towards an understanding as "regional museum". What it comes down to in discussions and debates, is how the notion of quality is employed as a justification of the acquisitions made. These questions have of course been central to feminist art history, at least since Linda Nochlin raised the question why there were not been any famous women artists in 1971.²³ Ulf Linde, art critic and former curator at Moderna Museet, reported that, in the 1970s when the commission for purchases returned from a tour in the country without any new works, it simply meant that they just had not found anything that was good enough.²⁴ Similarly, Olle Granath, director during the 1980s, argued that choices were made following a "gut feeling".²⁵ In the case of women artists, it seems to be – as Jeff Werner has noted – of importance whether this instinct is located in a male or female person.²⁶ There may be many reasons for the differences between the museums, and the exclusion or inclusion of certain artists in a collection. Different needs, agendas, and tasks provide for variations, all regional museums have local responsibilities, they are just not as apparent (or transparent) at Moderna Museet since it is also a national museum.

All museums provide for different frameworks. Even though Moderna Museet represents many women artists, this does not always mean that a proper framework is at hand. Most artists are represented through single works, which means that their own oeuvre is never a framework to rely on. For artists in the collection working someplace else, a regional framework might be lacking. Instead, the museum must find other ways, which of course is a usual procedure (after all, regional or monographic exhibitions are not common). However, it might remain questionable whether a single work by an artist from a context little known in Stockholm, might make a difference. In such vast collections as these, how are the employees to keep track of everything, especially when works of art are made by artists hardly known in Stockholm anyway. This risk seems to be less apparent at the other museums since they do not have to purchase nationally. So in a sense, the regional basis might be of advantage. Perhaps, one might say, this also implies a responsibility: if the regional museum has many works by an artist little known in the capital, then this museum might exhibit the artist, try to arrange for touring exhibitions, and look out for possible loans from Moderna Museet – making the national museum aware of these regional artists as well.

Moderna Museet between Region, Nation, and World

There is no doubt that Moderna Museet has played a pivotal role in Swedish art history since its founding in 1958. Through important curators it established itself as a place for contemporary art, and through its exhibitions and collections it made an impression. All the same, its self-understanding has competed with its task. Focus has shifted from Swedish and Nordic art toward international art, a shift that began early on in its history. Even though Swedish art has always been collected and is crucial, this is not the image conveyed by the museum. This shift might have led to less interest in regional art. Moderna Museet sees itself as responsible for the presentation of international art in Sweden, that is, as a national museum with an international task. This is also in the fact that Moderna Museet has been a node for Swedish art abroad. For instance, it has arranged exhibitions and been responsible for the participation at the Venice biennale. This responsibility marks a difference compared to the three regional museums. It underlines that *national* should be seen in relation to *international* rather than *regional*.

This has implications for the narrative of Swedish art. Firstly, Swedish art (especially by women) is not seen as important as international art. Secondly, Swedish art is compared to international art. The narrative that is constructed is compared to international tendencies and for the Swedish artists it is important to have international relations. This might explain why Swedish pupils of Henri Matisse were acknowledged while other artists were ignored – Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén were preferred to, let's say, Gösta Adrian Nilsson.²⁷ The story Moderna Museet tells is related to international art and tendencies; the regional museums do so to a limited extent – presenting a regional narrative in relation to a national one. The list illuminates the fact that Stockholm is a region too, albeit a capital one, and that Moderna Museet focuses on regional art.

It is evident that even slight changes might alter the course of great narratives. These great, in my case I would say *capital* narratives, have to be questioned, altered and extended in different ways all the time. To do this from a regional perspective, or a gender perspective at that, are options chosen out of many. Our research project has made it possible to shed light on the established narratives and how they relate to each other. As usual, an awareness of the problem is a first step on the way to presenting multiple narratives. Omissions need not always be dealt with through massive acquisitions in a strategy of 'filling holes', that might not even be necessary and I would certainly not propose to buy works of art by women artists only to make the relation more balanced. Representation works on many levels. As the example Niki de Saint Phalle shows: a single work can make a difference if it has great visibility and becomes part of a canon. In fact, being an international artist at Moderna Museet makes visibility more likely than being Swedish, either male or female. This means that gender is less important than geographic background in the national museum since it wants to convey the image of an international collection.

Notes

- ¹ The result of our research project has been published in the book *Representation och regionalitet. Genusstrukturer i fyra svenska museisamlingar*, Kulturpolitisk forskning no. 3, Anna Tellgren and Jeff Werner (eds), Stockholm, The Swedish Arts Council 2011. This article relies on my research, see M. Sundberg, "Innanför och utanför tullarna: Moderna Museet", pp. 26–53.
- ² For a summary on this project, see John Peter Nilsson (ed.), *Det andra önskemuseet/The Second Museum of Our Wishes*, Stockholm/Göttingen 2010. See also M. Sundberg, "Collection Strategies: Some Thoughts on How European Museums Deal with Gender Imbalance", *MP. An Online Feminist Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2010, 18–22.
- ³ See my articles on Dorothea Tanning, Louise Bourgeois, and Carolee Schneemann: M. Sundberg, "The Metamorphosis of Dorothea Tanning: On the painting *Insomnias*", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, Stockholm, 2010, vol. 79, no. 1, 18–32; M. Sundberg, "Pillar - A Gateway Figure? On a Work by Louise Bourgeois and her Relationship with Art History", *emaj – electronic Melbourne art journal*, Melbourne, Issue 5, 2010, 1–16; M. Sundberg, "A One-Work-Artist? Carolee Schneemann and the Reception of Her Work", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, Taylor & Francis, Stockholm, vol. 80, no. 3, 2011, 168–179.
- ⁴ Especially Griselda Pollock's research has been an important inspiration, see for example Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon. Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, London 1999; and *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum. Time, Space and the Archive*, London 2007.
- ⁵ Cf. "The Authority. Swedish Code of Statutes" comprising the "Ordinance concerning instructions for Moderna Museet" as issued in 2007 by the Swedish government for the museum. <http://www.modernamuseet.se/en/Moderna-Museet/About/The-authority> (2012-03-13).
- ⁶ The history of Moderna Museet, as well as its complicated relation to the "mother institution" Nationalmuseum, has been discussed in depth in the publications *The History Book. On Moderna Museet 1958–2008*, Anna Tellgren (ed.), Stockholm/Göttingen 2008, and Per Bjurström, *Nationalmuseum 1792–2002*, Stockholm 1992.
- ⁷ See Ulf Linde, "Memoarer", in Olle Granath and Monica Nieckels (eds), *Moderna Museet 1958–1983*, Stockholm 1983, pp. 59–65.
- ⁸ A sculpture by Germaine Richier was already a part of the collection, a painting by Marie Laurencin was in a private collection in Stockholm and donated some years later. The third artist, Sophie Täuber-Arp, was not part of the collection. For more information on the exhibition, see Maria Görts, "Routine and Selection. The Genesis of the Moderna Museet Collection", *The History Book* 2008, pp. 11–32.
- ⁹ This seems to be a kind of trend, with an important statement such as *elles@centrepompidou* (Paris 2009) being an early example of similar exhibitions and a new take on the collections.
- ¹⁰ This might be underlined through the fact that Nationalmuseum most of the time has recruited professors in art history as directors, while Moderna Museet has had artists and art critics. The current director of Moderna Museet, Daniel Birnbaum, is the first to hold a PhD.
- ¹¹ Iréne Winell-Garvén's doctorate thesis *Vägen till parnassen. En sociologisk studie av kvinnligt konstnärskap i Sverige 1864–1939* (Göteborg 2005), using Pierre Bourdieu's approach, was an important source for the art field in Sweden before World War II as well as an inspiration for our research project.
- ¹² For example, Lena Cronqvist and Eddie Figge are two artists who also have close social relations to the museum. Figge created the foundation for the development of a new museum in 1988, raising the funds for an architectural competition subsequently won by Rafael Moneo. See *The History Book* 2008, p. 363.
- ¹³ One might also ask, regarding our globalised world and the fact that many artists work abroad – in the case of Sweden today, Berlin seems to be captivating – what effects this might have on the collection of Moderna Museet? Will it continue to collect Swedish art even though many now work elsewhere? Some, surely, will be followed, but what about the emerging and less known artists?
- ¹⁴ "Det är naturligtvis fullt legitimt för konstnären att leka experimentellt och söka estetiska effekter i nya former och material, men den lätta estetiska leken och det smakfulla bör inte utan vidare förväxlas med den konst som har, jag vågar kalla det en högre syftning än den rent dekorativt ornamentala." Otte Sköld, "Ett museum för modern konst", *Moderna Museet. En konstbok från Nationalmuseum*, Bo Wennberg (ed.), Stockholm 1957, p. 27f.

- ¹⁵ Important exhibitions on women artists were mounted in Gothenburg in 1973 and 1975, and those that came to Stockholm were either shown at Liljevalchs konsthall (1980) or Kulturhuset (1981). For further discussion, see Sundberg 2011, p. 45f.
- ¹⁶ Hultén's private connections, his friend Billy Klöver in New York, played a major role in establishing the link with American artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Sam Francis. See Marianne Hultman, "Our Man in New York. An Interview with Billy Klöver on his Collaboration with Moderna Museet", *The History Book* 2008, pp. 235–256.
- ¹⁷ It is very common to find that when the museum purchases a work directly from the artist, the artist offers another work as donation.
- ¹⁸ See Birgitta Arvas et al. (eds), *Katalogen över Moderna Museets samlingar av svensk och internationell 1900-talskonst*, Stockholm 1976.
- ¹⁹ See Sundberg 2011, p. 28, for a detailed list.
- ²⁰ Compare the other essays in the research project, especially on Norrköpings konstmuseum, where Birgitta Flensburg, during her period as director 1987–2003, presented many women artists. See Andrea Kollnitz, "Museidentitet och genus: Norrköpings konstmuseum", in Tellgren and Werner (eds) 2011, pp. 54–79.
- ²¹ See Tellgren and Werner (eds) 2011, p. 139–165.
- ²² Artists at Moderna Museet only: 438 (35 %), artists in all four museums: 46 (3 %), artists in the three regional museums (Moderna Museet excluded): 9, East coast only: 32, West coast only: 26, artists except at Moderna Museet (at one, two or all three museums): 705 (50 %), women artists total: 1446.
- ²³ The question of quality in relation to gender has been discussed in depth, see for example classical essays such as Linda Nochlin's "Why have there been no great women artists?" (1971) and Nanette Salomon's "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission" (1991). For a Swedish view, see for example Anna Lena Lindberg, "Vem tillhör konsthistorien? Om konstvetenskap och feminism", in Anna Nyström et al. (eds), *Konstfeminism. Strategier och effekter I Sverige från 1970-talet till idag*, Helsingborg/Stockholm 2005, pp. 117–127.
- ²⁴ This included male artists as well. Ulf Linde in an interview with the author, August 27, 2007, conducted in relation to research on *The History Book* 2009. See Maria Görts 2008, p. 29.
- ²⁵ See also Vanja Hermele's illuminating study on the situation today, where for instance the former director Lars Nittve is interviewed regarding gender issues at Moderna Museet. Vanja Hermele, *Konsten – så funkar det (inte)*, Stockholm 2009.
- ²⁶ Jeff Werner, "Fyra museer och en magkänsla", in Tellgren and Werner (eds) 2011, p. 17.
- ²⁷ Gösta Adrian-Nilsson has 36 works in the collection, Isaac Grünewald 98, and Sigrid Hjertén 19.

The National and the Universal



Universal Culture and National Identity: The configuration of national museums in nineteenth-century Hungary

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Abstract

In the absence of royal collections, it was one of the wealthiest aristocrats of the country who set up the Hungarian National Museum in 1802. Initially a library with a selection of other holdings, the *Museum Nationale Hungaricum* gradually widened the scope of its collections, and from the 1870s onwards strove for encyclopaedic coverage of human knowledge. Its legal status underwent significant changes, shifting from private to public foundation (1808) and to state museum from 1867. At the same time, its orientation broadened from a national focus towards a regional, and subsequently European, outlook, finally turning to universal collecting when in the last third of the nineteenth century the representation of non-European civilisations came to be included in its programme. Within three-quarters of a century, a small proto-museum, offspring of the Enlightenment and Romantic patriotism, had developed from accumulating national heritage, though still under Habsburg rule, into a full-fledged national museum in the twin capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, trying to adopt in the 1870s the model of the British Museum. This stunning expansion soon pushed the institution beyond its capacities and led instead to the creation of several specialised collections. With this, the museum idea had achieved its triumph in Hungary, and Budapest became a hub with a series of distinctly specialised national museums, while the mission of the National Museum was redefined and re-scaled. Leaving aside its universal and encyclopaedic ambitions, it became dedicated to the mission of caring for the past remnants of the historical territory of the country. This study examines this process (1802-1902), paying particular attention to the changing relationship of imperial and national, ruler and ruled, in the multi-ethnic Carpathian Basin.

Walking up the staircase of the National Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria, visitors come across a set of golden objects from the Avar period. This treasure, found in Nagyszentmiklós (1799), a village in the Kingdom of Hungary, today situated in Romania, is an outstanding example of Migration Period hoards, which may have been hidden by its former owner in the context of the Bulgarian invasion of the territory [Kovács 2002: 47]. Awed by the shimmer of the griffin-decorated jugs and bull-headed drinking bowls, altogether 23 items that weigh 10 kilograms, most visitors may not notice the inscription at the bottom specifying that this is a modern replica of the originals held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Another replica of the set can be seen in the National Museum of Budapest, where, unlike Sofia, it is shown not as part of the permanent exhibition among originals, but outside, in the corridor. The three museums mobilise different messages of this heritage of the Danube Basin. The original in Vienna is an imperial trophy, proof of the power of the Habsburg Empire and of its cultural institutions, as much as of the artistic creativity of the centuries that had followed the decline of the Roman Empire. The copy in Sofia refers to the heyday of Bulgarian history when early Bulgarians were expanding their state by defeating Avars and other tribes far north of the borders of today's Bulgaria. In Budapest, in turn, the exhibit of the copy in the corridor is linked to the history of the Hungarian National Museum as the discovery of the treasure two centuries ago had implicitly motivated establishing the museum.

Unearthed by a Serbian inhabitant of the village, the golden vessels came by way of Greek merchants to Pest; from there the Mayor sent them to Vienna. A decree established in 1776 guaranteed that archaeological finds were to enrich the k.u.k. Münz- und Antikenkabinett. Similarly to the Osztrópatka finds of 1791 and the Szilágysomlyó treasure of 1797, the Avar treasures were sent to the Imperial Treasury, thus raising awareness in Hungary for the need of a museum in the country [Pintér 2002: 71]. The Habsburgs being on the Hungarian throne since the sixteenth century, no royal collections were available, which prompted Count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820) to establish a museum in 1802. Two-hundred years later, in 2002, to celebrate the bi-centenary of his donation, the Hungarian National Museum devoted an exhibition to the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, and the original was lent for this occasion by the Kunsthistorisches Museum. It is a rare occurrence to see a national museum look back upon its foundation by exhibiting a set of works of art that belongs to the leading museum of another country (Austria) and that is related to the history of another population (the Avars). This gesture indicates the mission of the Hungarian National Museum, to be in charge of the treasures of the historical territory of the Hungarian Kingdom¹. While the Avars had dispersed and are not related directly to any of Eastern Europe's population, their treasure remains a shared, as much as contested, element of the historical identity of several nations. As the following study of the public collections in Hungary aims to show, museums in these countries, as much as elsewhere, often came into being to claim objects from the past of their region – for the sake of the future identity of their nation.

Foundation of the Hungarian National Museum

Coming from one of the wealthiest families of the country, Ferenc Széchenyi began to collect systematically in the 1780s. An enlightened aristocrat, he had first envisaged a universal collection, planning it to offer it to the public from 1786 onwards [Somkuti 2002a: 25]. In

reaction to the centralising politics of the Habsburgs, by the middle of the 1790s he had focused on objects of Hungarian relevance. This was designed to foster the cultural self-appreciation of a nation only just in formation according to the modern sense of the word. In a third step, perhaps in reaction to the archaeological finds ending up in Vienna, he had realised that no matter how ambitious the collecting programme at his estate in Western Hungary was, an official institution was needed to gather and safeguard *hungarica* – defined at the time as objects of and about Hungarian history and culture. The shift from individual passion to an institutionalised national level implied his determination to save his private programme from potential discontinuation by placing it in an administrative public framework. We can also interpret his decision as an act of political responsibility. Having served on various high duties of the Habsburg Empire, Széchenyi was a well-known public figure, who had retired from the active political and administrative career, and returned to public life now with his act of setting up a museum as a private benefactor of a cause for his nation. His move was a model for being influential by far-sighted activity in the terrain of culture, rather than by having high political positions.

When the Emperor consented to his petition to allow him to offer part of his family collection to the Hungarian public, in November 1802 Széchenyi donated to the nation mostly a library, as well as a numismatic collection and a selection of other items, mainly but not exclusively pertaining to Hungarian history, while he retained the bulk of his universal collections for the family. Already as a private collector he had begun publishing the catalogues of his holdings, and the title of the first volume, printed in Sopron in 1799, *Catalogus Bibliothecae Hungaricae Francisci Com. Széchenyi. Tomus I. Scriptores Hungaros et Rerum Hungaricorum* shows that manuscripts, prints and books by Hungarian authors and about Hungary stood in focus.² The Latin wording of his founding declaration – ‘I irrevocably donate to my dear fatherland and for the use and benefit of the community’ – indicates his wish to further the public good of a country the autonomous statehood of which had been suspended for two-and-a-half centuries and was substituted for this reason by the legally vague, yet emotionally cohesive force of patriotism [for a recent edition of the original documents, see Somkuti 2002b].

As the Emperor convened the Hungarian Assembly (seated at that time in Pressburg/Pozsony, today Bratislava, capital of Slovakia) only sparsely, the institutionalisation of the collection moved ahead slowly. The museum functioned until 1807 as a private initiative, when finally the Hungarian Assembly accepted the donation in Act 1807/XXIV, and by naming the institution *Museum Nationale Hungaricum*, strengthened its national character. A private mission had shifted to become a public programme, its national character assuming a further meaning: not only had it been founded *for* the nation, from now it was to be sustained *by* this community. Soon, Act 1808/VIII spelt out that the museum had ‘to incorporate all that can be related to national scholarship [nemzeti literatura]’. As Hungary was a subordinate part of the Habsburg Empire, neither regulation conferred the status of a governmental institution on the museum, which was to function as a public foundation until the Compromise with Austria. Before independent Hungarian government was set up in 1867, allotting a yearly budget to the museum, and turning it into a state museum, over the first 65 years of its existence the museum operated as a non-governmental body, funded by the Hungarian public, and controlled by Habsburg administration [Fejős 1964: 270].

For the first time in 1812 it received the right to have a say in where findings from Hungarian soil would end up. The institution was gradually heading for partnership with the Viennese Treasury, coming step by step closer to fulfilling its *raison d'être*, the responsibility for objects of Hungarian relevance. Although this was a prolonged process, its aims seem to have been clear from the beginning to various strata of the Hungarian population, as suggests the declaration of the representatives of Szabolcs County at the 1808 National Assembly [Mátrai 1868: 13]. This praised the threefold function of the museum: 'the refinement of our nation [nemzetünk pallérozására], the blossoming of our mother tongue and the true knowledge of the history of our fatherland'. Just as 'nation' [nemzet] repeatedly surfaced in these early documents, so did 'museum': being overseen by the Habsburg Governor of Hungary, Palatine Joseph (1776-1847), before 1807 the institution was tentatively named *Museum Statuum et Ordinuum Regni Josephinum Palatinale*. Széchenyi himself had placed greater emphasis on the library, but also appended to it a numismatic collection, and in 1802 formally baptised these *Bibliotheca Hungarica cum Numophylacio Familiae Comitum Széchenyi Patriae Sacrata* [Ferenczy 2002: 35]. First as a collection of written documents related to Hungary, along with groups of other items, the set-up of the institution was to change fast into mainly a museum in the broad sense, incorporating a library. Early documents often attached a telling adjective to the title of the library, naming it *Bibliotheca Regnicolaris*, which highlighted that although the Habsburgs were on the throne and therefore this was no royal Hungarian collection, nonetheless it aimed to represent the intellectual heritage of the Kingdom of Hungary. Documents also used the expression *Instituto Nationalis*, suggesting that the Latin 'natio' referred to the community of Hungary while the country did not enjoy autonomous statehood [Korek 1977: 30].

This is an essential difference to other early museum foundations in the Habsburg Empire in cities other than Vienna, notably the Joanneum in Graz, 1811 and the Ferdinandeum – established as Tirolisches Nationalmuseum in 1823 – in Innsbruck, which were called into life by members of the Habsburg family and, although showing local specificities of their region, did not stand for a nation as an imagined community [Deneke and Kahsnitz 1977: 29]. When in 1802 Samuel Bruckenthal (1721-1803), former Governor of Transylvania, in his testament donated his valuable European collections of art and science, acquired over decades in Vienna, along with the palace he had purposefully erected to house them, to the Saxon community of Transylvania, this museum foundation was closer to Széchenyi's concept, except that the Saxons had never had autonomous statehood in this region. According to Bruckenthal's will, the Saxon Lutheran community came to assume responsibility for the collection in Nagyszeben / Hermannstadt (today Sibiu, Romania) under Habsburg and, from 1867, Hungarian auspices [Bodó 2002: 6]. Bruckenthal's achievement shows not only the close interrelation of religious, ethnic, regional and political aspects in setting up museums in this part of Europe, but also sheds light on the fact that promoting education and identity in a community by way of museums did not necessarily require collections of a specifically national perspective. Instead, Bruckenthal had chosen to strengthen his Saxon community intellectually in the supra-national sense of the Enlightenment, by calling into life a museum that represented the various strands of European knowledge at the time. For him, the attachment to the European model of collecting, classifying and showing artificialia et naturalia, was just as powerful a tool for elevating his community, a would-be nation, as a clear, but narrow focus on a nation's own heritage.

Likewise, Széchenyi's donation also included holdings of no Hungarian specificity, for instance antique Roman coins. In the year following his founding act, his wife, Júlia Festetich (1753-1824) gifted her natural science collection to the National Museum in Pest. The same year, the museum opened to the public free of charge in the halls of the Pauline Cloister in downtown Pest. When the first *Ordo Dierum* was printed – in Latin, Hungarian and German in 1811 – the three pillars of the collections could be clearly identified: ‘constituti sunt Dies Lunae et Jovis pro inspicienda Bibliothecae, Martis et Veneris pro Cimelio Rei nummariae et antiquariae, Mercurii et Sabbathi pro Camera Naturae Productorum’ [Csapodi and Tóth and Vértsey 1987: 3]. By this time, the institution had evolved from a private entity to a public body, from a library to a museum, and in its collections, from a dominantly, almost exclusively national historical orientation to a broader scientific perspective. The affairs of the museum were slow to progress – its building was completed only by 1847, its financial resources remained scant until 1867 – yet further acquisitions from private collections helped the museum continue to build up a varied collection of partly Hungarian focus and partly wider outlook.

Expansion of the collections of the National Museum

In the largest expansion of the collections in the first, semi-autonomous phase of the museum (1802-1867), Miklós Jankovich (1772-1846), of the landed gentry, sold his vast collections to the museum at a modest price (1832-1836), paid by subscription of the Hungarian nobility. This donation, larger in size, broader in scope and superior in quality to the collection given by Széchenyi, extended the profile of the museum. It also raised its scholarly standards as Jankovich had grown into a connoisseur and his collections came to be catalogued more systematically than had been the case with earlier acquisitions. Trained by leading professors of his time, Jankovich, after briefly working at the Treasury in Buda, devoted his whole life to collecting on a professional scale. While his prime concern remained the completion of his library, the nearly 70.000 items of which included a large number of manuscripts and first prints, he collected arms and armour, goldsmith's works, archaeological finds, stone-carvings, musical instruments, jewellery and other artefacts [Belitska-Scholtz 1985: 46]. His interest in this spectrum of what we today call material culture was already manifest in his proclamation-like article, entitled ‘Yearning for Hungarian Antiquities’, where he called upon his ‘Readers in the Hungarian fatherland as well as in Transylvania and other lands affiliated in earlier times with the Hungarian Crown [...] to supply us with remnants of all kinds [...] of HUNGARIAN ANTIQUITIES [capitalised in the original], be they either in our homeland or abroad, moreover with remnants of the Greek, Roman and barbarian nations left here at home’ [Jankovich 1818: 15].

His other novelty lay in reaching beyond a preference for Hungarian heritage, and embracing the culture of many other “nations”, from Slavs to the German-speaking territories, mainly in Central Europe [Entz 1939: 174]. By retaining the preference for Hungarian heritage, he showed that two strategies of collecting could supplement each other for the National Museum. The continued national focus was to enhance the institution's role as a custodian of the cultural canon of a nation necessary in building up its identity in the absence of a form of political independence, meanwhile opening the collections to a European dimension was to help fulfil the educational promises of the Enlightenment, and thereby contribute to the modernisation of the nation.

This broader perspective allowed him to collect the documents and objects of various ethnic and religious groups in Hungary.³ Acknowledging multi-ethnic heritage suggested that he regarded the museum to be national in the political, administrative, rather than in the ethnic, sense of the word, and wanted it to cater for all nationalities of the Carpathian Basin. His vision of ‘seizing from the whirl of dispersal the heroic deeds, fashions and works of our ancestors [...] detecting and returning their MEMORIES [capitalised in the original]’ [Mikó 2002: 10] was so strong that he published in printed form in Pest in 1830 a description of his holdings and his offer to place these in the National Museum, and applied for the directorship of the museum 1844. Although he was not given the chance to try his hand at managing the museum he had helped to boost, many scholars readily recognise him as the second founder of the National Museum, considering that his contribution allowed the institution to develop at the pace that followed.

Jankovich had immediate followers, most spectacularly in an area of collecting that he had newly established in the museum. Paintings and other works of fine art had barely featured in the museum so far, with the exception of a few canvases as part of donations and portraits commissioned for the institution. Having an eye for painting, Jankovich had assembled a *Collectio imaginum* – as the inventory of 1838 labelled it – including numerous Gothic panel paintings from the Germanic countries, the value of which was even in Germany only being re-discovered at that time. These paintings were scattered in his collection among mixed other works of art, such as Hungarian portraits of lesser aesthetic, and more historical, value. Yet establishing this new direction of collecting in the museum impressed a professional collector of European Old Masters. In 1836, during the year-long session of the Hungarian Assembly that had perfected the Jankovich acquisition, János Pyrker (1772-1847) decided to donate 190 Old Master paintings to the museum. Archbishop of Eger, a city in Northern Hungary, Pyrker had bought most of the works during his time as Patriarch of Venice in the 1820s [Hölvényi 1987: 132]. Having carried the collection to Eger, in 1830 he opened the South wing of his palace there to the public to show a permanent arrangement of the pictures, but now offered them to the National Museum.⁴ Pyrker’s offer is best seen not as patriotic. As an Archbishop, he had had a career at various posts in the Habsburg Empire, and shared the overall values of European civilisation and humanism, rather than those of a national Hungarian programme. His intention had been to turn the collection public, and the sudden development of the National Museum persuaded him that this institution, rather than the original location in Eger, was going to be the right home for it.

It was not only the acquisition of the Jankovich Collection that motivated Pyrker to donate his fifteenth-eighteenth century works from Italy, the Low Countries and France to the museum in Pest. Another factor of persuasion was that the same Assembly of 1836 had raised the necessary funds for erecting the museum’s building. Ten years later, in March 1846, on Joseph’s Day – to honour the Habsburg Governor, Palatine Joseph, who by that time had been efficient protector of the museum for 42 years – the splendid museum building opened with the permanent installation of the Pyrker Gallery [for an account of this history, published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the museum, and edited by its then Director, see Szalay 1902]. This was a major turn in the history of the institution. Established as a collection mainly of hungarica, the horizon of the museum had widened over nearly half-a-century to European culture, and when

its building finally opened, the first exhibition presented European Old Masters, instead of Hungarian heritage.

This shift was the result of the interplay of several forces. Planning the museum – initially at another location in Pest, first envisaged as a much smaller building – had begun as early as 1807, yet economic and political factors delayed the project until the Jankovich acquisition had made the political elite represented in the Assembly aware of the urgent need to provide funding for the construction. The decision that the necessary budget (500.000 forints) was to be paid by mandatory subscription from the nobility, a very rare instance at the time, indicates the urgency and importance attached to the matter. Just as the incorporation of the Jankovich Collection had signalled to the Assembly that a proper museum building was overdue for the institution, these decisions pressed Archbishop Pyrker to realise the future potential of this museum.

In turn, once the museum opened with the Pyrker Gallery, its national connotations had changed. If Széchényi's donation was mostly national, the Jankovich Collection could be interpreted as supra-national, with a focus on the whole region of Central Europe, and Pyrker enriched the museum with an even wider European fine art selection. This museum was national no longer because its collections had centred on objects of national culture, but rather in the sense that a series of private contributions had worked towards public benefit, for the education and self-esteem of a socially, ethnically, religiously broad definition of the population in Hungary. Just like the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, this museum was a joint venture of more and more groups of society. Not the project of a full-fledged nation state, but rather the common effort of a community in its Reform Age. The Jankovich and the Pyrker acquisitions suggest also a clear difference with the Germanisches Nationalmuseum: the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum did not limit its collections to national culture, but attempted to enlarge its focus and fulfil a national role as an institution by incorporating increasingly international collections. The building of the museum also radiated this growing commitment to shared European roots. Measured by other edifices in Pest – a unified Budapest came about only in 1873 –, a vast temple of the arts in a well-chosen location, this neo-Classical building bore hardly any local features. In line with the European canon of the times, architect Mihály Pollack (1773-1855) applied the Greek-based vocabulary of public buildings, from the colonnade to the tympanum [cp. the most recent examination of the building, including the Symbolism of its architectural patterns, in Pintér 2009]. Here was a new public building in the European idiom of museum architecture of the time, with the collections likewise shifting towards European cultures.

Towards universal collections

The failure of the 1848 Revolution halted this process of opening from a national towards a European museum model. In the 1850s the institution was subordinated as *Pester National-museum* directly to the Ministry of Culture in Vienna. Yet from 1867 onwards the museum enjoyed an entirely new set of opportunities to approximate the level of its leading counterparts in Europe. Regaining its sovereignty, Hungary placed museum development at the heart of its cultural policy. No more than four years after the Compromise with Vienna, the freshly established Ministry for Religious and Cultural Affairs [Vallás- és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium, from the Compromise in 1867 onwards, ministries had Hungarian names] was already planning a grand overall museum. Minister Tivadar Pauler (1816-1886) envisioned an institution that 'unites the collections of

artworks in the property in the country [... and] that will serve to ornate the capital of the country' [Sinkó 2009: 193]. The task was no longer to make up for missing political independence by cultural accumulation, but rather to compete with other capitals in Europe. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Budapest aimed to be Vienna's twin as capital, and Hungary was eager to assume the role of a regional power in Central Europe. Now a governmental institution, the National Museum had become a key part of state representation.

Beyond working to elevate the institution to the professional standards of the time, its new Director, Ferenc Pulszky (1814-1897) attempted to mobilise this strong governmental backing to broaden the collections universally. A political émigré to London after 1848, Pulszky had been for several decades engaged in the European world of museums and the art market. Both his grandfather and his uncle had been eminent collectors of the art of European (Greek, Etruscan and Roman) antiquities and non-European (Egyptian, Assyrian, and East Asian) civilisations. Inheriting his uncle's collection, he himself had become a connoisseur and avid collector, travelled widely, befriended colleagues internationally. Although this Fejérváry-Pulszky Collection was sold at auction in Paris in 1868, as Director of the museum, supported by his high political and cultural commissions and influential friends, he was in a position to attempt to implant the same universal interest in the leading public collection of Hungary. As Director from 1869 until 1894 – and meanwhile Head of the National Committee of Libraries and Museums, as much as President of the National Hungarian Fine Arts Association, and first becoming an MP, then also holding various offices in Parliament – he was to put to public use the expertise and vision he had gained as private collector [Szilágyi 1995: 913].

Intellectually, he had taken a long road to mature for this challenge. In his first noteworthy publication on museums, entitled 'On the use of art collections', 1838, he advocated focusing on national antiquities, yet already in two senses of the word:

It would be, nonetheless, a narrow-minded interpretation if one derived from these views that only national art and antiquities collections served a purpose, as the ancient relics uncovered in Hungarian soil had also been produced in this geographic area and as our country and our nation cannot be separated from each other, what counts as antiquity of the country is at the same time souvenir of the nation. [reprinted in Marosi 1997: 26]

This approach is quite close to what Miklós Jankovich adumbrated at the same time. The objective of collecting for public use was reached by safeguarding the nation's past relics. This was not to be limited to an ethnically and historically strict concept of Hungarian heritage, but rather to embrace all remnants of the past of a given territory, also of the past that had preceded the presence of the nation there. This view could be seen as up-to-date not only for Hungary but also responded to the general spirit of the time in appreciating local antiquities against the Greek-centred normative canon of Winckelmann.

Soon Pulszky was to be influenced by his lasting stays abroad, and particularly his years in London (1848-1961) that widened his horizon. In his 1851 lecture delivered at University Hall, entitled 'On the progress and decay of art; and on the arrangement of a national museum', his ideal museum was already to represent the art of all civilised nations, ranging from one-time Etruria to current China, including 'the productions of the untutored imagination of India; [...] the awe-inspiring sculptures of hierarchical Egypt; [...] the master-pieces of youthful Greece', along with 'the monuments of imperial Rome' [reprinted as Pulszky 1996: 27]. All this was to be

installed in chronological arrangement, in order to serve the chief objective of a museum: the education of the public. As David Wilson – former Director of the British Museum – identifies in his essay on Pulszky’s intellectual background during his time in England, Pulszky’s close ties with the arts establishment in London and his exposure to the changing set-up of the British Museum, as much as to the hugely impressive Great Exhibition of 1851, had a complex effect on his thinking. This experience prompted him to ally now with the model of the British Museum, centred on universal art, rather than following the traditional museum mission in Hungary [Marosi and Klaniczay 2006: 127].

Nearly a quarter-century later, Pulszky himself puts this bluntly in his treatise, ‘On Museums’ (1875), which can be interpreted as his Director’s programme for developing the Hungarian National Museum. Upon describing a number of museums he had visited in Italy, Germany, France and elsewhere, he contrasts powerful countries whose forward-looking museums show that ‘nothing is alien to them that testifies to the civilisation of the human race’, with ‘nations of restricted aspirations, which feel their secondary or tertiary statute and therefore make up for the self-esteem of grand nations by vanity’ and which sustain ‘rather provincial museums [... as] tools for showing off their country to foreign visitors’ [Pulszky 1875: 53]. While he did not spell it out, this reference to ‘provincial museums’ can be read as a hint at the earlier state of the Hungarian National Museum and as a farewell to his own views expressed in 1838. Dwelling at length on the merits of the British Museum, he continues that ‘[it] is also from other points of view exemplary’ and ‘differs from the museums on the continent primarily’ in that the latter are subject to the changing fortunes of royal collecting whereas ‘the British Museum has from the beginning borne the character of national ownership, received its funding from Parliament, with its management entrusted to connoisseur hands. The accumulation of art treasures has been happening according to plan [...] with Parliament feeling the powerful impact of this institution of public education on the enhancement of scholarship and the refinement of taste’. As he continues, the budget provided to the British Museum exceeds the funds made available to their museums by other countries, which explains how the British Museum is able to amass the broadest possible universal collections. By contrast, Pulszky barely mentions national museums *strictu sensu*. In his chapter-long treatise, merely a few lines are devoted to these. ‘National museums, which would be of an exclusively national feature, number hardly more than the Germanisches Museum in Nuremberg, the Bavarian one in Munich, the Römisch-germanisches [sic] in Mainz and two more in Copenhagen and Stockholm, yet even in these, slowly foreign elements make their way in’ [Pulszky 1875: 59].

With his directorship based on this programme, Pulszky opened a new chapter not only in the history of the Hungarian National Museum, but, as we shall see, in overall museum development in Hungary. Departing from an earlier understanding of the museum being national by way of its content, i.e. its collections of *hungarica*, he gave to the adjective ‘national’ the meaning of being sustained by state funds, managed by scholars appointed on professional account, and serving the intellectual advancement of the country. Over the quarter-century of his directorship, yearly attendance rose from 65.000 in 1869 – the first year we have official records of visitor numbers – to 440.000 in 1895. Swaying between 8-10 persons before 1867, museum staff soon numbered 35. Practical details, such as the heating of the huge building, as well as key scholarly issues, such as catalogues and other publications, were taken care of [Fejős 1965: 298]. The museum’s budget

rose exponentially, with the state providing separate allocations for specific acquisitions, for example in 1870, when Pulszky – using his position in the Finance Committee of Parliament – arranged for an extraordinary item in the national budget to cover the purchase of the mineralogy collection of the Prince Lobkowitz family, which was regarded as second only to the Imperial Collections in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A year later, the Hungarian state purchased the Prince Esterházy Picture Gallery of high-quality European Old Masters.⁵ This expansion earned international recognition for museum development in Hungary, as a summit of which in 1876 the National Museum hosted the 7th International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology [Szilágyi 1998: 14].

Whereas details of this rise of Hungarian museology to a European level are richly examined in writings on museum history in the country, for our argument two aspects need to be stressed. First, Pulszky strove for an encyclopaedic orientation, to represent all aspects of human knowledge in the collections. Second, he aimed for a universal level, by stepping beyond the national, regional and European limitations and embracing all civilisations. Where sufficient funds were beyond the reach of the country, he sought for compromises. In the representation of Antiquity, first-rate originals were no longer available for Hungary, yet replacing them with plaster casts in a complete overview of Greek, Roman and other, mostly classical Mediterranean Antiquities appeared to be a viable alternative [cp. the critical analysis of a contemporary, himself an applicant to the position of Director, reprinted in Henszlmann 1990: 231]. Public education being high on Pulszky's agenda among the tasks of a national museum, copies offered several advantages in arts instruction, and during the 1870s, a cast collection of several hundred pieces was acquired for the National Museum, with a selection put on permanent show in specifically decorated halls.⁶

Looking beyond European heritage proved possible in new areas of collecting. Non-European ethnography was establishing itself among museum curators in Hungary just as it had been appreciated in countries with long-time overseas connections. When a joint Austro-Hungarian commercial and scientific expedition set out for East Asia, covering from 1868-1871 a vast territory between Indonesia and Japan, one of the best Hungarian ethnographers, János Xántus (1825-1894) joined the crew and, commissioned by the Minister of Culture, sent home over the course of years altogether over 160.000 items, a selection of which was exhibited in the National Museum immediately upon his return in 1871 [for stunning twists and turns in Xántus' biography, see Bodó and Viga 2002: 963].

The return to national history

A whole range of further examples could illustrate the spawning collections. The Golden Age of Hungarian museum development (1867-1914), the half-century preceding World War I, witnessed the country trying to assume the position of a ruling state between the Imperial Court in Vienna and the cultural aspirations of various nationalities in Central Europe – indicated by museum foundations in Prague, Ljubljana, Zagreb and elsewhere in the region – that were to gain national independence only after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, for two reasons, the success of the museum project in Hungary soon led to the break-up of the National Museum. First, the once monumental building proved to be too small for the collections from the 1870s onwards. Second, as elsewhere in Europe, specialisation of knowledge

initiated a gradual turn away from encyclopaedic thinking, and advocated sharply-profiled institutions and curators instead of all-embracing museums and polyhistorians. These practical and intellectual pressures prompted the set-up of independent departments first within the National Museum – such as that of natural history (1870), ethnography (1872) and applied arts (1872) – and successively the split-up of the National Museum into specialised museums. Some received a purpose-built new home. The Museum of Applied Arts moved into its characteristically Hungarian-fashioned Art Nouveau palace in 1896, whereas the Museum of Fine Arts, whose collections accumulated from 1871-1896, opened the door of its Greek Revivalist and neo-Renaissance monumental building in 1906. Other specialised museums came to be housed in various non-purpose-built locations, with the re-arrangement of the museum network lasting well into the twentieth century [Vadas 1998: 140].⁷

These new museums lent the expression ‘national museum’ a new layer of meaning. While we have seen the gradual shift in the adjective ‘national’ from historical content and Hungarian heritage towards the classification of a museum as first a public, then a state institution, these new specialised museums were ‘national’ explicitly in the sense of the government establishing and maintaining them, for the cultural enrichment of a multi-ethnic state. This was a political statement of the ruling Hungarian community in the country understood as a small regional empire with a mixed cultural, religious and minority set-up. While the early nineteenth century brought about – in the vein of the Enlightenment and budding Romanticism – one National Museum in Hungary, by the end of the century a complete network of national museums had come into being in Budapest. Each of these new museums had as its mission to pay attention to its specialised collections as much within Hungary as abroad. National and international heritage – in fine art, applied art, ethnography and the other disciplines – complemented each other. By contrast, the National Museum underwent a process of re-nationalisation. As the new museums moved out, they carried with them their part of the collections, leaving the National Museum with a focus on national heritage, with no international collections and, in terms of academic disciplines, solely with a focus on the history and archaeology of the territory of Hungary, with no other encyclopaedic orientation.⁸

Although from time to time, this division of labour between the National Museum and the specialised museums was re-negotiated – with the network of national museums being subject to re-shuffle ever since, even today – we can say that the history of the National Museum had come full circle over its first one-hundred years. By the time it celebrated its centenary in 1902, the museum’s mission had first expanded from national to universal, and then retreated to a focus on the heritage of Hungarian lands. The second century of the museum reinforced this vocation from one more aspect. With the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, following World War I, the Paris Treaties made Hungary cede two-thirds of its former territory, along with significant groups of ethnic Hungarians, to new neighbour states. Having no longer political control over much of its one-time land and population, the country came to rely more than ever before on its National Museum to represent the past of its historical territories, now partly abroad. Set up in 1802 in a subordinated country that was part of the Habsburg Empire, in the second stage of its history, after 1867, the National Museum became cultural flagship of a newly-autonomous country that was itself a ruling state, while becoming in a third step, in 1918, a

museum in charge of the heritage of a historical country of a new small nation state that had been considerably reduced compared to its previous form.

This explains the continued concentration on Hungarian lands, a basically territorial definition of the national feature of the museum. No wonder that when the bi-centenary of the museum had arrived, in 2002, the institution chose to celebrate it, as have seen at the beginning of this paper, with the Avar treasure that not only recalled the circumstances of the foundation of the museum but also testified to its territorial mission. Various nations and countries – along with their museums from Vienna to Sofia – share the attachment to this archaeological hoard. The place where it was discovered is no longer situated in today's Hungary, but was so at the time of its finding. In 1802, the museum was called into life to claim from Imperial Vienna exactly such remnants found in the soil of the country; in 2002, the museum sought to underline its continued task to represent the heritage of the whole Carpathian Basin. Despite that the Avars are no longer directly related to any of the modern nations in this region, their treasure has remained part of the antiquity of this territory, just as this territorial approach has remained central to the self-understanding of the Hungarian National Museum.

Notes

- ¹ Beyond the replica in the museum, over the two centuries, the charming motifs of the golden objects had been reproduced innumerable in Hungary, from schoolbooks to public sculpture in Budapest.
- ² He also provided funds to regularly enhance these collections and to set up a publicly accessible institution for their care. Other aristocrats successively contributed to the costs of the land, the building and the running of the museum.
- ³ Collecting deliberately for the National Museum, he used the modest sum he had requested at the transfer of his holdings to the museum to pay off his debts and immediately to begin with a second collection, also expressly for the museum, which, however, dispersed on his death.
- ⁴ As there was only one single piece by a Hungarian master in the collection – and the painter, Károly Markó, lived in Italy, and had painted the work as illustration to a poem by Pyrker written in German – this donation bore no national feature.
- ⁵ The collection had been displayed since 1865, on permanent loan, in the third-floor galleries of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – founded in 1825 by Ferenc Széchenyi's youngest son, István Széchenyi [sic] (1791-1860) – which now, with the governmental acquisition of the works, turned into a kind of external exhibition location of the Hungarian National Museum.
- ⁶ This did not exclude attention to Hungarian works, either. From 1873, enjoying the re-discovery – which had been taking place all over Europe – of neglected periods of national art, such as the Middle Ages, plaster casts of the forgotten Hungarian centuries were also commissioned and exhibited.
- ⁷ Eventually, also the founding collection of the National Museum assumed independence as the National Széchenyi Library became a separate institution in 1949, today housed in the Western Wing of Buda Castle, renovated after World War II.
- ⁸ Although Pulszky's programme lived on – for instance a national programme for collecting aegyptiaca was announced in 1902, and in Greco-Roman Antiquities, originals were acquired, next to the plaster casts, from 1908 – these new collections enriched the specialised museums, the offspring of their musée-mère, the National Museum.

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Inverting the Nation at the British Museum

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Abstract

In the last four decades the ideas and practices that the British Museum were historically associated with have come under critical scrutiny, which means the institution requires a new basis for legitimacy. As a consequence, over the last ten years in particular, the discourses about the role of the museum have gradually and subtly altered. In this paper, I suggest that there is a repositioning of the institution away from a surveyor of the world, to a facilitator of world cultures. New discourses position the institution as playing an important role in promoting tolerance amongst peoples in the present. One reason this is necessary, it is suggested, is due to a rise in nationalism. The British Museum was never a museum that presented a nationalist discourse. Instead it surveyed the world. However, the shift which identifies nationalism as a problem and the museum as a solution to it, is a significant departure that requires attention.

Introduction

In this article I argue that the legitimising discourses of the British Museum are in flux, that it is in search of new authority, and that one of emerging legitimising narratives is an implicit and at times explicit critique of nationalism. After an introductory discussion of the establishment of the Museum, I outline that the foundational principles have been subject to critical scrutiny. I look at how, in this critical context, the museum is shifting and adapting its role, and suggest that it is drawing on different rhetoric, discourse and practice in response. A number of initiatives have been launched over the last decade that have, I argue, attempted to repose the role of the organisation, in an attempt to re-legitimise it. The attempt at adaptation and new legitimising strategies, in part, inverts concepts of nationalism, which is an important development - both in relation to its history and the historical association of museums in the nineteenth century and their use in the project of building the nation.

Foundations

The British Museum was founded in 1753. Its origins lie in the collections and will of Hans Sloane, a physician, naturalist and collector who had assembled more than 71,000 objects, which he wanted to remain as a collection after his death. The first interesting point here is that the decision to have it in Britain and in London was not something that Sloane specified as necessary. Instead he suggested the locations of London, Saint Petersburg, Berlin, Paris and Madrid. He did however offer it to London first. After some prevarication it was accepted, paid for, and on 7 June 1753, an Act of Parliament established the British Museum. It was set up as a Trust. It was to be run independently of Parliament, and to have no entrance charges. And it was the first public institution to be called British. The current director, Neil MacGregor, suggests that the aim was to embody the values of the new state created in 1707, which had been challenged by the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 (MacGregor, N. 2004). Significantly it was a period when the country was learning to deal with a new parliament, whilst society was rethinking the place of the monarch, and the relationship between parliament and the citizenry. In this context, national meant belonging to neither church nor king, but to an emerging idea of the citizen

Despite being the 'British' Museum, this was not a museum that expressed a discourse on the nation itself, nor did British material culture or history figure strongly in the collection - if at all - for some time. This was in contrast to a number of national museums that played an explicit role in the promotion of national identity, such as those in Prague and Budapest or the Louvre (MacGregor, A. 1998). There is a debate as to why a British identity was muted in the discourses and collections of the institution, centring on disagreements over questions of political stability and instability). Arthur MacGregor suggests that the insular character and comparative political stability of Britain may have attenuated the demands of nationalism and that as a consequence the institution did not collect artefacts of a British nature (MacGregor, A. 1998). Wingfield, on the other hand, posits that this absence of nationalism cannot account for the significant absence of British material in the collection. Wingfield suggests that whilst the British Museum did not present a national narrative, it presented a discourse of 'civilisation', a discourse that is linked to particular histories. The Museum was a surveyor of other cultures, linked to the relationship of Britain to parts of the world through trade, colonisation and imperialism (Whitehead, 2011).

Thus, in marked contrast to other national museums, the idea of Britishness was implicit rather than explicit. The British Museum was a national museum which implicitly, through its architecture, presentation of objects and position in relation to the British state, helped to make the nation's importance visible. It expressed, in the words of Norbert Elias, 'the sum of the national self-image' a confident, self-assurance about Britain's place in the world (1939: 5).

How things have changed

The British Museum was associated with ideas and practices which have come under critical scrutiny which means that the institution requires a new basis for legitimacy. Broadly, a legitimation deficit arises when older sources of justification for institutions are undermined and eroded (Habermas 1987). In what follows, I briefly describe the shifts that have led rise to a questioning of the foundational ideals of the institution.

In the past 40 years in particular, the cultural authority of the museum has undergone considerable scrutiny and a number of criticisms, which have resulted in the destabilization of its legitimacy. A number of overlapping social and intellectual shifts have resulted in significant and widespread questioning of the purpose of the museum, which has weakened its traditional sources of justification (Jenkins, 2010). The social theorist Zygmunt Bauman explains that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the time of the emergence of the modern museum, was a time when men of knowledge had authority that could be described as legislative (Bauman 1987; 1992). This intellectual climate underpinned the formation of the modern state and official institutions of culture, including education and the early public museums. In the present period, however, Bauman argues that the role for men of knowledge as legislators of meaning has weakened. They no longer - securely - hold legislative authority or the ability to define meaning and outline judgements. As the state's reliance on culture for the reproduction of its power diminished, market forces rose to challenge their autonomy. Bauman describes a clash of interests between philosophers and aestheticians, and emerging market-orientated intellectuals where the production of culture serves the market and their role shifted from being 'legislators' to 'interpreters' with the transition from modernity to post-modernity

The central tenets of the Enlightenment, which informed the remit of the museum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have been called into question (Foster, 1985; Bennett, 1996). While the principles of the Enlightenment were always critiqued, a number of intellectual trends since the late 1960s, in particular: postmodernism, cultural theory, and postcolonial theory, have theoretically deconstructed its premises, thus profoundly challenging claims about truth, and the idea of the museum as a distinct realm removed from social and political forces (Furedi, 2004). These critical ideas have impacted upon museology and, I would suggest, practitioners; if to differing degrees. Until the 1980s, most literature on museums was devoted to reports of exhibitions, discussion about equipment and histories. There was some examination of the social and educational role of museums, but this was limited. This changed in the 1980s, when a body of work emerged that criticized the idea that museums were value-free and argued that they are inherently and unavoidably political (Merriman 1991). The development of museums in Western societies, it has come to be argued by a wide group of museologists and practitioners, occurred in specific historical circumstances and actively supports the dominant classes, maintaining the status quo as natural (See, for instance, Duncan and Wallach, 1980). One response was to

critically engage with the old institution and forge a more socially useful role for it, as illustrated when, towards the end of the 1980s, a group of scholars and museum professionals published *The New Museology* (Vergo 1989), a collection of essays that aimed to develop new critical theory on museums and to reconsider the social role of museums. *The New Museology* recommended that the study of museums and professional work should adopt a greater degree of self-awareness and questioning of the methods employed, as well as the purpose and context of the institutions. Overall, as the historian Daniel Sherman and the art historian Irit Rogoff describe, 'a broad range of critical analyses have converged on the museum, unmasking the structures, rituals, and procedures by which the relations between objectives, bodies of knowledge and processes of ideological persuasion are enacted.' (1994: ix–v).

Other social shifts have also played a role in shaping a new social and cultural context for the British Museum. Since the Second World War the nationalist project has been firmly interrogated. Decolonisation has reduced the British Empire and prompted by its decline questions have been raised about Britishness. The influence of post-colonial thinking has severely impacted on institutions associated with this period of history. As a consequence of these historical events and the development of these intellectual theories, the pursuit of knowledge, culture and science – the work of museums – have come to be viewed not as universal or objective, but as influenced by the prejudices of European cultures. For example, writing in her book *Making Representations: museums in the Post-Colonial Era*, the theorist Moira Simpson argues that museums' origins were implicated in colonialism, continue to be 'inextricably enmeshed' and need to move away from this model. (Simpson 1996: 1)

Furthermore, the political structure of the British Isles, itself made up of four different kingdoms, is increasingly unstable. A referendum, planned for 2014, will consider the Independence for Scotland, and it is possible that the United Kingdom as it is today may cease to exist – additionally exacerbating the need to ask the question of what it means to be 'British'.

The British Museum has also been a target of particular criticism, but it had, up until the late 1990s, been able to withstand it, I would suggest, due to its significant size and history. Under the last government, however, it fell out of favour with the British political elite. Remarkably, and in contrast to traditional practice, the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, did not visit the institution. The New Labour party had symbolically distanced themselves from British history and the past. I would also suggest that these critical questions have begun to have an impact on this institution, not just because of external pressure, but also due to the arrival of a new generation of curators schooled in critical thinking, and the new museology who are involved in the life of the institution, and reshaping it from within. The question that is raised in this context is that given the questioned status of foundational principles associated with the pursuit of knowledge and the notion of Britishness, how can the museum continue to operate with credibility?

How the museum is adapting – from universal to encyclopedic

Over the last ten years, especially since the new director – Neil MacGregor – took over in 2002, the discourse about the role of the museum has gradually and subtly altered. It is possible to identify a repositioning of the institution away from a surveyor of the world, to a facilitator of world cultures, and a role in promoting tolerance amongst peoples in the present; one reason this is necessary, it is implied, is due to a rise in nationalism or battles fought along the lines of ethnic

identity. Amongst the new strategies is a programme of loans; one in particular has been forefronted, that of the *Cyrus Cylinder* to the National Museum of Iran in Tehran. In the press release about this loan the Museum stressed the independence of the institution from the national government, the multiplicity of meanings of the cylinder and, crucially, the essential role the loan and the object could play in contributing to: ‘a better relationship based on dialogue, tolerance and understanding.’(BM, 2010). The discourse I want to highlight here is one of the role the institution can play in complicating concepts of identity and in the promotion of tolerance.

Another example of this is the shift in the discourse that has long characterised the museum as universal to the term *encyclopaedic*. In 2002 a group of museum directors issued the *Declaration on the Importance & Value of Universal Museums*. It defended the role of the museum as a space in which to understand artefacts from different cultures and time, and argued that they should not be judged by their practices in the long distant past, practices that should be appreciated as the product of different sensitivities and values. Significantly, although the British Museum was not among the original signatories, the declaration was circulated through the British Museum press office. It was seen as a call to arms against repatriation and was immediately subjected to critical scrutiny (O’Neill 2004, Curtis 2006).

Since then, the Museum is less frequently formally referred to as a ‘universal museum’, opting, for example in their publicity for touring exhibitions, for ‘A museum of the world for the world’ or an ‘encyclopaedic museum’ as a description. To qualify; the transition from one to the other has been gradual and you can still find examples of a universal discourse. Further, I am not suggesting that encyclopaedic was not used before – it was. As Eva Schultz has shown, one of the earliest treatises, compiled in the 1560s by Samuel Quiccheberg - a Flemish physician, made reference to the encyclopaedic framework within which scholarly collecting should be conducted (1992). Increasingly, however the museum is described as promoting tolerance in a difficult and divided world, and references to any universal discourse are dropped. Writing in the national newspaper *The Guardian*, the director, for instance, argues that the display of objects allows the visitor to address ‘questions of contemporary politics and international relations.’ And that the BM in particular encourages that because it is a ‘collection that embraces the whole world allows you to consider the whole world.’ (MacGregor, N. 2004) With this shift one finds references to the promotion of tolerance and understanding in the present as the purpose of the institution. Take for example, the introduction by the director, to *Enlightenment Discovering the world in the Eighteenth Century*, referring to the changes in outlook and practice, such as the moving of collections to other institutions, of the institution over time: ‘[...] it has surrendered its eighteenth-century definition of universality, it has developed a new identity as a collection of the cultures of the world, ancient and modern.’ He continues to elaborate on the same point but in relation to the public – stating that it has changed; broadened and diversified:

The comparatively small number of people who have lived in London and visited its displays in the late eighteenth century have been replaced by the millions who now come every year. That new audience is truly world-wide, both because they come from all over the world and because they include the increasingly cosmopolitan population of London and Britain as a whole. (MacGregor, N. 2003 : 6)

The British Museum is ‘a museum of the world, for the world.’ Neil MacGregor states. Indeed, a related narrative holds that contemporary geopolitical factors provide the institution with a more vital and relevant role to play in the contemporary period. MacGregor writes: ‘As the

world becomes more interdependent and more tightly linked, it is more and more essential to have a place where the interlocking of stories of humanity can be seen and explored.' (MacGregor, N. 2003: 3)

The term *encyclopedic* is less charged than that of *universal*, which is too associated with a period in which the institution and the arts were not seen as political - in the sense of reinforcing the social order in the service of elites but as part of a separate sphere of society. Although the British Museum was never an explicitly national museum in terms of its frame of reference, and has always distanced itself from any type of nationalist discourse, it is significant to see that today it is further distancing the institution from the discourse of nationalism; that it is positioning the institution as operating in opposition to, and as a critique of, a perceived rising nationalism in broader society. However, paradoxically, this discourse suggests a more explicitly political role for the institution.

Another major museum director – James Cuno, formerly of the Chicago Institute of Art, now CEO of the Getty, is developing a similar narrative more forcefully: the encyclopaedic museum is a space to contest problematic nationalism, suggesting also that nationalism is on the rise (see Cuno, 2008). As James Cuno writes in his latest book, *Museum Matters*:

This I hold to be the promise of the encyclopaedic museums: that as liberal, cosmopolitan institutions, they encourage identification with others in the world, a shared sense of being human, of having in every meaningful way a common history, with a common future not only *at stake* but increasingly, in an age of resurgent nationalism and sectarian violence, *at risk*. (Cuno, 2011: 7)

Here, in this approach, it is possible to identify an inversion, even a critique of nationalism, in an emerging discourse that seeks to legitimise museum institutions, and those named as encyclopaedic. In the contemporary period there is an attempt to re-authorise the Museum by positioning the institution as a vital space to address political issues – in particular essentialised identities and intolerance. It is implicitly and, at times, explicitly, a critique of nationalism.

In closing, there are a number of questions to raise in relation to these observations, for further reflection. Primarily, will it work? Will it contribute to furthering the legitimacy of the institution? The British Museum does seem to be on firmer ground, further stabilised by prominent media projects such as the History of the World in 100 Objects that was broadcast in 2011 on BBC Radio4. The Times Newspaper, in 2008 nominated Neil MacGregor as 'Briton of the year' - in the words of their Art Critic Rachel Campbell-Johnston: 'He is a committed idealist who, in a world in which culture is increasingly presented as the acceptable face of politics, has pioneered a broader, more open, more peaceable way forward.' (Campbell-Johnston, 2008). However, it would appear that within the sector and academy, these shifts; if identified, are seen as cynical and calculating (see, for example, O'Neill 2004, Curtis 2006, Flynn 2010). Further, the claims for the institution as creating tolerance further politicises the institution in an explicit fashion, and may commit it to a purpose that it is unable to fulfil.

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A National Historical Narrative in Universal Context – The Historical Mural Cycle of the Hungarian National Museum

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Abstract

The earliest modern museum building in the Austrian Empire was the Hungarian National Museum in Pest, Hungary. The classicist building was constructed between 1837-47 after the plans of Mihály Pollack and followed the concept of the important museums of London, Berlin and Munich. The decoration of its staircases was executed in the 1870s, they represented the cultural history of Hungary in the path of the tradition of the murals of Peter Cornelius in Altes Museum, Berlin. The murals created not only the frame of interpretation for the earliest exhibitions of the museum but they also interpreted the history of Hungary in the context of European and especially Austrian political history.

Side by side with the creation of modern museums, the universal exhibition was a typical phenomena of the 19th century. Its appearance followed in a short time the spread of modern museums in the early 19th century. Both the museum and the universal exhibition were conceived as useful tools for the self-representation of the state in economic and cultural fields. In terms of state representation the Hungarian political elite pursued one major political goal during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918): the creation of the image of an economically and culturally independent country. Hungarian sections at universal exhibitions served the cultural and political representation of the country, which appeared as a new political entity in the 19th century globalization only after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867. The first manifestation of its political goals were of mixed character: the cultural history of Hungary was represented through politicized historical paintings at the Hungarian fine art section of the Vienna universal exhibition in 1873, especially the preparatory drawings of the mural for the staircases of the Hungarian National Museum.

The first part of this paper analyses the political aspects of the historical narratives in the Hungarian National Museum depicting national cultural history. The second part of the paper concentrates on the sketches of the mural of the National Museum exhibited in Vienna in 1873, their original meaning, the change of the program and their interpretation.

The murals of the Hungarian National Museum can be interpreted in the context of the contemporary mural cycles in German speaking countries from the mid 19th century. Hungary, as a non-German speaking political nation of the region, was governed from 1867 onwards by its independent government and state administration. Thanks to the outcome of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, foreign affairs, finances and defense matters were held jointly controlled by the Austrian and Hungarian governments, but all other areas, including cultural issues and their administration were considered of national competence. After 1867 the direction of the Hungarian National Museum was placed in the hands of the Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Education. The Hungarian National Museum was, at the time of the creation of its mural cycle (1867-1875) the only institution collecting artefacts of Hungarian national history.

National museums responded to different political and cultural needs in every country where such institutions were created in the late 18th early 19th century. Whilst 18th century museums may have served firstly as places of representation and delight, increasingly the act of museum foundation came to be part of nation building process. The necessities of court representation were at the heart of the foundation of one of the richest fine art collections, the Small Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, created by Catherine the Great in 1765. The same leitmotiv can be detected behind the foundations of the Fridericianum in Kassel, opened in 1769, with the explicit goal of preserving regional cultural heritage and the encouragement of science: the Fridericianum housed an open library of the state of Hesse, collections of antiques and natural history; weaponry; astronomy and physics. The encouragement of scientific research (and the intention of ensuring the unity of his collection) led Sir Hans Sloane's intentions to offer his natural history collection to the nation in 1753 thus to the foundation of the first modern museum, the British Museum. Modernization of the society and the democratization of the knowledge played a crucial role in the case of the Königliche Museum (Altes Museum) in Berlin and the Hungarian National Museum in Pest (Fodor, I.-Lengyel, Cs. B. 1992). The latter was conceived from its foundation as a treasury of *Hungaricas*, objects and documents related to the Hungarian, therefore national, history.

A complete analysis defining what the term *national* in the context of museums at the 18-19th century meant is beyond the scope of this short study. However I might specify what I consider a *national* museal institution in this paper: all those museums which were founded in the period between 1753 to 1830 for the benefit of a large public and that were financed either from aristocratic/monarchic or central/governmental budget. Museums with fine art collections will be considered as first specialised, art gallery type institutions created in some cases independently from national museums. Art gallery type of museums were created in a similar institution-creation process, but as first specialized public museums they presented in their collections works of art historical value. Such museums will become by the mid 19th century the second pillar of national museum system.



Figure 1: Hungarian National Museum, by the architect Mihály Pollack (1837-1847) (© The Author)

The Hungarian National Museum – the institution and the building

The Hungarian National Museum and the National Library were founded by the donation of count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820) in 1802. The official act of creation of this very first modern national cultural institution of the country was voted in 1807 by the Hungarian Diet (legislative institution at that time assembled in Pozsony, today's Bratislava, in the proximity of the Vienna). The original donation of count Széchenyi consisted of his library, original historical documents and different type of objects (11884 imprints, 1156 manuscripts, 142 volume of maps and engravings, 2019 coins, other antiquities and some portraits). The museum collection was later enlarged by the donation of the mineral collection of Széchenyi's wife, countess Julianna Festetics (1753-1824) who was the daughter of György Festetics (1755-1819) the founder of the first modern Hungarian agricultural education school, the Georgicon (1797), in Keszthely, Hungary. The character of the core collection of the Hungarian National Museum manifested similarities with the first European national museums of its time: the British Museum (1753) was founded on the basis of the *naturalia* collection of Sir Hans Sloane and Sloane's own library. The nucleus of British Museum later importantly enlarged not only by the acquisition of fine art works as the Elgin marbles (1816) but by the donation of King Edward IV of his father's library in 1823. The King's Library marks also the very beginning of the construction of the British Museum's quadrangular building by Robert Smirke (1823-1827). The Prado Museum, another example of an early modern museum, was originally conceived as a Natural History Museum when Charles III ordered its construction from Juan de Villanueva in 1785. It became the New Royal Museum of

Painting and Sculptures only under the influence of Queen María Isabel de Braganza (1797-1818), wife of Ferdinand VII (1784-1833).

The Hungarian National Museum's collection was housed first in the building of the Pauline Order in Pest and later in the mansion the Batthyány family, which stood on the terrain of the current site of the museum. A new and adequate building was required due to the museum's extensively growing collections. The planning of a new and adequate building for housing the library and the museum was ordered by Archduke Joseph, Palatine of Hungary (1776-1847), great modernizer of the city of Pest, in 1836 from Mihály Pollack (1773-1855), the country's most fashionable architect by that time. Pollack's museum is among the oldest models of such buildings in Europe and is certainly the earliest in the former Austrian Empire (built between 1837-1847). Its neoclassical shape, elevated podium, frontal stairs, Corinthian headed columns in the exterior and the two wing-placed exhibition rooms and its rotunda-shaped central room in the interior proves a direct lineage to the ideal museum plan of the French architect and teacher Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760-1834) (Durand 1809, Vol. II. P. 56, pl. 11). As a new building type of the 19th century together with prisons, railway stations and department stores, the museum needed to respond to the challenge of the secularized bourgeois society in terms of education and display facilities. The same idea can be traced in the modern museum buildings on the continent such as in London's British Museum (Sir Robert Smirke, 1823-1852) or National Gallery (William Wilkins, 1832-1838), or Berlin's Königliches Museum (Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 1823-1830).

Historical Narratives in German and Austrian Museums in the mid 19th Century

Historical murals depicting universal moments of the history of mankind constituted an important part of museum decoration since the appearance of the first examples of modern museum buildings. The murals of Peter von Cornelius in the Munich Glyptothek represented battle scenes of the Greek mythology with an allusion to the Bavarian-Prussian struggle for leadership among German dukedoms. The internal decoration of the edifice complemented the narrative of the museum itself: the intention of the Bavarian king, Ludwig I was to establish the story and thus illustrate the continuity of classical sculpture from ancient Greece up until his own era. The collection reached its peak with the works of contemporary artists Bertel Thorvaldsen and Antonio Canova.

The Neues Museum built by Friedrich August Stüler between 1843-1855 in Berlin, the capital of protestant Prussia, was decorated by Wilhelm von Kaulbach, the pupil of Peter von Cornelius. He prepared the sketches of the six large-scale (and twenty smaller) paintings depicting the History of Mankind (1866). The narration of Mankind started with the representation of the *Tower of Babel* and lead the visitor through the *Destruction of Jerusalem* and the *Battle of the Huns* to the *Age of Reformation*. The original idea was to represent not simply a historical narrative, but the main agents of the civilization and their work (Sinkó 2000).

The frescoes decorating the Arsenal of Vienna, the former barrack and military center built between 1848-1856 as a consequence of the March Revolution of Vienna in 1848, were commissioned by Emperor Franz Joseph I. He specified that only military events from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century of the Austrian army as such "truly worthy of fame" could

be represented. The time and topic frame given of the emperor clearly indicated the Austrian national framework of military history for the murals.

Mural cycles in the Hungarian National Museum

As institution and as a building the Hungarian National Museum created the framework for the illustration of the Hungarian history in at least three ways: first, through the conservation of the material memory of the country's history, secondly in the National Portrait Gallery and finally through the murals that depict the cultural history of Hungarians.

Inside the museum a U shaped staircase organized the circulation of the visitors between the ground floor and the first level of the museum. The painted decoration of the staircase was already conceived when the building was under construction, but the post-revolutionary political situation – the political oppression in Hungary in the 1850s - made their realization impossible. The idea for a narrative cycle depicting Hungarian Cultural History was developed by Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg (1817-1885), one of the first art history professors in Europe by 1863. It was Mór Than (1828-1899), pupil of Rahl Carl at the Vienna Academy who suggested the museum as a suitable place for such narrative (Basics 2004: 145). Mór Than cooperated with Károly Lotz (1833-1904) in the painting of the murals.

Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg (1817-1885) was a late representative of imperial patriotism, supporting the political agenda of the Hapsburg Empire created after the Napoleonic wars with the aim of unifying, both culturally and politically, all the nations of the Empire's vast territories. As an ideologically engaged intellectual Rudolf Eitelberger intended to create a mural series depicting Hungarian cultural history as narrated from a point of view that would be acceptable from the perspective of the Hapsburg Court: the *al secco* murals described in a continuous narrative the role of leaders and kings in Hungarian history, their role in civilizing the Hungarian people (Honismertető 1873: Appendix 1-12). The representation of the figures included among others the monastery and school foundation activity of St. Stephan, first Christian king of Hungary; the reign of Béla III initiator of the new written administration of the country and the implementor of the latest achievements of Western art in Hungary; Queen Elisabeth as the patron of the arts; King Matthias surrounded by humanist scholars; and the defenders of the Christian faith: governor János Hunyadi and the priest János Kapisztrán fighting against the Turks, and the principal actor of the counter-reformation: Péter Pázmány, founder of the university in Nagyszombat (1635) consisting of faculties of theology and humanities. The representatives of the protestant movement and the leaders of the first independence movements against the Hapsburg Court were represented together with the Queen Maria Theresa, the modernizer of the country's educational system in the 18th century. What the representation of these figures had in common was the emphasis on their political, religious and educational activity in the aim of strengthening Hungary and modernizing the country. The closing pictures of the mural referred to the contemporary phase of modernisation in the country's development and its main actors: one shows the very moment of the foundation of the museum, entitled *Pannonia Crowning the Genius of the Science and the Art* and the last one illustrates all the main actors whose political activity contributed to the process that lead to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise: among others István Széchenyi, son of the founder of the Hungarian National Museum and the initiator of the creation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as an

independent public body in 1825, Lajos Kossuth, governor-president of Hungary during the independence war of 1848-1849 and finally Ferenc Deák, the main negotiator of the compromise with Austria. In the original sketches the activity of István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth exemplified new cultural achievements. The final mural was conceived to illustrate the continuity of the narration of the cycle. The act of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise was accompanied by the crowning of Franz-Joseph as king of Hungary. This moment was afterward considered as the second foundation of the Hungarian state (the first being the crowning of St. Stephen in 1000) (Basics 2004: 147-150).



Figure 2: Staircase of the museum with the first and last phases of the narrative (© The Author)

The murals, finished by Károly Lotz and Mór Than in 1875, created the frame of interpretation for the earliest exhibitions in the museum running under the independent Hungarian cultural administration formed after 1867. They are an early and splendid example of the representation of national cultural history, and also the second example of a monumental mural cycle of the Hungarian capital Budapest, formed as a unified city of the former Óbuda, Buda and Pest in 1873. (The first being the decoration of the Redoute in Pest, executed between 1863-1876 representing episodes of Hungarian mythology and Hungarian pre-history) (Szvoboda Dománszky 1998: 166-167). The resolutely national aspect of the murals differentiates them from the mural works in the Berlin and Munich museums and makes them appear as conceptually closer to the (Austrian) national narrative in the Vienna Arsenal. The mural cycle of the Hungarian National Museum narrative expressed the vision of its founder, Ferenc Széchenyi: they ensure the frame for the nation's cultural history represented through its exhibited objects.



Figure 3: Important scenes depicting the foundation of the Hungarian State, the role of the Austrian princes (© The Author)

Preparatory drawings of the murals at the 1873 Vienna Universal Exhibition

The original intention of the universal exhibition was to present the cultural and economic aspirations and achievements of Western civilization. Aside from the commercial competition to capitalise on the advances made by the industrial revolutions, the positivist, encyclopedic conception was fundamental in the development of the universal exhibition phenomena and allows us to bring it into parallel with the museum-phenomena. Categorization and description were key to understanding, and in the case of universal exhibitions, they were manifested as presentations of newly developed machinery, the newest objects and works of art created by man. The original aim of the universal exhibition was to help the modernization of the Western world in the field of production, consumption, economy and culture by presenting new industrial, scientific and cultural achievements (Wesemael 2001: 21).



Figure 4: Scenes from the Hungarian prehistory (© The Author)

The aims and methods of the policy that sought to alter Hungary's self-representation were greatly influenced by a sense of its "civilizing" mission inherited through the centuries among the members of its aristocracy. Indeed, their rights were partially restored by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, based on the recognition of the Hungarian Constitution. Starting with the 1867 Compromise, the political elite, mostly of aristocratic origin, were able to introduce and represent the independent and Hungarian economy, culture and its historical view for the turn-of-the-century. The universal exhibitions organized in this period (Paris 1867, Vienna 1873) coincided with significant political changes in Hungary. The Austro-Hungarian Compromise served as the basis for the country's self-definition, it marked the beginning of a new era in the interpretation of its own history and culture.

The period between the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867 and the Millennium Festivities in 1896 that celebrated the conquest of the state territory and thus the foundation of the State, was characterized by gradual modernization and efforts to establish the modernised economic and cultural system of the country. The activity of Hungarian exhibiting groups now was under the control of the Hungarian government. In the year of the compromise, Hungary made an independent debut on the international stage with its first catalogue, in French, and a self-organized exhibition at the Paris universal exhibition. Parallel to industrial development, foundation of museums and schools of applied art and industry and the exhibition of objects of applied art at great international shows (among them in 1873 in Vienna) grew more and more conscious on representing diverse aspects of the national culture. As an important moment of national self-representation high profile guests were invited and guided around the Hungarian capital's main attraction and cultural institutions, among them the Redoute and the Hungarian National Museum were the only ones decorated with mural cycles (Szvoboda Dománszky 1998: 135-136).



Figure 5: King Matthias as patron of the arts and sciences, Péter Pázmány as founder of the university (© The Author)

The 1873 universal exhibition in Vienna was not organized by the Monarchy, but by Austria, and Hungary was invited as a foreign state and made an introduction as a culturally independent country with the most important fine and applied art material of the 1860-1870s. The sketches of the murals were exhibited in the Hungarian fine art section. From the point of the newly created Hungarian Cultural administration, the significance of exhibiting the sketches of the only painting series representative of national history was far more important merely introducing newly created artworks. The preparatory drawings of the murals were given high rank in the Hungarian exhibition catalogue with a detailed description of each scene. Their exhibition in the Hungarian fine art section indicated the relation of the Hungarian fine arts to the Vienna Academy in aesthetic terms, but also the shared conception of a Hungarian and Austrian view of historical narrative and the continuity of the Hapsburg Empire's official political agenda in the recently created independent cultural administration.

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Transnational Narratives



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Musealizing Napoleon (1837–2011): From Traditional Representations to a Dualistic European Master Narrative

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Abstract

The paper will successively establish why national museums in the past generally constructed the image of Napoleon as a “*Grand homme*”, a heroic leader and patron of the arts, providing a more unified, consensual vision and tendentially hagiographic presentation of Napoleon than the more divided domain of general written historiography. It will also show how permanent presentations and temporary exhibits in the last two decades have attempted to revise different aspects of the museum’s master narratives of Napoleon by desacralizing the representation of his physical body, underlining his role in one of Europe’s most horrific wars and examining from a political point of view the artistic productions of his time and thus moving towards a more dualistic narrative. These recent museographical reinterpretations of Napoleon’s role in exhibitions held across Europe seem to have allowed him to incarnate many ambiguous aspects of the European idea and the sometimes-contradictory nature of its history as his memorial role as moved from the national to a more European paradigm.

Napoleon Bonaparte's life has been told and retold, no other historical figure outside of Jesus has inspired so vast a bibliography. He has become nearly inseparable from the narratological epithets that so often accompany his name – they are the epic and the legend of the hero and the ogre. He has been ascribed a status of mythological and even christological proportions, representing alternatively the modern Prometheus or Satan, the Saviour or the Anti-Christ, and the new Augustus or the new Neron. Yet, the story of Napoleon is short - in just under twenty years he built and lost an Empire. During his own lifetime, his name came to represent a whole era: in the 2010-2011 exhibition *Napoleon und Europa, Traum und Trauma* in Bonn, the quotation that greeted the visitor in both English and in German at the entrance was Hegel's famous description of his encounter with Napoleon "I saw the emperor – that world-soul – riding out of the city to reconnoitre. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse reaches out across the world and dominates it" (1806).

Indeed for the romantic generation and beyond, Napoleon's biography became an idea of history itself – that of a world where man's destiny was his own – capable of reinventing and changing society (Martin, 2002: 16). So, despite the brief period that he represents in the long history of Europe, the Napoleonic era can be considered an essential part of the master narrative of the political origins of several European nations (François, 2010: 137) - as self-determined entities, born of the will of an independent people. Thomas Nipperdey's (1983) famous opening quotation "Am Anfang war Napoleon" referred to the history of Germany, but is easily transposable to the history of many other European countries, France of course but also Italy, Holland, Belgium (though yet to be existent as such) etc. Yet beyond its place in the memory of individual nations, the Napoleonic era is doubtlessly very much at the core of what Claus Leggewie (2009) has termed as the European battlefield of memory, as he asks to what extent "Is European memory divided between European nations, as a 'shared memory'?" (Leggewie, 2009: 1). Indeed Napoleon is equally essential to any understanding of political and historical relationships between France and England (Semmel, 2004), Austria, Spain, Portugal and indeed Europe as a whole.

The founding master narratives of Europe, as recently analysed, have appeared as largely negative: Leggewie cites the Holocaust, soviet totalitarianism and other equally traumatic historical contexts as the principal master narratives that have contributed to a sense of a united Europe (see also Kaiser, 2011). European historiography deals predominantly with some of the darkest issues of history of the twentieth century (Mazower, 2000), so much so that Europe appears to have built its identity out of a common resistance to adversity (Leggewie, 2009: 2):

For the nationally-minded, Europe is essentially a free-trade zone that acts collectively only in the case of attack from outside; worth commemorating are, if anything, wars against external enemies and internal barbarians such as the Nazis.

The development of a representation of a European Napoleon (as opposed to tradition nationalist visions), in stark contrast to the most absolute of internal enemies, Hitler, establishes him as a quintessentially ambiguous enemy. Indeed no other European historical figure has been recognized as having played such an important part in forging the history of modern Europe - both through his modernizing administrative reforms and out of concerted reaction (i.e. the Battle of the Nations, 1813) to his menacing political and military activities. François Étienne

recognizes a distinctive European memory, from that of the distributed and diverse national memories related to Napoleon (2012, 386), he writes:

At times held in common, at other times an object of division, even of conflict, this memory is, in the literal sense, shared and entangled. If memory of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars has this double national and European dimension, it is primarily because these wars – through the movements of troops and of civilian populations and the resulting contacts between them – were shared experiences in the fullest sense of the term.

Due to the particular nature of collections related to the figure of Napoleon, national museums and temporary exhibitions move between these national and European dimensions in a particular way that we will try to examine here. The visual force of Napoleon's place in European museums is largely due to his own efforts to style his place in history through imagery - for example by establishing himself as the successor of a prestigious genealogy of rulers that included Charlemagne (Lentz, 2005 : 11). The most famous of these images is of course Jacques-Louis David's *Bonaparte crossing the Alps* (1800), this iconic image indeed exists as five copies, hanging in the museums of Versailles, Malmaison, but also in Berlin (at the castle of Charlottenburg) and in Vienna (at the Museum of the Belvédère – formerly in the Palace of the Cisalpine Republic in Milan). European museums have of course retained through their collections shared images that Napoleon promoted through his controlled artistic patronage which produced vast series of propagandistic history paintings and economically drove the development of an international artistic *Empire* style that has since been considered in direct relation with his person. It follows that the narration of the Napoleonic Empire using a common basis of visual and material heritage in national museums and in museums of national importance constitutes an excellent subject for a transnational study. However, in order to establish necessary limits in dealing with this very vast comparative subject both chronologically and geographically, the analysis of these displays has focused on how the physical representation of Napoleon is established and museographically contextualized.

Museums contribute in a very singular way to the historiography of Napoleon mainly because they use specific media to develop their narratives. In the case of Napoleon these are the collectables that have been used in private and public contexts of display to commemorate, illustrate and narrate Napoleon's life and times in a material cult that began with his exile to Saint Helena. They make up a limited set of categories that tend to provide all of the displays related to his person with similar visual focal points and so also suitable points of comparison between the museographies of different museums and exhibitions. Napoleon's hats for example represent one of the most obvious visual signs related to his figure and may be found in nearly every display of his personal effects. An essential element of his civil and military attire, he had at least four hats made every year unwittingly yet conveniently providing future collections with a fair number of models. Karine Huguenaud (2007) classified the categories of material objects related to Napoleonic collectionism as historical souvenirs (such as personal effects and manuscripts); militaria (objects related to the Napoleonic wars) ; and artistic objects (fine arts, history paintings, portraits and decorative arts). These categories have also contributed to structuring this essay, leading us to first consider his physical representation as a cult of the man himself, secondly in relation to his role as a man of war and lastly as an important figure in the world of culture and the arts.

Napoleon's presence in the museum is exceptionally widespread and strong. He is indeed the only figure in European history for which we find thematically dedicated museums not only in his country of origin but also internationally. In France of course there is an important network of Napoleon museums (*musées Napoléoniens*) all related to former homes or residences. In Monaco there is also a Museum of Napoleonic souvenirs established by the Prince Louis II, grandfather of the current prince (see tables for details on all of these institutions). However, we also find a *Museo Napoleonico* in Italy run by the municipality of Rome, left to the city by members of the Napoleon family and two of Napoleon's homes on the Island of Elba are today labelled as "national" Italian museums. For the French historian Ferdinand Boyer, it appeared as most natural that of all European countries, Italy, as the theater of Bonaparte's early glories, should be particularly attentive to establishing museographical installations relating the history of Napoleon (Boyer, 1955 : 93).

Switzerland too became home to the *Napoleonmuseum* in the castle of Arenenberg, in the canton of Thurgau, former home of the exiled daughter in law of Napoleon, Hortense de Beauharnais and one should also mention the existence of a *Museo Napoleonico* in Havana, in Cuba. Whilst across the channel, in London, Apsley house, the residence of the Duke of Wellington run by English Heritage as a national collection with the V&A, is also a house museum dedicated to the memory of the Empire, from the British perspective of the victory at Waterloo. It has been included here as a counter narrative to the other house museums for indeed we find there a very strong presence of the figure of Napoleon himself making it a particularly interesting if somewhat ambiguous monument to British victory. Alongside these museums entirely dedicated to Napoleon himself and to the Napoleonic era, we have taken into account narratives of the Napoleonic wars as established in several major national military and history museums (cf. table 2). Lastly, careful consideration has been given to the wave of major historical exhibits dedicated to the personality of Napoleon that have been organized by national museums across Europe (and indeed internationally in Brazil or in Japan for example) and which have flourished in the last decade in the context of the bi-centennial celebrations/commemorations of the major battles of the Napoleonic wars (cf. table 1). From the creation of the so-called Napoleon museums and house museums directly related to him and the development of military and history exhibits to these most recent historical exhibits we have considered the long evolution of displays as developed since the creation of the museum of national history in Versailles in 1837.

The museum's narrative has been, as far as this is really possible, considered against the background of the gigantic historic production dedicated to Napoleon. Even a very superficial overview of written historical narratives dedicated to Napoleon clearly shows that from the outset two visions, two master-narratives expressed firstly by artists and writers of the romantic generation (Ferber, 2005) and later by historians established a split attitude – "for and against" Napoleon (Geyl, 1976).

The *master narrative* may be defined as the overreaching messages about the past that motivate the museum's general programme and structure its display(s), they "were (are) intended to enable mastery of the messy and complicated real world." (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, 24). As underlying ideas or principals, they structure stories, great and small, general and particular, bringing them together to make them intelligible. Megill (2007, 33) situates the master narrative in the context of

the rise of nations in the 19th century : “In each case there was a master narrative that was seen as running through the nation’s history – the master narrative of the nation’s movement from its early beginnings, through the rise of national self-consciousness, to its current struggle for recognition and success.” That of Napoleon’s place in European history has been divided between the vision of the ogre, Napoleon as a premonitory figure of Hitler’s Europe, which has alternatively been held up against that of the emperor-administrator, author of the civil code of law and also instigator of a united modern political Europe (Petiteau, 2002: 19).

By adopting this long chronological perspective on the displays related to the figure of Napoleon and by attempting to examine the difficult intersections between national and European histor(ies), this paper will examine the evolution of his museographical representation towards the confrontation of its master narratives with narrative strands up until excluded from the story on display. The case of Napoleon illustrates how a theme whose museography has traditionally been exceptionally monolithic has come to be handled in a way that is illustrative of a reflexive attitude to the past – which simultaneously identifies and provides a critique of its own master narrative.

The Real and the Represented Bodies of Napoleon – the *Grand Homme* on Display

Napoleon’s tomb across the courtyard from the *Musée de l’armée* in Paris is perhaps the clearest illustration of how small the distance can be between religiously paying homage to so-called great men and their historical representation in the museum. In the French context, one of the public museum’s first functions was to provide public displays of the relics of the lives of great men or *grands hommes* (Poulot, 2010). It has represented and narrated their lives through the material remains of their physical existence (Bodenstein, 2011: 11), artistic renderings and souvenir objects so that their biographies could be considered and most importantly experienced as part of a *historia magistra vitae* (Hartog, 2003: 84).

In the first part of our study we will focus on narratives related to the display of personal belongings and historical memorabilia in what one might call the museum’s “heroic regime” in a material transposition of one of the historical regimes presented by François Hartog (2003) in his well-known typology. He developed his notion of heroic historicism on the basis of the anthropological studies of societies of the Fiji islands undertaken by Marshall Sahlín, where the role of the leader subsumed all of the community’s history and where one man counted for everyone, constructing a past that could be described as fundamentally anthropomorphic (Hartog, 2003: 38-42).

The *Grand Homme* as a National Hero

The return of Napoleon’s ashes to France from Saint Helena in 1841 coincides with the beginning of a long tradition of public displays related to the figure of Napoleon in a ritual context that he had in a sense himself established. Indeed Napoleon ordered the transfer of the important army generals, Turenne and Vauban, to the Dome part of the church of the *Invalides*. It was here too that he organized the display of battle trophies such as flags and arms, and that he distributed the famous medals of the Legion of honour for the first time. So, when his ashes

returned to France in 1841 during the July Monarchy long discussions took place before the Invalides (rather than the Pantheon) were chosen as their last resting place (Humbert, 2005, 35).



Figure 1: Engraving by Adam Jacob, 1861. Napoleon's ashes being transported to Visconti's tomb in the dome of the Invalides. Photo F. Bodenstein.

Louis-Philippe had already positioned Napoleon as a key figure in the presentation of France's history in the *Musée d'histoire de France* at Versailles that opened in 1837 (Constans, 2001, 20). In the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Napoleon had also expressed his own museographical project for the gardens of Versailles where he claimed that his intention had been to replace the sculptures and fountains by panoramas representing his most triumphant victories.

In Louis-Philippe's museum the Napoleonic wars occupied thirteen rooms, vividly illustrated with portraits and battle scenes that chronologically followed the rise and fall of his Empire (although of course Waterloo was as good as absent). The most sumptuous room was the *Salle de Marengo*, dedicated to the second Italian campaign – centred on the above-mentioned painting by David *Bonaparte crossing the Alps* and the *Salle de la Coronation*.



Figure 2: Alexandre de Laborde, “La salle Marengo” *Versailles ancien et moderne*, p. 351.
Photo F. Bodenstein.

In 1839 Alexandre de Laborde published a monumental guidebook of the museum with illustrative *vignettes* showing the displays and including long historical accounts of the events illustrated by the paintings. His description of the vestibule space dedicated to the sculpted representation of the Emperor highlights a specific mode of display in this narration of the Napoleonic wars.



Figure 3: Alexandre de Laborde, “Vestibule de l’aile du sud” *Versailles ancien et moderne*, p. 337, Photo Felicity Bodenstein.

Here in this liminal space, devote attention was paid specifically to the figure of the *Grand Homme* as an isolated element outside of any chronological narrative (de Laborde, 1839: 337, translation by the author):

Let us suspend for a moment the history of the great man to which all of these rooms are dedicated, and stop here close to his statue surrounded by the busts of his family and those closest to his throne. The noble simplicity of this vestibule allows us to take a break from the profusion of the paintings and study with more care his physical traits represented by three busts and two statues.

On the introductory page to the presentation of recent French history in the south wing, we find a vignette that shows Napoleon himself visiting the museum, standing at the door of the room dedicated to the year 1796.



Première Salle de l'aile du sud. — Rez-de-chaussée.

Figure 4: Alexandre de Laborde, “Première Salle de l’aile du sud” *Versailles ancien et moderne*, p. 327, Photo F. Bodenstein.

The museum of French history at Versailles clearly fed into the popular appeal of the Napoleonic era and the translation of his earthly remains to the *Invalides* four years after the opening of the museum was part of the same political strategy. The transfer of Napoleon’s ashes was indeed the paroxysmal moment of a transformation of his memory that began with his death in 1821. Very quickly, Napoleon’s posthumous popularity was to reach extraordinary heights – the ‘black legend’ of the tyrant, that had dominated for some time after the defeat of Waterloo, gave way to a veritable cult that produced an exceptional bounty of material objects (Hazareesingh, 2004: 74):

The most striking feature of the Napoleon cult was its sheer scale. In the years between 1815 and 1830 thousands of coins and medals, hundreds of thousands of busts and small statues, and millions of images representing Napoleon were sold, distributed, and exchanged across France.

His aura as a national hero took on a force that Louis-Philippe attempted to harness for the improvement of his own image (Humbert, 2005, 35).

However whilst the return of Napoleon's body had been the work of Louis-Philippe, the architecture of the tomb itself was designed and opened to the public during the reign of Napoleon's nephew, Louis-Napoleon also known as Napoleon III. The monumental sarcophagus in red porphyry stone was literally set into an explicit evocation of his most glorious victories – as the names of the battles were incrustated into the mosaic floor surrounding the sarcophagus. His most prominent civil achievements were illustrated in the series of low reliefs created by the sculptor, Charles Simart, and set into the wall of the circular ambulatory that allows the visitor to walk around the tomb without being in direct contact with it.

Upon entering the ambulatory, two scenes are dedicated to his burial on the island of Saint Helena and the arrival of his ashes in Paris. They are followed by ten scenes that each represents Napoleon as a godlike figure bestowing his gifts of administrative and cultural modernity on the French nation. The presentation was accompanied by an extravagant gilded display case – which stands empty today in the chapel of Napoleon's son, the *roi de Rome*. It had been especially designed to receive the most important relics and trophies kept in the *Invalides*, the hat from the battle of Eylau and the sword carried by Napoleon at Austerlitz (Hussadis, Robbe 2010, 66).



Figure 5: The display case created to hold the souvenirs of Napoleon.
Photo F. Bodenstein.

Concomitantly to the construction of the funerary monument by the architect Louis Visconti in the Dome church of the *Invalides*, a memorial type display related to the figure of Napoleon was also established in the Louvre with the opening in 1853 of the *Musée des Souverains*.

This museum, an outright expression of state propaganda, was indeed the result of Napoleon III's desire to legitimate his reign by underlining his direct affiliation with Napoleon and by presenting himself as a central figure in the nation's long genealogy of power. It was the first time in France that historical memorabilia became the principal concern of any museum's official acquisition policy.

In 1853, Horace de Viel-Castel, the museum's first director, expressed his satisfaction at the striking overall effect that the room dedicated to the souvenirs of Napoleon should to his mind have on its visitors. Indeed, the lighting and decoration had been designed to produce a contemplative atmosphere that called for religious silence just as one might observe in the presence of a funerary monument. For Viel-Castel it was a cenotaph, and the direct counterpart to the tomb at the *Invalides*. It was destined to be a place where the lessons to be learnt from the man's great destiny might best be absorbed, as remarked upon by one contemporary journalist who clearly described his visit to the museum as a pilgrimage (quoted by Granger, 2005: 334).

According to Viel-Castel, the Napoleonic souvenirs needed no introduction or explanation; for as he claimed, the history of France's most popular hero was fresh in everyone's minds and hearts. He considered that the personal objects presented in the museum had the power to recall a whole period, inciting visitors to recall their own forgotten family stories (Viel-Castel, 1853: 189-190, translation by the author).

No guide is needed to tell the story of this popular hero; it is in everyone's mouth; it impresses upon all whose fathers were the soldiers of the great captain. In only a few hours one could have collected thousands of unwritten anecdotes, stories passed down from generation to generation by the companions of the conqueror at Austerlitz, and which one day will become part of the marvellous legend.

The objects themselves did not indeed provide any explicit narrative of events, but were lent evocative powers that supposedly enabled them to bring back personal histories to the minds of visitors and give them a more intimate sense of past events. Towards the end of the century the *musée Carnavalet* as the historical museum of the city of Paris also created a display of the Emperor's possessions, promoting historical pathos by presenting Napoleon's *nécessaire de campagne*, and other pieces that had come into possession of the museum mainly through the donations of private collectors, as objects of grave curiosity (Bodenstein, 2011, 17).

The *musée des Souverains* closed in 1871, after the exile of Napoleon III, but many of the objects related to Napoleon's person made their way into what would become the future collection of the *musée de l'Armée* officially founded under its current title as the reunion of already existing collections in the *Invalides* in 1905 (Hussadis, Robbe 2010, 70). Throughout the twentieth century it continued to be devoted to a presentation of Napoleon that was clearly commemorative and dedicated to monumentalizing the figure of Napoleon rather than to inserting his life into a narrative of military history. The history of the collections – very much the sum product of private donations – to a certain extent explains the development of what for a military museum appears as an unusually personal museography. In 1949, the *Invalides* hosted an exhibition entitled *Napoléon Bonaparte. Souvenirs personnels présentés pour la première fois à Paris*, the exhibit was then also

presented in Brussels augmented with objects from the reserves of the *Musée du Cinquenaire* and the *Musée d'armes de la porte du Hal* (Anonymous, 1950: 6). It was organized with the help of the *Société des Amis du Musée de l'Armée* in conjunction with important loans from the descendants of Napoleon himself. Contemporary press articles give us an idea of how the objects were perceived, especially in relation to the display devoted to Napoleon's death, including those objects that had surrounded him during his last moments (Castelot, 1949, translation by the author):

The last moments of his life are rendered extraordinarily present. The thermometer refers to the heavy moist heat that must have dominated the room; the oval teapot decorated with the Imperial arms can be seen on the bedside table, the crucifix that was placed in his hands and the objects that participated of the ceremony of last rites. The bed from Austerlitz is still covered in the same sheets that he lay on in death.

In the 1960s, an American researcher J.-L. Westrate travelled across Europe to study military museums for the Smithsonian Institute and pointed out the disproportionate attention given to the figure of Napoleon in Paris, describing the hall dedicated to his “family and personal items ranging from dishes and clothing to the bed in which Napoleon died. Such objects normally are not found in a military museum” (Westrate, 1961: 83). The museum to a certain extent became the direct extension of the shrine-like display tradition established around Napoleon's tomb itself.

For over 150 years, France's national museums have developed the same “narrative fetishism” defined by Eric Santner as: “the construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place. [...] it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere” (Santner, 1992: 144). So it was that the loss of the Empire, the dramatic consequences and impact of the wars were generally overstepped and blotted out by a glorified, biographical representation of Napoleon himself.

At home with Napoleon

The cult of the personal object that provides the essential material of the metonymical biographical displays described above is equally if not even more preponderant in the roughly ten museums exclusively dedicated to Napoleon and to his family. These house museums (cf. table), whose sites are related to the private and public life of Napoleon, which had in some cases been maintained throughout the 19th century as family shrines were progressively nationalized during the twentieth century. All of them contain collections whose public status is generally the result of initiatives due to members of the imperial family, beginning in 1906 with the donation of the castle of Arenenberg to Swiss canton of Thurgau by the former Empress Eugénie, who played a very important role in the musealization of the family's history.

Taken together, these museums present Napoleon as the patriarch of a European house that he himself established, a new dynasty that allowed him to effectively extend his rule across the Empire. Today the Island museums of Corsica, Elba, the Island of Aix and Saint Helena each tell the story of an essential biographical event: birth, exiles and death – their narrative role is clear and unambiguous.

The situation is somewhat more complex in the case of those house museums that were never direct sites of Napoleon's life and history. Although he himself never lived in the house in which

the count Primoli established his *Museo Napoleonico*, its owner conceived of it as a way of illustrating the genealogical relationship that tied Napoleon to the city of Rome, through the *aiglon*, the king of Rome, and through the history of a large part of his family who sought exile in the eternal city after 1815 (Huguenaud, 2011, translation by the author):

The histories of the First and Second Empire appear through the intimate evocation of their main protagonists. Beyond the official iconography dedicated to important historical events, the Bonaparte's personal and daily destiny is revealed through an extremely rich variety of objects.

It stands as a monument to the memorial work undertaken by its owner, and has hardly changed since its establishment; the recently renovated rooms have sought as much as possible to remain faithful to their original state.

In a very different way, Apsley house in London attests to the long history of Britain's fascination with Napoleon described by Olausson (2010: 19) in the introduction to the 2010 exhibition catalogue *Staging Power* as: "an almost fetishistic love-hate relationship." The Swedish historian continued by observing:

One of its most exclusive forms is the collecting of objects once belonging to the emperor. These could in a sense be described as trophies, which were commonly taken on the battlefield. Such items, though would scarcely have attracted as much interest had it not been for an almost perverse fascination with 'the little general Bonaparte.

Interestingly, it was not only in France that Napoleon's popularity changed over the course of the first half of the Nineteenth century to reach cult status, but also in Britain, as analysed by Stuart Semmel (2004) where his character attracted ever more admiration – a fact that needs to be taken into account if we want to understand the Duke of Wellington's personal demonstration of respect for his defeated adversary in his home which has since become "a national shrine to the victor of Waterloo, the liberator of Europe from Napoleon" (Bryant, 2009, 3).

Apsley house is today described as a family house museum, dedicated to military history and the important collection of art of Arthur Wellesley, the 1st Duke of Wellington. It was purchased by Wellington in 1817, with the help of the money that he received as reward from the grateful British state and it remained in his family until the Seventh Duke of Wellington donated it to the state in 1947 to mark the centenary of the first Duke's death. "The house as it appears today is largely a product of the first Duke's refurbishments." (Bryant, 2009, 5). The museum in no way retraces a clear story of the battle of Waterloo, the events of the Napoleonic wars or its political background – yet these are consistently referred to through the display of the Duke's "trophies".

However, in the case of Apsley house the notion of the trophy needs to be employed with care. Indeed, the ambiguity of the relationship between the victorious general and owner of the house and his adversary immediately strikes the visitor upon entering the area of the stairwell from the vestibule. Here, he comes face to face with the monumental nude statue of Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker by Antoino Canova (1802-06).



Figure 6: Antonio Canova, *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* (1802-1806), Apsley House Photo F. Bodenstein.

Napoleon had himself rejected the statue as too unrealistic in its rendering of his physical body and had kept it covered up in the Louvre in a corner of the *Salle des Hommes Illustres* (Bryant, 2005, 38). After 1816 however, it was bought by the British government and presented to Wellington as a gift. The significance of Napoleon's place here has been interpreted in very contrasting ways. As pointed out by Julius Bryant "The location of the sculpture prompted published criticism from France and Italy in Wellington's lifetime and it is still seen today as evidence that the victor of Waterloo sought to humble his adversary by giving a war trophy an unworthy domestic setting." (Bryant, 2005, p. 38). Yet, as Bryant points out, given the immense fame of the artist - Canova who at the time was perhaps the most famous of living artists - "This was no white elephant to be acquired for political amusement" (Bryant, 2005, 40). Its position and lighting convey a particularly dramatic effect upon the statue creating what would be an inordinately monumental effect if the aim of the display were indeed to ridicule. Today, a bust of Wellington himself is positioned in the corner and appears as though calmly contemplating the figure of Napoleon – a presentation that due to the contrast of scale is not without comic effect.

The audio-guide at this point in the visit reminds us of the respect that Wellington expressed for Napoleon during his lifetime, on news of his death, he is quoted as having stated: "Now I think I may safely say that I am the most famous general left alive". The display also includes a large painting by John Prescott Knight (1803-81) showing the heroes of Waterloo united in the dining room of Apsley house, in presence of Wellington himself. The house holds an important selection of other portraits of Napoleon confirming a narrative that places the English general on a level footing with his adversary – still in the stairwell after passing this first monument – the visitor is confronted with two full length portraits of Wellington and Napoleon side by side



Figure 7: Portraits in the stairwell of Apsley house. Thomas Lawrence, 1814, *Arthur Wellesly*, Apsley house collection and Robert Lefèvre, 1812, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, Apsley house collection. Photo F. Bodenstein.

This magnificent collection of European art, mainly united as trophies of the Napoleonic wars and through the artistic interests of the Duke of Wellington himself, establishes an early example of an ambiguous memory of the wars outside of France.

Current Museographies of the *Grand Homme*

The permanence of such displays over decades and thus of the narratives that they vehicle is perhaps what best characterizes the existence of such house museums as the *Museo Napoleonico* and *Apsley House* which are as much to be considered as public collections as they are monuments to their owners and expressions of personal memorial relationships to the figure of Napoleon.



Figure 8: Presentation in Apsley of personal objects related to the cult of the figures of Napoleon and Wellington. Photo F. Bodenstein.

Such a memorial function implies that it is difficult to establish new critical and reflexive narratives as these displays are treated as fixed elements, in themselves objects to be conserved. However, in the case of both of the museums considered, curators have in the last decade augmented the traditional presentation with a separate display that tells of the cult of these personalities, that allows the visitor to better apprehend the museum itself and its historical foundations. The *Mythe and Satire* room of the *Museo Napoleonico* is the only new addition to the original display, established during the museum's recent renovation. It considers how the myth of Napoleon was constructed and provides a counter-image of the "great man" by exhibiting a selection of caricatures that portray a different Napoleon. At Apsley house a new display area has been recently developed in the basement of the museum where we find again the cult of the person of Wellington, reflexively placed in opposition to that of Napoleon. By setting out relic objects related to both men in the context of a variety of souvenir objects and caricatures they

show the different reactions that both men provoked throughout history. Though the Napoleon Museum of Arenenberg has not made any additions or major changes to its museography it did publish in 1997 one of the most comprehensive catalogues of caricatures of Napoleon.

These attempts attest in a modest way to changes in what has been termed here as the heroic regime of display that founds the museographical tradition of the display of Napoleon himself. One might add that it can also be observed in the context of displays related to other national heroes from this period – in comparative terms an interesting example is the fetishisation of Nelson’s uniform in the *National Maritime Museum* in Greenwich. In terms of current displays one can attempt a comparison between the presentations of the *Musée de l’Armée* in Paris that reopened in 2009, the display in the National Army Museum in London and that of the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* that can both be dated to 2006.

The recent so-called Athéna project (1996-2010) of renovation that entirely reorganised the *Musée de l’Armée’s* displays (Delage Irène, interview with E. Robbe, 2010) has very much toned down the shrine like aspect of its museography discussed above. The space and symbolic place occupied by Napoleon had come to be considered by the museum’s current curators as too overbearing (Humbert, 2005) and in the context of the museum’s renovation, the predominance of his place which eclipsed even the personality of the buildings founder, Louis XIV, was questioned. A good example of how this change is expressed museographically is the place given to the famous sword carried by the Emperor at Austerlitz. As a relic it had for over a century been either placed directly on the tomb of Napoleon itself or in the aforementioned gilded display case. Today it has been relegated to an almost insignificant position, discreetly displayed in a sunken display case on the windowsill of the room dedicated to Napoleon in battle, easily overseen and absolutely understated.



Figure 9: Napoleon’s sword from the battle of Austerlitz. The current display in the *Musée de l’Armée*, Paris (2009). Photo F. Bodenstein.

It is placed in the same room as the formerly existing display of his tent and military equipment, conserved with the renovation. Here Napoleon’s lifestyle on the battlefield is the focal point. Despite a certain attempt to balance out its narrative, the figure of Napoleon still retains a strongly individualized presence in the rooms related to the Revolution and the Empire.

Of course the importance of Napoleon for the *Deutsches historisches museum* in Berlin, cannot be compared to the *Musée de l’armée*, but one might consider room 17 dedicated to *Napoleon and Europe* (<http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/bildzeug/17.html>, site consulted on the 3 May 2011). Here, the hat, sword and stirrups used by Napoleon at Waterloo are carefully isolated in a separate

display case that quite simply sets them apart from a more global narrative and they are clearly presented as the focal point in the centre of the room.



Figure 10: Napoleon's sword from Waterloo, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin. Photo Sebastian Niedlich (<http://flic.kr/p/98dNNM>).

This museography continues to underline the reverence for personal objects described above – perpetuating the kind of sanctified relationship to great man that such objects represent. Of course Napoleon's Prussian adversary at Waterloo, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, also benefits from a biographically exclusive display area to establish his historical existence and his importance. Yet, the particular pride of place given to Napoleon's hat and sword from Waterloo is different; evidently has not the same meaning here as the memorabilia from Austerlitz would have in the Invalides. Yet the presentation enhances the role of Napoleon as central, the positioning of the display case allows his figure to preside over the narrative describing his role in European history. Here in quite a traditional manner, the "Great Man" is not so much a story as a presence in the museum.

One might argue that it seems simply quite natural and intuitive to underline in this way important historical actors, yet if we compare this display with what we find in the *National Army Museum* in London, we can observe a very neat opposition to the narrative of the great military hero as embodied by such objects. The Napoleonic era is illustrated in a section entitled 'The Road to Waterloo, 1793-1815' as part of the *Changing the World 1784-1904* permanent exhibit. In the displays dedicated to the Battle of Waterloo one of course also finds objects related to

Napoleon and to Wellington. Indeed, two small objects – Wellington’s watch and Napoleon’s shaving mirror are displayed side by side though appear as relatively insignificant at the bottom right of this large *vitrine* of miscellaneous military memorabilia related to Waterloo.



Figure 11: Vitrine of historical memorabilia from Napoleon and Wellington. National Army Museum. Photo F. Bodenstein

In London, the display illustrates an obvious desire to tell the story of Waterloo without paying too much attention to the “great men” of the battle. Of course there is a small print of Wellington, providing us with some basic biographical information, yet of all the actors of the battle one learns most about a certain Captain William Tyrwhitt-Drake through the presentation of his personal effects in a vitrine labelled “A Household Cavalry officer at Waterloo”.



Figure 12: “A Household Cavalry officer at Waterloo” National Army Museum, Photo F. Bodenstein.

This display is clearly a transfer of the museographical modes usually reserved for the presentation of the personal objects of famous and important men. In general, it should be added that the displays of the National Army Museum seek to present the history of British military intervention from the point of view of the average soldier and great pains are taken to ensure the

representation of ordinary soldiers and minorities – even women and children and their role in the army is brought to our attention.

In the London displays, personal objects when available, have been carefully woven into a factual narrative to create an idea of a general war situation – but they are never placed in exergue in such a way as might lead the visitor to consider them as having an intrinsic value of their own, outside of the story being told – not even objects owned by Napoleon or Wellington himself.

The tendency we would like to draw attention to culminates in the 2010-2011 exhibition presented in Bonn, *Napoleon und Europa, Traum and Trauma* that neatly announced the dual ambition of the narrative it intended to offer the visitor in the title of the display itself and in a sense set out its principal argument using the museographical tradition of the great man as a foil. The exhibition was curated by French/German art historian Benedicte Savoy and was organised in collaboration with the *Musée de l'armée* in Paris.

Spatially, the hall occupied by the exhibit was split down the centre from the entrance into two halves introduced by a central dome shaped area that formed the exhibit's introduction. In order to introduce this dual conception the rotunda presents Napoleon in the heroic regime – with his signature coat and hat and a neo-classical bust of Napoleon as Augustus, whilst to the left of this central space the heroic figure was clearly placed in opposition to the general situation of violence incurred by the war itself, identifying Napoleon as the principal orchestrator of Europe's first "Total war" (Bell, 2007) by presenting the violently damaged breast-plate of the carabineer François-Antoine Faveau. (For images of the exhibition: <http://www.franceculture.fr/2011-03-10-napoleon-le-reve-et-la-blessure.html>).

This confrontation introduced the notion of "Fascination" for Napoleon and "Abscheu" or repulsion that structured the themes of the exhibition. After being lead down the right side of the exhibit through the story of the Napoleonic wars all the way to the back end of the exhibition space which is occupied by the story of Napoleon's family and his implementation of blood relations to create a new Napoleonic dynasty ruling across Europe, the visitor then turns back toward the entrance and comes through another series of spaces presenting the other dimensions of the Napoleonic story – evolutions in state rule and leadership, but also presents the question of art robbery, symbolic imagery related to Napoleon, and the nationalist reactions that his actions provoked. Towards the front of the exhibition hall, and the exit (which was also the entrance) - the Napoleonic legend is illustrated by two spaces, back to back, dedicated to his birth and another dedicated to the mythology surrounding his death which forms the end of the exhibit on the other side. The circuit subtly manages to express at once the polarised narrative, introduced by the rotunda and spatially expressed by a division of the exhibition straight down a median line with the war to the right and the other themes running down the left side. At the same time it orders the narrative of Napoleon's life and impact on European thought and history according to clear thematic propositions that nevertheless follow an order that is logical in terms of the timeline of events, establishing it firmly as a dualistic European story.

Napoleon – Man of War and Military Adversary

General historiography and the museum

We posited in our introduction that the image of Napoleon conveyed by national museums, be it in France or abroad has until recently proved less contentious and conflicting than what the strongly contrasting currents to be found in general historiography might allow us to expect. In 1940, the dual nature of Napoleonic historiography was established as a kind of constant in a seminal essay written by the Dutch historian Pieter Geyl, *Napoleon: for and against* clearly defining the problem of considering his place for posterity. Using Napoleon as a historiographical textbook case he showed that throughout the nineteenth century ‘French historians had depicted Napoleon either as a son of France and the Revolution who brought liberty and stability to Europe or as a foreigner whose thirst for power and glory dragged France into disaster’. In so doing, Geyl demonstrated that ‘historical accounts are coloured by the ideological and political concerns of historians’ (Hughes-Warrington, 2008: 126).

As we have tried to show in the first part of our study, a largely positive narrative can be observed in the history of displays related to his figure, as many of them were related to private and public cults of Napoleon. It is implicitly perpetuated through a particular form of reverence for personal relics, and the long life of display traditions that go back to the mid-nineteenth century and are often reinforced by the private origins of collections and by the propagandistic nature of their construction.

The conservative historian Renée Casin recognised the narrative power of Napoleon’s personal possessions as a positive historic expression of the man in her 1956 study (reedited in 2008) dedicated to the representation of Napoleon in France’s *lycée* or high school history books. Her book appeared as a reaction to an explicitly negative vision of the history of Napoleon that appeared during the Second World War, resulting from the more or less direct comparison with Hitler. The perceived affiliation of the two men had indeed been epitomized by the famous visit of the *Führer* to Napoleon’s tomb during the ceremony that accompanied the transfer of the body of the *Roi de Rome*, Napoleon’s son from Vienna to the *Invalides* in Paris in 1940 (Savoy, 2010, 15).

Casin very interestingly remarks on the contrast that she observed between the negative representations of Napoleon in France’s schoolbooks, the more nuanced historiography in the academic field and the more clearly positive vision provided by the museum. She expressed her strong feeling of injustice at the absence of recognition of what she considered as Napoleon’s more positive contributions to French society or indeed to Europe as a whole and accused school history of exclusively underlining his role as the sole responsible for the bloodshed of the Napoleonic wars (2008: 13-17). As a counterpoint, she remarks on the contrasting situation to be found in the museum, quoting as an example the 1951 exhibition *Napoleon and his family*, held at the *Musée de l’Armée* in Paris. She presents it as an excellent source for a better understanding of what she considers to have been the fruitful role of the Emperor and praises the moving, lively impression produced by the clothing, arms, handwritten documents and even the furniture that accompanied him throughout his lifetime (Casin, 2008: 24). Her remarks illustrate the stability of the image of Napoleon produced by France’s museum in contrast to the narrative of schoolbook history and academic work.

It is noteworthy that several recent exhibition catalogues point to the relative absence of French Museums in the commemoration of the bi-centenary of the great battles of the Napoleonic wars, a situation that has been analysed by Peter Hicks (2007). The fact is all the more striking, as it is the exact opposite to the situation described by Jean Bourguignon in 1949, at the time chief curator of the Napoleonic museums in France. In his preface to the catalogue of the 1949 exhibition of Napoleonic memorabilia in the *Musée de l'armée*, he observed the great number of brilliant temporary exhibitions dedicated to the souvenir of Napoleon Bonaparte in France since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the last major monograph exhibition dedicated to Napoleon in France, held at the *Grand Palais* in 1969 for the bicentenary of his birth gave rise to a remarkably controversial reception as outlined by Bénédicte Savoy (2010, 15). The hagiographic presentation of the “prodigious destiny” of Napoleon, the great statesman, prompted certain journalists in France, but also in Germany, to criticise what they considered to be a grossly one-sided presentation.

In the following we will try to see whether we can trace a narrative current in the museum that explicitly questions the status of Napoleon as a hero and great statesman by addressing some of the more contentious aspects of his person and his role as an historical figure.

Napoleon and the representation of violence

Though we have shown that French museums have essentially established Napoleon as the great hero of the Empire, they are also home to some impressive images of the suffering and the violence of Napoleonic wars that can be found in some of the paintings of the Napoleonic era by artists such as Antoine-Jean Gros, who experienced the battlefield first hand. The horrors of the death and the suffering of injured and starving soldiers rendered in the foreground of Gros' monumental *Napoléon sur le champ de bataille d'Eylau, 9 février 1807* (1808) is generally recognized as one of the most realistic contemporary depictions of the violence of the Napoleonic wars (O'Brien, 2006). In 1837, the painting was exhibited to the French public as part of the *Musée d'histoire de France* in the château of Versailles.

Alexandre de Laborde's guide to the museum described the painting as a most horrific spectacle, and the battle as an event of great violence during which “three hundred mouths of fire had vomited death for twelve hours” (1839: 348). He underlines to what an extent the outcome of the battle had affected the emperor, due to the huge loss of life on both sides as observed in his letters to Josephine. Alexandre de Laborde's text, in conjunction with paintings such as these, established a narrative of the Napoleonic wars as depicted in the Versailles galleries that does indeed render its horrors but clearly places them in the context of Napoleon's compassion for his soldiers (1839: 340). Recent art historical perspectives have recognised the ambiguous nature of Gros' glorification of Napoleon in this image that of course went unremarked in Laborde's explanation of the painting (Prendergast, 1997, 35):

The formal composition of the picture can be said to reproduce the tri-partite schema of Renaissance and Baroque religious painting: in the foreground the tormented souls of the dead, in the centreground the Redeemer (or his delegate), in the background the heavens radiating the aura of divinity. But as Gros' picture reproduces this schema, it also wrecks it, the brute carnage of its foreground and the apocalyptic atmosphere of its background inevitably putting questions to the assurance of its centreground. This brings us to the verge of a very complicated relation indeed, which concerns not just the painting of politics but also the politics of painting.

Gros' realism was nevertheless already recognised as exceptional in the nineteenth century and was precisely one of the reasons that led the painting to be elevated to the status of masterpiece of the French school, and to be moved from Versailles, where it documented the history of Napoleonic campaigns, to the Louvre in 1848 (Allard, Chaudonneret, 2011: 141-142). Today it hangs with some of the most famous images of French nineteenth century painting, prominently displayed in the *Grande Galerie des Peintures françaises* of the Louvre where it occupies an essential place in a presentation of the monumental history of French art.

However, generally speaking depictions of Napoleon in battle or with his soldiers, by artists of his time or as painted later in the nineteenth century to be displayed in Versailles, were part of a tightly controlled state funded artistic production and are rarely ambiguous in their propaganda oriented message. Defeated and hurt soldiers were more often than not painted in a more idealized style, perhaps best represented by Charles Meynier's *Retour de Napoléon dans l'île de Lobau après la bataille d'Essling*, (1812), thus more easily supporting the narrative of the compassionate general developed by Laborde. The difficulty of providing a contemporary critical reading of these images has contributed to the fact that a large part of the thirteen rooms dedicated to the Napoleonic wars in Versailles remain today closed to the public.

In light of the above, one might venture the supposition that until recently the role of Napoleon and the violence of the Napoleonic wars was not a prominent theme of museum displays related to his person and that a history of museographical narratives of such a theme might first and foremost be the history of their non-existence. Napoleon was certainly represented as a man of war through extensive displays of *militaria*, and battle scenes yet these do not seek to tell of the brutal reality of war, as we might understand it today, but act more as edifying elements in a narrative of military glory that is unrelated to the everyday condition of ordinary soldiers or to the suffering caused by war, and which is a recent narrative in museographical terms. The example provided above to illustrate the absence in France's national museums of a critical narrative relating to the nature and political causes of this violence are echoed by situations abroad. In such military museums as the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna, whose museography dates further back than the current displays in Paris, London or Berlin that we will consider in more detail below, the most common narrative of Napoleon as an enemy in war is structured as a confrontation between two mighty and more or less equal adversaries and national heroes in what one might call the *face-off* narrative. Unfortunately, however it is not always easy to find visual information on overhauled museographies and in certain cases a more exhaustive archival study would need to be undertaken to ascertain exactly how past museographies in European national museums have dealt with the issue of violence during the Napoleonic wars.

However, one may consider here the effort that has over the last decade attempted to explicitly deal with issues of war and violence – by looking at the recent museographies of the *National Army Museum* in London, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin and the *Musée de l'Armée* in Paris, as elements of a development of this narrative that was however taken to a level never seen before in the 2010-2011 exhibition, *Napoleon und Europa. Traum und Trauma*. This development can be directly considered as the result of a corresponding academic historiographical current, related to the revaluation of the Napoleonic wars, notably through the rise of war studies (i.e. Guiomar, 2004; Bell, 2007; Talty, 2009) but also to a more general cultural

change in terms of the perception of war as a necessarily traumatic experience for all of its actors/victims, the historical evolution of which has been pointed out by Fassin and Rechtman (2009).

Let us then begin by first considering this most explicit example of a new narrative current as displayed in the Bonn exhibition. Upon entering *Traum and Trauma* the visitor was greeted by the open end of an impressive canon that at once drew him to the right side of the rotunda – to the area where the repulsion and fascination for the figure of Napoleon confront each other. The circuit then leads us through a series of themes related to the wars, providing some extremely vivid visual representations of the horrors of the multiple campaigns as part of the section entitled “Dream of an Empire” devoted to the military expansion of Napoleon across Europe. The narrative that it constructed gave a clear overview of the damage to human life caused by the 60 battles (of which 44 victorious) led by Napoleon’s army.

One of the most impressive of these displays was related to the infamous campaign of Russia. In 1812, 35 000 soldiers died from hunger and hypothermia outside of the city walls of Vilnius as one of the final episodes in what had been a disastrous campaign for Napoleon. To illustrate this the exhibition used an enlarged photography embedded into a grave like floor presentation of the archaeological excavation undertaken in 2002 by a Franco-Lithaunian research team of the mass grave of soldiers who froze to death outside the city of Vilnius in 1812 (Talty, 2009).

The visual impact of this presentation appeared as all the more remarkable when compared with the evocation of the campaign of Russia in the *Musée de l’armée* in Paris in the new permanent exhibit (2009). Here the recent excavation of Vilnius is also referred to - however the reference is infinitely more discreet, indeed one might easily overlook it. In a room dedicated to the campaign of Russia, it is illustrated by fragments of clothing, in and of themselves relatively non-descript from the excavation, explicated through a short text and placed in a corner display case set into a window-sill. It is a resolutely understated presentation when considered alongside the scale and nature of the visuals used in Bonn. Yet it is a direct reference to a situation of suffering and violence – representing what has been established as a new thread in the narrative presented by France’s military museum, albeit a still relatively minor one.



**Figure 13: Vitrine dedicated to fragments of clothing discovered in the mass graves of Vilnius in 2002. Musée de l’Armée, Paris.
Photo F. Bodenstein.**

The exhibit in Paris illustrating the battle of Waterloo also presents the steel breastplate of the carabineer François-Antoine Faveau that was literally torn open by the impact of a bullet, a piece that was also lent for the Bonn exhibition where it was used with much greater rhetoric impact as a symbol of the wars' violence. It was placed in the introductory rotunda of the exhibition as an opening piece to the theme of the Napoleonic wars, a stark example of the physical damage incurred by war. This approach was further developed in the exhibition notably through the presentation of gelatine moulds used by forensic experts to show the penetrating force of the large bullets that made these head-on combats so deadly, as they literally blew off entire limbs. However, one of the most gruesome pieces related to the question of war mutilations was borrowed from the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin. It is a set of false so called 'Waterloo' teeth, made from the real teeth of dead soldiers, torn from their mouths on the battlefield to make sets for those who had lost or hurt their own in battle. In Berlin, this telling object was placed directly behind the vitrine showing Napoleon's hat and sword from Waterloo as discussed above in a section dedicated to the question of war injuries.

The Bonn exhibition reaches a high point in its presentation of violence with a series of contemporary sketches by the Scottish surgeon, Charles Bell, who documented the injuries incurred by the soldiers who fought at Waterloo, where 55 000 men were injured or died – doubtlessly these sketches, which represent a very different genre from the generally omnipresent battlefield paintings, are some of the most explicit renderings of these mutilations that exist.

As already touched upon in the first part of our study, in the National Army Museum in London, the different ills suffered by soldiers – cold, injuries and the imminent danger of the battlefield have clearly become a structuring narrative, a characteristic that appears as especially explicit when considered in opposition the Paris installations, where they are evoked more as an aside to the general narrative. The soldier's life – more than that of the great generals – gains a strong visual presence from the life size figures whose realism can easily have quite a startling effect as they punctuate the visitor's circuit, accompanied by fictional biographies that illustrate the fates of the lowest hierarchies in the army.

It is in such a context, beside the figure of an ordinary British soldier and the massive model of Waterloo built in 1838, that we find the only representation of Napoleon in the London exhibit. It is made up of a massively enlarged print of Napoleon on horseback, placed behind the skeleton of the actual horse that he rode into the battle of Waterloo.



Figure 14: “Napoleon’s horse”, vitrine showing the skeleton of Marengo. National Army Museum, London. Photo F. Bodenstein.

The horse, Marengo had lead a long career of “display” as a trophy of British victory after being captured by the British Army (Hamilton, 2001). Here, the superposition of the print and the skeleton creates quite a uniquely disturbing effect. It is impossible to know whether it is a voluntary quotation of a well-known French caricature of Napoleon entitled “Depart pour l’Armée” (Mathis Hans Peter (dir.) 1998, p. 486) - the resemblance remains striking. In the caricature, Napoleon appears as a crazed Jupiter, galloping past a dead tree upon a skeletal horse on his way to war. The print was filed for publication the day that Napoleon left with his army for the Southern Netherlands just a few days before the battle of Waterloo. Placing Napoleon behind a skeletal horse to establish a morbid equestrian portrait is in any case a significant museographical choice. Indeed, the equestrian portrait is *par excellence* that of the political and military leader – its long history makes it a particularly important subject for the construction of Napoleon’s image best illustrated by David’s portrait – the most iconic representation of Napoleon already mentioned in our introduction. The comparison between the London Army Museum and the far more neutral presentation of Napoleon’s stuffed horse Vizir in Paris highlights the dark nature of this very unusual display which constitutes the final exhibit of the section entitled the “The road to Waterloo”. It is a rare example of a museography that presents a truly negative representation of the figure of Napoleon – and which as such can be considered comparable thematically to the voluminous production of caricatures that depicted Napoleon as a Néron, a warlord, or man eating general who sent hundreds of thousands of men into bloody battles to satisfy a hunger and thirst for power, violent images which up until quite recently made only scarce appearances in the museum.

The faceoff: confrontations and adversaries

In the last two decade the bi-centennial commemorations have confronted museums with the problem of revisiting the major victories and defeats of the Napoleonic wars. In order to deal with this theme numerous recent exhibitions have placed Napoleon in the position of the adversary in a biographic confrontation that could allow for the representation of the most

important military confrontations of the Napoleonic wars with the British and with Russia (2002 – Alexander and Napoleon; 2005- Nelson and Napoleon; 2010- Staging Power : Napoleon, Charles John, Alexander – see table of exhibitions).

The exhibition held in 2002 at the Roemer und Pelizaeur Museum in Hildesheim confronting the figures of the Russian emperor Alexander I and Napoleon Bonaparte was actually the final result of a project for a national museum in Moscow that was developed at the beginning of the twentieth century and presented a collection that was initially brought together nearly a century ago to create the “Museum of the Year 1812” as an attempt to portray the phenomenon that was “Napoleon” (*Napoleon Bonaparte und Alexander I. Epoche Zweier Kaiser*, 2002: 6). The project had been at the outset designed as two separate rooms, one dedicated to each personality, but it was never actually carried out; however, the collections are part of Moscow’s state history museum and were presented as a major exhibition in 2000 in Russia and in 2002 in Germany. The introduction by the director of Russia’s State History Museum, Alexander Schkurko, illustrates how the confrontation of two personalities allows him to underline contradictory and ambiguous aspects of their lives, summarizing that Bonaparte began his career as the defender of the Revolution only to become the tyrant of Europe and was finally challenged by one of the most absolutist ruler who became the liberator of Europe (*Napoleon Bonaparte und Alexander I. Epoche Zweier Kaiser*, 2002: 6). Schkurko justifies the use of the biographical approach by underlining the fact that the Napoleonic era can above all be characterized by the personality cults that the subjects of the exhibition induced.

Similar reasoning led the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich to dedicate its bicentenary commemorative exhibition of the battle of Trafalgar to a confrontation between the figures of Nelson and Napoleon. The exhibition’s curators were aware that a major temporary exhibit would perhaps allow them to renew and reshape the vision that the public had of the ever present Nelson memorabilia (Nelsonia) on permanent display in Greenwich since the museum’s creation – such as the uniform that Nelson was wearing when he died at Trafalgar (Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 106). The decision to pair up the famous admiral with Napoleon on this occasion was not as obvious as one might think and was made with very specific intentions. Again as above in the case of Alexander I, there was the sense that it would allow for a more balanced presentation of otherwise controversial figures. At the outset was the question of commemoration – should one and could one still commemorate the admiral, was he still an iconic figure for a vast majority of the British population and how could one deal with aspects such as his defence of slavery. “How could the picture of Nelson as a great popular hero, the name of a thousand public houses, be reconciled with his participation in a British state seen by many radicals at the time (and since) as repressive and a threat to civil liberties? And how could the events of Trafalgar be presented without incurring the dangers of nationalistic celebrations of defeat of the French?” (Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 104). The answer was found by comparing him to his greatest adversary – this would have the advantage of expelling the problem of a nationalist perspective and set Nelson into a European context. “The dual focus also offered a way of dealing with the wider strategic issues of the war between Britain and France, and the internal dynamics of the two societies, through an accessible biographical approach. And the two men allowed an exploration of how highly significant and iconic lives

were memorialized and contested after their deaths” (Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 105).

In terms of the exhibition’s reception, the curators noticed that what fascinated most again were however the relics “it was all here: no medieval saint could have asked for more” (Adam Nicolson, *Sunday Telegraph* quoted by Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 110) and the personal items. *The Times* reviewer Rachel Campbell-Johnston wrote that it was at those points where the exhibition “focuses on the personal that it touches the spectator to the quick” (quoted by Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 110). However, it was also praised for emphasizing the violence of combat, making it an all the more personal experience as it “placed the implications and brutal reality of war alongside the intimacy of certain objects” (quoted by Lincoln, Margarete ; Daunton, Martin, 2007, 108). Indeed again as in *Traum and Trauma*, surgical equipment was presented as a means of narrating this aspect of the war. The curators also reviewed French press reports on the exhibition which were characterised as relatively unremarkable, noting however that Napoleon appeared as a more controversial figure in France than Nelson did in Britain – a situation that possibly explains why “despite initial plans, there was in the end no major Austerlitz exhibition at the Paris *Musée de l’Armée*” (Hicks, 2007, 121) for the bi-centennial anniversary of the most important French victory of the Napoleonic wars.

Napoleon through the Lens of Art History

When considering the representation of Napoleon in the museum it is impossible to dissociate between art and history. This indeed is due to the character of artistic production of the Napoleonic era as was recently defined in the 2010 exhibition *Staging Power* that took place in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. As stated in the introduction to this exhibit that compared Napoleon with Sweden’s Charles John and Russia’s Alexander I :

Art and power are like magnetic fields. They can attract each other, to form an inseparable whole, but they can also repel one another. At certain junctures in history, they have fused together with such force that entire societies have been remoulded. The rulers of the Napoleonic era made architecture and town planning, the fine and decorative arts interior design and fashion, coats of arms and emblems, coins and medals, even simple utilitarian objects, into bearers of the symbols and messages of power. (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 2010 : 5).

Organized in cooperation with the St. Petersburg’s State Ermitage museum, the preface states that these “Two countries that for many years regarded each other as enemies have freed themselves from their firmly rooted stereotypes by seeking their shared history” (Director of the Ermitage, Mikhail Piotrovsky, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 2010 : 6), and goes on to underline that: “Our starting point is the role of art in these dramatic historical events, which finds concrete expression in the objects on display”, thus “the history narrated in this exhibition is fascinating, dramatic and beautiful.”

More generally speaking the narratives concerning Napoleon in the museum nearly always employ objects that are first and foremost recognized as having artistic or aesthetic value, this is even true to some extent in military museums: in Paris at the *Musée de l’Armée* famous art works and collections of splendid arms and army costumes are set into a very purist and highly aesthetic type of presentation.



Figure 15: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1806, *Napoleon I on the Imperial throne*, Musée de l'Armée, Paris.
Photo F. Bodenstein.

In this third part of our study we will try to consider how this has conditioned the museographical representation of Napoleon. Predominantly aesthetically oriented presentations can be a means of edifying or of relating historical actors to artistic concerns (as often implicitly opposed to political or military issues). In recent exhibitions we will see that such displays are often related to a discourse that refers to notions of common heritage. However, art works can of course also be presented critically to outline the system of cultural propaganda and art theft that also characterises the history of Napoleonic rule over France and Europe. Furthermore by widening the range of visual culture used in recent exhibitions, a new imagery of Napoleon has in the last decades allowed art historians to provide a darker counterpart to the idealized portraits of his time, contributing to a more balanced or dualistic portrait of the 'great man'.

Napoleon, patron of the arts – promoter of a European artistic style

Throughout the twentieth century the *arts* became one of the preponderant means that the network of national museums from Malmaison (1906) to Fontainebleau (opened in 1986) have established to consider the role of Napoleon. The chief curator of the Napoleonic museums in France, Jean Bourguignon expressed in 1949 what one might call the master narrative of these museums, taken as a group (Bourguignon, 1949, 13, translation by the author):

We know that the First Empire was in terms of artistic production one of the most flourishing periods in our history. As Napoleon stated himself 'It is my aim to see France's artists erase the glories of Athens and Italy'. Doubtlessly, he no more created those artists than the popes of the Renaissance created theirs. But he knew how to orient them and by encouraging them to take as their subjects the *Grande Épopée*, (the Empire), he lead them to take on the full challenge of contemporary life.

The simple fact that art works are the museum's privileged media in representing Napoleon, is hardly surprising indeed as museums are where art goes. It follows that in the house museums dedicated to Napoleon and his family in France and abroad, the figure of Napoleon is very much represented through the lens of an art historical narrative that runs parallel to the historical one, dedicated to the development of the fine and especially the decorative arts during the Empire. In

her guide to ‘Napoleonic’ collecting, Karine Huguenaud promotes the advantage of collecting in the field of the decorative arts as one of the richest areas in terms of the availability of objects, advising the amateur to train his eye by visiting the castle museums of the circuit of *Musées napoléoniens*, whose displays “bear witness to the creativity of a style that has left a lasting mark on the history of the decorative arts, contradicting the general clichés that unjustly depreciate it” (Huguenaud, 2007: 79). She especially praises the power of the period rooms of Malmaison, Fontainebleau, Compiègne and Versailles’ Grand Trianon as essential experiences to the understanding of the creative importance of the Napoleonic era and their ability to valorise a style that was for a long time denigrated.

The effect that the sumptuously decorated period room presentations of the collections in these eponymous museums must have on a visitor needs to be carefully observed. The displays of France’s national Napoleon museums: Malmaison, Fontainebleau etc. or those of the castle of Arenenberg in Switzerland or in Rome at the *Museo Napoleonico*, are all considered as important art collections based for a very large part on the direct heritage of the collections owned by members of Napoleon’s family. Fontainebleau is the most recent museum dedicated to Napoleon. The decision to establish a special museum in one of the wings of the castle was made in 1979 following the donation to the state by the prince and princess Napoleon and princess Marie-Clotilde of the family collection of napoleonic souvenirs.

These site museums are principally structured as series of rooms to be visited as formerly inhabited spaces. Additionally, Arenenberg and Malmaison are more exclusively representative of Napoleon’s women developing strong narratives of family life. As shown in the first part of this study, they are constructed museographically as “memorials” to the man himself or to his dynasty, thus they *de facto* represent Napoleon. Yet they do so nearly exclusively in the context of displays dedicated to the decorative arts, collections of objects, furniture and decor of the period of the Empire. In a similar way we might say that Apsley house presents Wellington as an art collector rather than as the leader of an army. These house museums, through the very nature of their collections, emphasize a very specific dimension of an era. Their role as museums of the decorative arts does not contradict their memorial role – but rather underlines it and one might dare say even tends to sublimate it.

Napoleon himself actually occupies a relatively marginal place in some of these museums, for example in the *Museo Napoleonico*, his presence is described by Ferdinand Boyer as less important than that of the other *Napoléonides*. However, he states that Napoleon is nevertheless represented by the great carpet decorated with an eagle and bees and bronze chandeliers from the apartment that had been prepared for him in the palace of the Quirinal, some books from Saint Helena, some personal objects such as a tobacco box, some letters and a large official portrait painted by Joseph Chabard in 1810 (Boyer, 1955, p. 96). So indeed, he is represented mainly through memorabilia and works of decorative art produced during his time. All in all, the ‘Napoleonic museum of Rome offers more than a simple illustration of Napoleon and his time, it is also an evocation of the shared past of France and Italy’ (Boyer, 1955: 97, translation by the author).

On the point of Napoleon’s relationship to the arts, historiography presents a very nuanced situation through the important debates that have been waged in French art history in order to ascertain to what degree one might consider Napoleon himself a “man of taste” who veritably influenced the forms and ideals of the aesthetic vision of his time, or whether this was actually

rather the work of others, such as Dominique-Vivant Denon, who was the *Directeur général du Muséum central des arts* later the *Musée Napoléon*. A certain consensus has been established positing that Napoleon though not himself directly what one would call a man of taste showing exceptional sensibility for artistic matters, did however very much “direct” cultural affairs and seek to control them an idea that can be weighted both positively and negatively according to the context. However, debates concerning the nature of his patronage in terms of the arts do not necessarily impact upon the general impression produced by the constant reference to and visual prominence of Napoleon in these house museums that are equally dedicated to his life, to that of his family and to the history of the decorative arts during the Empire. Their very nature quite logically and directly brings the artistic dimension to the forefront, whilst the history of Napoleon the politician and the general – take a step back.

In contrast to the implicit equation established between Napoleon and the arts in the permanent displays of Napoleonic museums, recent temporary exhibitions have in some cases also produced narratives of culture and art that explicitly seek to establish Napoleon in a narrative of the Emperor as a great administrator of the arts. In 2004, the Louvre published a book on Napoleon’s role in the establishment of France’s most famous museum and in its preface, the museum’s director, Henri Loyrette expressed the hope that it would allow the reader to consider the Napoleonic era through a different perspective from that of the military epic, which tended to overshadow the history of that time (Loyrette, 2004: 5). Whilst in his introduction to the same book, Sylvain Lavissière, curator of the Louvre’s paintings department defended a historiography of the neo-classical style and the *style Empire* that established these as more than mere creations or reflections of the authoritarian and militaristic reign of Napoleon stating that the notion of a “dictatorship” of the arts needed to be carefully challenged (Lavissière, 2004: 6). The book gave its title to a major exhibition organized by the Louvre and presented in China in 2008 (in the Forbidden city) and in Moscow in 2010 – but which was not shown in France. The history of the Louvre had already been very much a part of the exhibition held in 1999 dedicated to the man who had been its general director, Dominique-Vivant Denon and ‘Napoleon’s eye’, to paraphrase its title (*L’Oeil de Napoléon*, musée du Louvre, 1999). Of course the role of a personality such as Denon, though important for France was too marginal to be exported, whilst Napoleon could very well serve as the ambassador of the Louvre abroad. The tonality of the book published in 2004 indicated however that an explicit narrative relating Napoleon to the development of France’s greatest national museum was not necessarily a welcome one in France – lending itself to a book, but not perhaps to a major exhibition as it was clearly one that needed to be defended and justified to a wider public. Indeed, Lavissière (2004: 7) remarks that Napoleon’s artistic patronage:

Is on an even greater scale, the modern counterpart of the glorious works of art commissioned by Louis XIV from Le Brun and the Academies and that if one were to be fair, it is quite simply a constant of absolute powers, though they do not always apply themselves with similar determination. But, does one want to be fair with Napoleon?

In 2005, the privately owned Fuji museum in Tokyo brought together objects from the most important national collections in Europe and America to create a major temporary exhibition entitled: *Napoleon : Europe and Culture, the other Conquest*. The catalogue was authored by curators from major national museums in France, Germany and Italy. Its central narrative was to consider

Napoleon as the incarnation of a whole era, visually identifiable through the *style Empire* as a European phenomenon and thus Europe as a culturally unified space during this period. In a note to the visiting public, the founder of Tokyo's musée Fuji wrote : “Napoleon re-established order in the face of the chaos that reigned after the French Revolution and was already dreaming of the possibility of European unification” (Ikeda, 2005: 13). His text was followed by prefaces and opening words from Arnaud d’Hauterives, the perpetual secretary of France’s *Académie des beaux-arts* and Jean Tulard, France’s foremost specialist of Napoleonic history, both echoing this edifying discourse. Hans Ottomeyer, the director of the *Deutsches historisches Museum* contributed an article retracing the history of the furniture related to the couple Napoleon and Josephine and its place at the castle of Malmaison and the Italian Giulia Gorgone presents the meaning and the museography of the *Museo Napoleonico* as a family art collection. What is interesting here is that this narrative of the Napoleon as a great administrator of the arts has originated in European national museums – but is essentially told outside of Europe.

Napoleon as Conqueror and Dictator of the arts

A postcard on sale at the Ashmolean museum’s gift shop (2006) illustrates one of Clerihew Bentley’s biographical verses: “It was not Napoleon who founded the Ashmolean. He hardly had a chance living mostly in France” with a drawing of Napoleon by G. K. Chesterton. The short humorous phrase captures the international importance of Napoleon’s contribution to the development of the public museum. However, whilst Napoleon can be represented as the orchestrator of a European cultural and artistic Empire in Japan or appear as a kind of founding figure of the Louvre in Russia and China, inside of Europe itself such narratives appear as far more contentious.



Figure 16: Postcard “It was not Napoleon who founded the Ashmolean. He hardly had a chance living mostly in France”. Photo F. Bodenstein.

The paradoxical relationship between Napoleon and history of the Louvre may in a sense be illustrated by the reflections of Pierre Rosenberg in an intentionally provocative introductory text of the catalogue accompanying the *Napoleon und Europa. Traum und Trauma* exhibition, entitled

“Why I do not like Napoleon” . As a former president of the Louvre, Rosenberg (2010: 18, translation by the author) writes:

How could I, who have given 40 years of my life to the Louvre, forgive Napoleon for the catastrophic consequences of his return to France? For indeed would not the Louvre otherwise have been allowed to remain that *musée imaginaire* of all the masterpieces that Malraux had dreamed off.

He was of course referring to the emptying of the Louvre after Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo. For indeed, throughout the Napoleonic era and up until the restitutions that followed Waterloo of 1815-1816, the *Musée Napoléon* had displayed as a result of confiscations during the revolutionary but also the Napoleonic wars some of the greatest treasures from what were to become Italian, German, Austrian, Belgian and Dutch national collections. But it is not without irony of course that Rosenberg accuses Napoleon not of theft – but of having overestimated his powers, of coming back thus allowing Wellington to become the triumphant general who organized the gutting of what had for a short time been the largest and most magnificent collection of art in all of Europe.

Only a few of the many European museums affected by this episode present this aspect of the history of their collections explicitly. Interestingly, there is one example of display related to this question, in Britain (a country that of course never lost any of its collections to France). In Apsley house, the provenance of the collections coincides so directly with the story of war and art conquest that it has entirely conditioned the display as arranged by the Duke of Wellington himself and is carefully explained and commented in all the guidebooks of the museum.

The manner in which the collections of Apsley house came to be there is indeed the main narrative of the museum itself as ‘the display of his (Wellington’s) collections at Apsley House could be seen as a way of consolidating his victory’ (Bryant, 2009, p. 33). To illustrate this one might consider the heart of the house, the so-called Waterloo gallery, designed by the Duke as a space to be used for the annual commemorative dinner of the victorious battle. (For more images see: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/apsley-house/>) Despite what one might expect, not a single battle scene hangs on its walls. These are in fact entirely covered with the splendid collection of Spanish paintings that Wellington recovered from Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon’s brother after the battle of Vitoria. As the King of Spain himself had refused to take them back, declaring them to be an offering of his gratitude, these canvases of singular artistic value, including two extremely famous paintings by Velazquez, appear here most obviously as trophies of war. The following room, the yellow drawing room, prominently presents a marble bust offered to Wellington by the artist Antonio Canova, a present given to Wellington by the sculptor in 1817 as a sign of his recognition for his contribution in the return of Italian collections from the Louvre.

More critically, the subject of Napoleon’s great “art theft” has in the last two decades received considerable scholarly with the increasing development of collecting and museum history establishing a narrative that recognizes Napoleon as an essential figure of the history of the national museum firstly in France (Gallo, 2001; Laveissière, 2004) but also in Europe (Savoy, 2003; Bergvelt, Ellinoor and al., 2009, Potin, 2010). He has been considered as the founder of significant institutions, but, he of course also appears as the “thief”. In *Napoleon's Legacy: The Rise of National Museums in Europe 1794-1830* several essays consider how museums and national

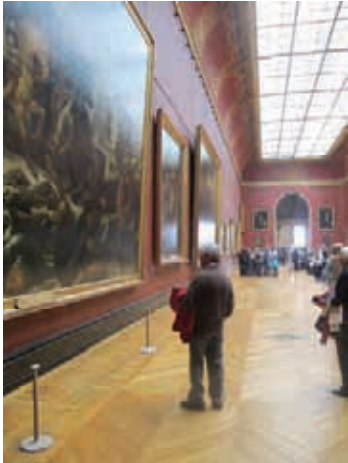
collections were founded or developed as a result of the heightened awareness of heritage caused by the sense of loss provoked by multiple confiscations. The narrative of art theft was for the first time explicitly displayed in relation to Napoleon as a European experience in Bénédicte Savoy's presentation in Bonn (2010-2011) where a section was entitled "Objects of Desire: Napoleon and European Art and Memory Theft". The display highlighted the extensive nature of his project. Though not initially a Napoleonic project, but an operation began by the armies of the revolution, its aim to centralize Europe's artistic heritage but also the paper archives of the dominated territories in the city of Paris, was largely developed under Napoleon's rule, firmly establishing cultural heritage as a central strategy of conquest.

Napoleon was himself fully aware of the power of display and very much at home in the Louvre palace, consistently using its galleries as spaces to magnify his own greatness. The only sovereign to ever have lent his name to the museum: the *Musée Napoléon* indeed opened its doors in 1803. It was there in the *salle des Antiques* that Napoleon received the chiefs of his army after his coronation on the 8th of December 1804 (Laveissière, 2004: 9). It was in the *Grand Galerie* that the emperor celebrated his wedding to the Austrian Princess, Marie-Louise. Lastly it was in the bi-annual salon held in the Louvre that the French public discovered the hundreds of paintings that he commissioned from the most important artists of his day to glorify his own image, establishing a vast *ensemble* of monumental propaganda paintings that definitively made contemporary events worthy of the attention of history painters. Accordingly commissions sought representations of contemporary history as illustrations of the nation's glory, designed to elevate the new Empire to the rank of the past Empires of Alexander, Cesar, Augustus and Charlemagne (Foucart, 2001: 14). Two decades later, these paintings founded the core of the collection established to illustrate the period from 1789-1815 in the huge history museum that Louis-Philippe created in Versailles (1837).

Indeed of the 400 paintings that were used to represent the Revolution and the Napoleonic era, 150 of them had been painted during this period and for the second part were largely direct commissions by the Emperor (Constans, 2001: 28), providing a series of explicit examples of the instrumentalisation of art for political ends.

The plethoric character of the production of these images of war and government for the French artistic salons held in the Louvre during Napoleon's lifetime clearly outweighs the artistic production in Europe related to the so-called *Befreiungskriege*, or representation of the battles of the Sixth and Seventh Coalition that put an end to the Napoleonic wars. Indeed for Michael Thiman an art of *Befreiungskriege* does not exist: "In contrast to the affirmative political iconography of Napoleon and his official state art, no consistent visual world was developed on the side of his opponents" (Thiman, 2010: 119).

So it is mainly through these battle and political propaganda images, as seen through the eyes of France's artists that the Napoleonic epic has been visually perceived. Furthermore one must remember that these paintings have continued to occupy an extremely important place on the walls of two of the most visited museums in the world: the Louvre and Versailles.



**Figure 17: The Great Gallery of French Painting in the Louvre (2012). We see Gros's *Battle of Eylau* close to Géricault's famous *Radeau de la Méduse*. The display showcases the masterpieces of French nineteenth century painting.
Photo F. Bodenstein**

However, in the last two decades, art history has paid increasing attention to the caricatures of Napoleon that were produced in France and across Europe, providing a visual *anti-Napoleon*. This was indeed the title of an exhibition held in 1996 in the *Musée national de Malmaison*. Bernard Chevallier, head curator of the museum pointed out that this subject was deliberately chosen as an original and in a sense provocative kick in the series of exhibitions that would be dedicated to Napoleon across Europe in light of the commemorations of the bi-centenaries of the Napoleonic wars. In his rhetorical interrogations on how the museum could still seek to praise the *Grand homme*, he posited that by presenting his black legend he had tried to conceive of a different, original form of celebration (Chevallier, 1996).

Two years later, the Napoleon museum of Arenenberg published in German the most extensive existing catalogue of Napoleon caricatures (Mathis (dir.) 1998). In 2003, the *Deutsches Museum für Karikatur und Kritische Grafik* acquired a collection of 700 caricatures that gave rise to an important exhibition shown twice in Germany: in 2006 *Napoleon! Kunst und Karikatur um 1800* was presented in Berlin to mark the bi-centenary of Napoleon's entry into the city and again in 2009 under the title *Napoleon: Genie und Despot*, confronting the ideal and official image of himself that Napoleon had carefully established with the caricatures that had flourished across Europe, producing perhaps for "the first time – a European discourse" (Hoppenstedt, 2007: 6) to quote the preface of the exhibition, or at the very least the visual expression of a European wide political cause – the destruction of a common enemy.



Figure 18: Lewis Marks, *A Happy Dance for Europe*, 1814, Public Domain.

Conclusion

In recent years much attention has been paid to the memorialisation of the wars of the twentieth century – the development of the multi-disciplinary field of war studies and that of museums studies have very fruitfully worked together to establish a critical approach (Louvier, P., Mary, J. and al. 2012) and create innovative museographical presentations. Even in France where an otherwise suspicious attitude reigns in relation to the historical museum, the need to commemorate the world wars has given rise to the creation of the Historial of Peronne, the Memorial of Caen or to the most recent addition to the *Musée de l'Armée* in Paris, the Historial Charles de Gaulle. This last case is a rare example of a purely biographical approach in dealing museographically with the history of the world wars. However, the circular structure and narrative organisation of this monument let it appear as the twenty-first century's version of Napoleon's tomb. Here Charles Simart's low-reliefs, telling of Napoleon's exploits, are, as it were, replaced by the high-tech projections and touch-screen installations that narrate Charles de Gaulle's heroic military and political career, whilst the immersive cinematographic experience occupying the central rotunda, is designed to promote strong emotive reactions – the low-lighting and underground placement of the *Historial* all contribute to its near sepulchral character. These spaces taken side by side, illustrate how one memorial experience can engender another.

This is also true of monuments and museums displays on a transnational scale. As I have tried to show the evolution of a museography of Napoleon and the Napoleonic wars over a long time period allows us to better gauge the significance of recent changes – but also the weight of display traditions. Our vision of Napoleon has been significantly changing in museums both in France and in other European countries; be it in the permanent exhibits of major national museums, but more particularly through a series of international temporary exhibitions, whose production has been more than prolific in the context of bi-centennial commemorations. This change is however often difficult and tentative due to a tradition of representation related to the events of these wars as historically conditioned by the types of objects available to illustrate them

and to the very different social and political perception of war that they express. The change in contemporary attitudes to war have also changed the way in which the history of the Napoleonic wars is written today according as illustrated by recent historiographical and even archaeological contributions – these contributions are however echoed by the museum in differing degrees, according to different national and museological contexts.

This essay has attempted to examine the reverse side of an already well-studied aspect of Napoleon's contribution to the development of the cultural institutions – his role in the establishment of national museums – by looking at how he has himself been represented by these institutions over a period of nearly two centuries. This long chronological perspective shows that even in the context of changing narratives, certain types of objects – certain characteristics of the history of collections related to historical figures such as Napoleon impose a kind of permanence in a tradition of glorification by the museum that is currently being challenged by the need to establish a more balanced representation of Napoleonic history. However the new narratives, appearing mainly in temporary exhibitions are conditioned by such contemporary notions as the collective trauma of the Napoleonic wars in a history of suffering, an anthropological and social approach that according to Henry Rousso (2004: 4) characterizes the “europeanisation” of history and that appears as a foil against which the image of the *Great man* can be reflexively balanced. This happens through an exchange of perspectives, in which national histories are dealt with as the history of ourselves and of the other, an aspect that is artistically captured by the work of the Benin artist, Georges Adéagbo presented at the 2012 *Triennale* fair of contemporary art in Paris, dedicated to the notion of *Intense proximity*. Inside of his vast multimedia installation that is private narrative devoted to the notion of the relationships that unite politics, religion, art and display in a global world, one particular vitrine is dedicated to Franco-German relations, showing in the centre an article published in *Le Monde* on the exhibition in Bonn, *Napoleon, Traum und Trauma*, entitled “Bonn looks at the multiple faces of Napoleon”. The article begins with a quote from the director of the *Musée de l'armée* in Paris, stating that no French museum could have organised this exhibition by itself. Sandwiched between a photo of Angela Merkel and the *Mémoires de guerre* de Charles de Gaulle it expresses the contemporary importance of this narrative, and seems to offer the challenge of intercultural understanding in light of the ever-present and often conflictual past.

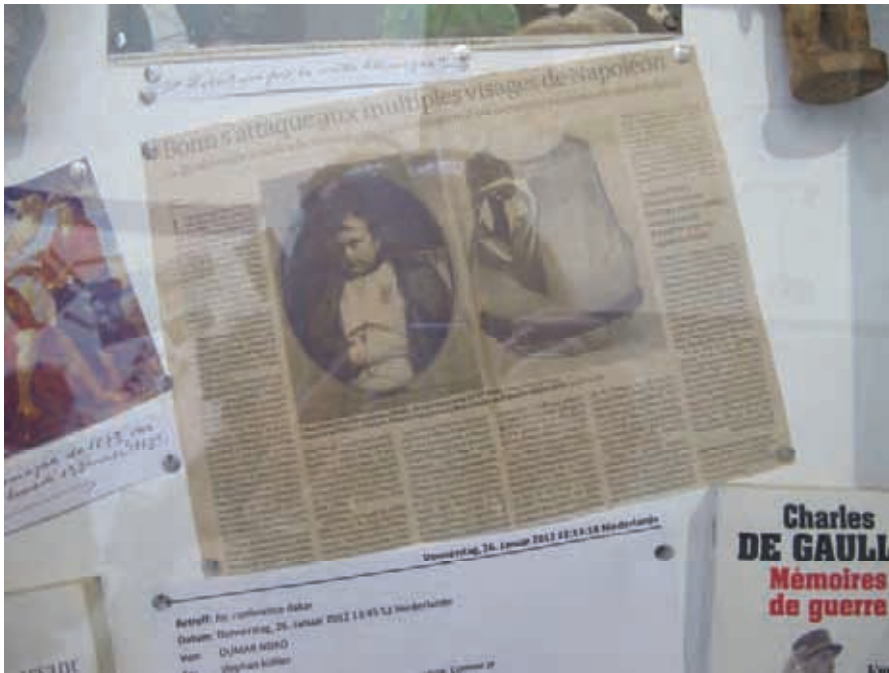


Figure 19 and 20 : Georges Adéagbo, 2012, *La Porte: derrière la porte...! Qu'est-ce qu'il y a derrière la porte?*, Photos F. Bodenstein

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Table 1: Recent temporary exhibitions in European national museums

Name of the Exhibition	Localisation	Year	General description
Napoleon und Europa. Traum und Trauma	Bonn, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Paris, Musée de l'Armée, Germany	2010/2011, 2012	Aims to present a differentiated portrait of the man and of his time in its influence on European history as a whole through all kinds of visual and documentary media.
Staging Power : Napoleon, Charles John, Alexander	Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, Sweden, organised with the Ermitage, Saint-Petersburg. The exhibition was also shown at the Château de Compiègne, France in 2011.	2010 ; 2011 (France)	With an emphasis on art history, exhibition presents a comparative approach of the representation of power in the field of the arts during the Napoleonic era.
Napoleon. Feldherr, Kaiser und Genie	Schattenburg Kulturbetriebgesellschaft, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.	2009	Historical exhibition commemorating the 200 years anniversary of the battle of Wagram and Aspern
Napoleon and the Louvre	Biejing, Forbidden city(2008) Moscow, National history museum, Russia (2010)	2008, 2010	The life and cultural policy of the Emperor Napoleon as considered in relation to the a history of the Louvre. (In France there was a book with the same title edited by the Louvre in 2004 but no exhibition accompanied it.)
Napoleon Trikolore und Kaiseradler über Rhein und Weser	Preussen-Museum, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.	2007	Exhibition considers the historical role of Napoleon in the modernisation of the region and of Germany as a consequence.
Napoleon: Genie und Despot	Stiftung Brandenburger Tor, Berlin (2006) and in 2009, Museum Haus Ludwig, Saarlouis (birth town of the general Michel Ney), Germany.	2006, 2009	Organized with the Brandenburger Tor foundation to commemorate Napoleon's 1806 entry into Berlin through the Brandenburg gate. An iconographic confrontation of Napoleon as heros, genius, emperor and as ogre, caricatured and hated despote.
Nelson & Napoleon	The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, Britain.	2005	Commemoration of the bicentenary of the battle of Trafalgar that opposes the figure of the two major players of the battle (chosen over a monographical presentation of Nelson)
Napoléon, l'Europe et la culture: une autre conquête (Napoleon, Europe and Culture, the other Conquest)	Musée Fuji de Tokyo, Japan.	2005	Napoleon's taste and cultural politics as a cultural aspect that forged a European chapter of art history
Napoleone e la repubblica italiana, 1802-1805	Milan, Museo del Risorgimento, Italy.	2002/2003	
Napoleon Bonaparte – Zar Alexander I. Epoche zweier Kaiser	State history museum Moscow and Museum Hildesheim in Germany.	2000, 2002	Two biographies to illustrate the Napoleonic era – focused on the historical attention and given to these major figures of European history.
1796-1797 Da Montenotte a Campofornio: la rapida marcia di Napoleone Bonaparte	Museo Napoleonico, Rome, Italy.	1997	Exhibition that deals with the historical details of the campaign, with the imagery of Napoleon in Italy, his influence on the formation of the future Republic.
Anti-Napoléon	Musée national de Malmaison	1996	Exhibition that presents Napoleon's black legend through a presentation of European caricatures.

Table 2: Museums dedicated to Napoleon and important permanent exhibits in national museums

Nomination	Location	Date(s) of creation/ inauguration	Major actors/management	Main display themes	Short collection history
<u>House/Family Museums</u>	-	-	-	-	-
Napoleon museum of Saint Helena	Island of Saint Helena, British but the domains related to Napoleon are owned by the French state.	1857	The negotiations for French ownership of Longwood were instigated by Napoleon III. Longwood was bought by France in 1855 thanks to Queen Victoria, the Briars by Mrs Brooks to France in 1960. The museum situated on British territory, is financed by the Napoleon Foundation and is run by the French ministry of Foreign affairs and is not part of the RMN network of napoleonic museums.	The house has been maintained and restored as the last home of Napoleon Bonaparte since 1857 due to the direct attention of Napoleon III.	There are original elements of the furnishings in the house during Napoleon's exile and an important collection of souvenirs
Musée national du château de Malmaison and château de Bois-Préau	Île de France, France	1906	The house, bought by Joséphine in 1799 remained hers until her death in 1814, exchanged hands twice but came back into the imperial family in 1861 when it was bought by Napoleon III, the state sold it in 1877 but it was offered to the state again in 1904, becoming a national museum in 1906.	The museum is more specifically dedicated to the period of the <i>Consulat</i> and to Joséphine and her children. Whilst Bois-Préau houses souvenirs of Saint-Helena and displays related to the Napoleonic legend (1815 to the present day).	The house though emptied by 1861 has been restored to show the rooms of Josephine's residence and to present the aspect again of a former home, important collection of art and decorative arts of the style Empire, that were part of the so called <i>Mobilier national</i> collection and the rest is due to donations

Musée national de la maison Bonaparte	Ajaccio, Corsica, France	1923, declared historical monument and a museum was established - took on the status of national in 1967.	The remained in the Bonaparte family from generation to generation, passing notable to Napoleon III and his wife Eugenie in 1923 the prince Victor who offered it to the state in 1923 (today it is RMN and administratively dependant of the museum at Malmaison)	History of Corsica. Family home, family members and their history. Period rooms evoking the home where Napoleon was born and grew up: the <i>chambre natale</i> is the central attraction of the museum.	The house could be visited by a very select public and was already a site of napoleonic cult in the 19th c. Much of the furniture and collections are original, having been preserved over the generations.
Musée Napoléon de l'île d'Aix	Island of Aix, off the Atlantic coast, France	Inaugurated in 1928, it was nationalized in 1959	The house in bought from the French army in 1926 by the baron Napoleon Gourgaud (great grandson of general Gaspard Gourgaud (1783-1852) - who had followed Napoleon to Saint Helena. Today, RMN, (administratively dependant of the museum at Malmaison)	It has been preserved as the house were Napoleon gave himself up to the British after the defeat of Waterloo	10 rooms each developing a specific theme related to the life of the Emperor, especially preserved is Napoleon's bedroom from his three day stay before his surrender. The collections of souvenirs however were bought by Gourgaud himself and given to the museum.
Musée national du château de Fontainebleau, Musée Napoléon Ier	Fontainebleau, France	1979, inaugurated in 1986.	Part of the RMN network, the decision to establish a special "museum" in the castle was made following a donation.	Presented as Napoleon's favorite residence "Voilà la vraie demeure des rois, la maison des siècles".	The decision to establish a special museum in one of the wings of the castle was made following an important donation made by the prince and the princess Napoléon of souvenirs belonging to the imperial family.
<u>Outside of France:</u>					
Napoleonmuseum, Thurgau, Castle Arenenberg,	Switzerland	1906	donated to the canton of Thurgau in 1906 by Eugénie de Montijo, widow of Napoleon III, who had inherited it from his mother. Eugénie's wish was that it be transformed in a museum dedicated to Napoleon. Today it is cantonal museum	It is only German speaking museum dedicated to the history of Napoleon. Former residence of the exiled Hortense de Beauharnais, bought in 1817 (wife Louis Bonaparte, Arenenberg was the childhood home of Louis-Napoleon, later Napoleon III)	Essentially made up of period rooms that illustrate the decorative and fine arts of the first and second Empire. The room in which Hortense died has been kept in its original state.

Residenze Napoleoniche: Musei Nazionale; Palazzina dei Mulini; Villa San Martino and the Demidoff Gallery	Elba island, Italy	19th c.	Anatolif Demidov brought together a collection of Napoleonic souvenirs from all over the island for the gallery and the Villa San Martino in order to form a museum, but most was dispersed in 1880 after his death.	The Palazzina dei Mulini had been Napoleon's official residence on the island, whilst the Villa Sal Martino, was his more intimate retreat. Both contained souvenirs of the Emperor but were relatively badly kept and have only been renovated in recent decades as quite sparse period room style displays.	In the 19th c. the Count Anatolif Demidov who had bought the Villa Sal Martino, which had been the more intimate residence of Napoleon, built a gallery in the front as a kind of mausoleum in memory of the Emperor.
Museo Napoleonico	Rome, Italy	1927	Giuseppe Primoli (1851-1927), son of Count Pietro Primoli and Princess Carlotta Bonaparte (grand-daughter of Napoleon's brother, Lucien). Primoli gave his collection to the city of Rome in 1927 as a legacy - it is today run as a municipal museum (we might add that the municipal museums of Rome have an obviously national status - including such institutions as the Capitoline museums).	The displays offer a family cult to the figure of the Emperor and illustrate the relationship between Rome and the Bonapartes, as the once future imperial city to be ruled over by Napoleon's only son the "roi de Rome" and the city of exile for a large part of imperial family after 1815 (Napoleon's mother, Letizia and his brothers Louis and Jérôme).	The collection itself was mainly established by the Count Giuseppe Primoli (1851-1927). They are mainly made of furniture, paintings, sculptures etc of portraits of the Emperor and other members of the royal family, organized as period rooms that have remained faithful to the presentations created by the count Primoli himself.

Apsley House	London, England	Donated in 1947; opened to the public in 1952 to mark the centenary of the Dukes death.	The house was offered to the First Duke of Wellington as recompense for his military achievements, it is still in the family but the current public display areas were donated by the 7th duke of Wellington to the State, and are today the collections are managed by the Victoria and Albert museum and building is labelled as "English Heritage".	Residence bought by the Arthur first Duke of Wellington in 1817, annual banquets in commemoration of Wellington were held there during the lifetime of the first Duke. Today the displays are of the Dukes collection and public reception rooms, relating the Dukes victory at Waterloo and the subsequent celebrations of that victory, especially in the Waterloo gallery and dining hall.	Period rooms, as decorated by Wellington, presentation of his collection of art works, portraits of his time, of Napoleon and his family. Painting collection confiscated from Joseph Napoleon's that had been part of the Spanish royal collection, notably hung as in the time of Wellington in the Waterloo gallery. The entry hall is decorated by famous nude statue of Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker, sculpted by Canova, in 1806 and rejected by the Emperor himself, it was purchased by the British government and presented as a gift to Wellington.
Museum of Napoleon Souvenirs, Prince's Palace of Monaco	Monaco	Opened to the public after 1949	Prince Louis II of Monaco (1870-1949), Rainier III	A collection of over 1000 souvenir objects related to Napoleon I from garments of the <i>roi de Rome</i> to religious souvenirs from Saint Helena	Collection composed by Prince Louis II of Monaco (1870-1949)
<u>National History Museums</u>					
Musée national du château de Versailles	Versailles, France	1837	Former royal residence, nationalised and opened to the public in 1798, as a history museum in 1837 (under the patronage of king Louis-Philippe), today run by the RMN, ministry for Culture however the main attraction today are the former Royal living quarters refurbished at the end of the nineteenth century.	A series of rooms dedicated to the history of the Revolution and the Empire, notable - the Marengo room and the room of the Sacre with a copie of David's monumental painting of Napoleons coronation as Emperor.	The history of France is told through the display of monumental history paintings - many were painted during the period of the Revolution and the Empire itself, and some were commissioned specifically for the museum by Louis-Philippe - it very much presents the history of Napoleon from the perspective of national historical propaganda far from current historiographical readings.

Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam, Netherlands	1800 (first opening) 1808 move to Amsterdam, 1815, the Rijksmuseum, 1885 (current building).	State owned building and collections but administered and run as a private foundation since 1996.	Before the renovation that began in 2003 three rooms were dedicated to the Napoleonic era, of course mainly representing the figure of Louis Napoleon, but also important display to devoted to the victory of Waterloo.	The largest canvas of the Rijksmuseum is indeed Jan Willem Pieneman's <i>Battle of Waterloo</i> , 1824, (576x836 cm), Napoleon is not represented.
Deutsches Historisches Museum	Berlin, Allemagne	Political project since 1983, first exhibitions from 1991 onwards, permanent exhibit since 2006.	German Bundestag.	History of Germany from its origins to the present day in a monumental chronological presentation. Room 17: Napoleon und Europe. Presents a variety of documents that comment in part on the social contributions of the period for Germany but also on the extreme violence of the napoleonic wars.	The collections include two "trophies" of the victory of Waterloo, Napoleon's hat and sword (as such a kind of pendant to the skeleton of Napoleon's horse, in the National Army Museum in London). Also objects rarely shown elsewhere such as the "Waterloo Zähne" dentures made from death gathered from soldiers dead during the battle of Waterloo (also shown at the <i>Traum und Trauma</i> exhibition).
Museo del Risorgimento	Milan, Italy	1893	Municipality of Milan	Italian history from 1796 to 1870	The regalia worn by Napoleon when he was crown king in Milan in 1805
<u>Military Museums</u>					
Musée de l'Armée: Hôtel National des Invalides	Paris, France	1905	Ministry of Defense, Société des Amis du Musée de l'Armée. Museum goes back to the Arsenal museum created in 1797 and which was housed in the <i>Hôtel des Invalides</i> from 1873 onwards. The development of a museum of military history was encouraged in parallel after a retrospective military exhibition that took place during the Universal Exhibition of 1889. They were united to form the <i>Musée de l'armée</i> in 1905.	There is a long history of display related to the figure of Napoleon, conditioned at first by the presence of his tomb in the <i>Église du Dôme</i> . Reliquary type displays of symbolical souvenirs are the mains characteristic of these displays. This aspect has been somewhat neutralized by the new display that opened in 2009. There is	The vast majority of the objects directly related to the figure of the Emperor came into possession of the state in the second half of the 19th c. Before the opening of an actual museum in the Invalides in 1905 they were partly regrouped as a reliquary display close to the tomb itself. (i.e. the Sword of Austerlitz). They included the so-called souvenirs of the "Return of the ashes".

				relative continuity though with a similar installation of Napoleon's military camp room.	
Heeresgeschichtliches Museum	Vienna, Austria	project: 1848, inauguration and development 1856/1891	Imperial creation by Kaiser Franz Joseph I, State run by the ministry of Defence	Chronological display of military history of Austria - dedicated rooms to the napoleonic wars.	Room dedicated to the Archduke Charles, chief of the Austrian army against Napoleon. Display opposing the two military heroes. With specific souvenirs such as the coat of the General Koller worn by Napoleon on his voyage to Elba.
National Army Museum	London, England	end of 1950s, 1960 royal charter; 1971 inauguration in current building	Inheriting collections from the Royal United Service Institution Museum in Whitehall. It was founded by Field Marschal Sir Gerald Walter Robert Templer, established by Royal Charter, public but not dependent of any one ministry.	The museum is made of 4 chronological sections of which the second is "Changing the World" - the first part of which is "The first Great War, 1793-1815" or the "Road to Waterloo" - it is mainly dedicated to an equal representation of all the actors of the Army - from the simple soldier to the general. The current display dates from 2006.	An important display area is dedicated to Waterloo, with the monumental 19th c. Sibourne model of the battle in a darkened room - and animated by multi-media. The main display related to the figure of Napoleon is the famous skeleton of his horse Marengo, that he rode into the battle of Waterloo



Historical Narratives of the Nation and the Internationalization of Museums: Exhibiting National Art Histories in the Jeu de Paume Museum between the Wars

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Abstract

In 1983 Benedict Anderson insisted on the foundational role that museums have played in the construction of *imagined communities*. To better grasp the mechanisms at work in the shaping of historical narratives of the nation as it takes place in the museum it is vital to cross-reference the history of nationalism with recent studies on cultural and artistic circulation. The latter have proved that national identities are inherently constructed at a transnational level. The question is, therefore: what happens to the historical narratives manufactured by national museums at a time when museums as such undergo a process of internationalization mediated by traveling exhibitions?

My contribution will focus on a batch of exhibitions conceived by the national museums of several European countries and hosted by the Paris Jeu de Paume between 1921 and 1939 (exhibitions of Belgian, Swiss, Romanian, Dutch, Canadian, Austrian, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Latvian art). I will analyze this group of exhibitions in terms of the construction of national stereotypes, both at the level of the material production at the hand of foreign museums planning exhibitions abroad and from the point of view of their reception by more or less specialized publics, beginning with the Parisian curators. The texts of catalogues and documents clarifying the makeup of individual events will be compared with the specifically visual devices: catalogue illustrations and the choice of works to be reproduced in journals, newspapers, on postcards, posters and advertisements. Our aim will be to clarify the political stakes at play in these choices.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, the expansion of temporary exhibitions and the subsequent development of a network of loans and exchanges among museums resulted in a wide circulation of works of art at a European and global scale (Haskell 2000). This renewed mobility of museum collections was not limited to the displacement of individual works: exhibitions, especially after the Great War, began to be conceived at the outset for export. Between the wars, in the general context of an enhanced cultural diplomacy among former ally countries (or, as in France, a politics of cultural prestige), exhibitions designed to introduce a foreign public to the artistic heritage of a specific country abound.

This particular genre, or subcategory, offers a unique vantage point for a discussion of the historical narratives of the nation as shaped by national museums, not least because it requires us to rethink the terms of the question. A score of now classic studies on the construction of national identities has called attention to the instrumental role of the museum as an institution in the development of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983; Thiesse 1999). However, what happens to the historical narratives manufactured by national museums at a time when museums themselves undergo a process of internationalization, mediated by travelling exhibitions? In other words, what does it mean to construct a “history of national art”, or a “national history of art”, for a foreign museum? How does the image of cultural identity as displayed before “others” differ from the internal image conceived for an autochthonous public? What particular categories of items are mobilized? What are the strategies for display?

I would like to address these questions by examining a corpus of twenty exhibitions hosted between 1923 and 1939 by the Jeu de Paume Museum, whose curator was then André Dezarrois¹. The purpose of these events was introducing the Parisian public to groups of works on loan from the national and regional museums of each country. How to study this corpus of exhibitions from the point of view of the construction of national identities? As it is hardly possible to focus on individual examples in this context, I would rather like to attempt a *global* analysis of this corpus. These exhibitions provide particularly clear instances of the way a constitutively trans-national construction of a historical narrative of the nation operates at an institutional and intellectual level. The adjective “trans-national” implies different layers of meaning. At a first level, we have the relationships between the “exhibiting” country and France. At a second level, European relationships: from the point of view of Italian institutions, for example, the 1935 Italian exhibition at the Jeu de Paume was one of several showcases of Italian art that were traveling through Europe in the context of a deliberate strategy of display of Italian cultural prestige abroad. French institutions, for their part, conceived of the exhibition at the Jeu de Paume as an open-ended but organic cycle of events connected with the several exhibitions of French art that were being hosted in foreign museums in the same years².

A simpler, monographic approach would hardly do justice to this great complexity. The mechanisms that preside over the construction of national identity in the museum are inseparable from these multi-layered interactions. I will therefore attempt a cross-sectional study of these exhibitions, in order to point out a number of patterns that appear to underlie the writing and the techniques of visualization of an historical narrative of national art as staged abroad and for foreign eyes. In so doing, I will attempt to address at the same time the two levels of production of historical narratives of the past through exhibitions on one hand, and their reception in Paris on the other.

The first point of interest concerns the choice of Paris itself as the showcase for a country's art and national history (Joyeux-Prunel 2009; Casanova 1999: 190-198 ; Sapiro 2009: 249-289). Within the international network of exhibitions as it began to develop in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, the place of display was of fundamental strategic importance. Within a system of multiple circulations of objects, being able to showcase material in prestigious venues, especially abroad, meant obtaining enhanced visibility for the collections of a museum. The location and frequency of exhibitions and possibly celebrated loans from prominent partners also affected the ranking of a country or an institution in the scoreboard of international prestige. This is one of the reasons why a study of the international system of exhibitions and their role in the construction of national identities needs to be conducted as a geohistory, if not a geopolitics of exhibition practices.

In this particular case, for example, it is essential to observe that exhibitions at the *Jeu de Paume* were usually organized at the initiative of the national museums of the countries that wished to be represented, through the direct contact taken by their officials with André Dézarrois to propose a retrospective of the country's national heritage in Paris³. Archival materials clearly show that the contribution of the *Jeu de Paume* was limited to providing spaces whilst transportation and insurance, as well as organizational costs, were entirely covered by the guests. Italy and the USA appear to be the only exception, possibly for reasons of exceptional prestige of the first and the excellence in contemporary art in the second case⁴.

Regardless of the motives – the ambitions of the “exhibiting museums” or France's wish to attract celebrated works – the choice of venues is essential for the development of a historical narrative of the national self, of a nation's art and heritage. In our case, an artistic and cultural genealogy is implied in which France plays a fundamental role in the development of the “exhibiting” country: the history of national art is rewritten “for” and “through” France. Particularly interesting documents, in this regard, are the historical essays that open the catalogues, invariably signed by the representatives of “exhibiting” museums. One of the leitmotifs of this literature is the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties that link the “guest” country to France. There is no doubt that such exhibitions are major diplomatic events, but it would be a mistake to dismiss these rewritten genealogies as a mere act of opportunism or a strategic statement. The writing and rewriting of the national self “through France” is a chapter in a cross-historical elaboration of national identity that needs to be studied in the long term. For example, the representatives of foreign museums evoke a canonical commonplace of late nineteenth century French criticism when they attribute the “reawakening” of local artists and the rediscovery of specifically national pictorial resources to the prestige of modern French painting. France helped other countries to be more “national”; nineteenth century French painters had been a model for the “locals”, who had rediscovered and painted in their wake the reality and nature of their own home countries: this is a motif that recurs with almost obsessive frequency, and with minimal variations, in many catalogues.

In the specific case of the exhibition of Belgian art (1923), the rewriting of the country's artistic genealogy takes place in the context of a long-standing debate between Belgian and French art historians: the exhibition, as we shall see, was but the final chapter of a polemic on the “shared heritage” of the two countries. A sort of symbolic restitution took place when Ernest Verlant, of the boards of directors of the Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts de Belgique and Hippolyte

Fierens Gevaert, curator in chief of the same institution, wrote in the short introduction to the catalogue that the history of old and modern Belgian art would be unthinkable without a dialogue with France. They never went as far as to speak of an “influence” – faith in the autonomy of national art is another constant of these catalogues – but the dialogue with France was presented as particularly fruitful (Verlant 1923:29). Belgian national traditions in art seemed to entertain a harmonious relationship with their French counterparts: in the aftermath of the War an irenic representation of the relationships between the two countries, now comrades in arms, had replaced the fierce rivalry that had emerged in the early twentieth century with the exhibitions of Flemish and French primitives. This representation, as already noted, went with a sort of symbolic restitution, on the part of France, of a number of works endowed with deep-seated national implications. I am thinking of the paintings of the so-called “Maitre de Flémalle” or “Maitre de Mérode”⁵, owned by French museums, but whose Flemish origin had been ascertained as early as the end of the nineteenth century. These works had been displayed in 1902 in Bruges under the signature of the Flemish artist Robert Campin, but in 1904, with the Louvre exhibition of French primitives, France had snatched them back and reattributed them to the French “Maitre de Flémalle”, a choice that had scandalized a number of experts, not only Belgian, but also German, British and Italian (fig. 1) (Thiébaud 2003: 35-39; Passini 2012). In 1923, at last, these panels were displayed as Flemish paintings at the exhibition on Belgian art hosted in the French capital – a token of renewed friendship between two countries and people, as explained by Léonce Bénédite, curator of the Musée du Luxembourg and chief organizer of the exhibition, in his preface to the catalogue (Bénédite 1923: 26; Arnoux 2007: 139-140).



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Figure 1: The « Maître de Flémalle », La Nativité (Musée de Dijon), in *Les Primitifs français exposés au Pavillon Marsan et à la Bibliothèque nationale du 12 avril au 14 juillet 1904*, catalogue, Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1904, plate.

Apart from the way such events embodied a certain kind of relationship with France, how were national arts “staged” in these exhibitions, how were they materially put on display? The archives of the Jeu de Paume, unfortunately, don’t reveal much about expography. The catalogues, however, suggest that the set-up of these events was invariably chronologic, following in sequence the evolution of a national corpus through its defining stages. Hosted by the alleged “capital” of European art, these exhibitions were synthetic and highly mediatized representations of the “legitimate heritage” of a country. A particularly interesting question, therefore, is to what epoch; to what works in particular does the “exhibiting” museum (or do ...museums) trace back the beginnings of “national art”?

The double exhibition of Italian art, a section on medieval and modern art at the Petit Palais and one on contemporary art the Jeu de Paume, opened with three roman sculptures on loan from the Louvre, welcoming the visitors at the entrance, under the dome of the Petit Palais, despite the title of that section, “From Cimabue to Tiepolo”⁶. It wasn’t possible for me to ascertain whether the initiative went back to art critic Ugo Ojetti, chairman of the Italian committee and literally “metteur en scène” of the exhibition, or to his French counterpart, Raymond Escholier, the curator of the Petit Palais. This choice, however, went particularly well with the general concept of a double exhibition that was rooted in the political myth of Rome, and that not only opened but also closed under the sign of romanity: the Louvre statues on one end, a group of artists supported by the fascist regime on the other. André Dezarrois himself insisted on this point in a short contribution that followed the historical introduction to the catalogue, signed by the Italian art historian Antonio Maraini. According to Dezarrois, the works of Carena, Tosi, Casorati, Chirico, Tozzi, De Pisis, Severini were a visible proof of “the ferment of a country that is rising from its ashes, rescued and beautified by Fascism”⁷. Maraini, accordingly, concluded his historical survey with a paragraph on “fascist revolution” and the rebirth of a “genuinely Italian art”: “As a tribute to this new life, the work of five pioneers and masters of art [...], working in different directions but endowed with the same innovative spirit and a deep-seated, spontaneous sense of tradition, have been gathered around the busts of the King and the Duce and Primo Conti’s ‘March on Rome’: the painters Spadini, Boccioni and Modigliani and the sculptors Andreotti and Wildt”⁸.

A diametrically opposite approach to this kind of colossal retrospective was the exhibition of Danish art, opening with the eighteenth century. As explained by Karl Madsen, former director of the Copenhagen Arts Museum and chairman of the Danish committee, before that date Danish artists were working “under the spell of foreign schools”, particularly the Dutch. Only after the foundation of Copenhagen Academy of Fine Arts in 1754 – writes Madsen – “national talents began to come to the fore”⁹. A very rigid notion of “influence” is at work here, allowing observers to make sharp distinctions between national and non-national, and therefore to mark the boundaries of “legitimate” artistic heritage.

Peasant and folkloric artistic expressions are sometimes included in the official self-representation of national art, as a key to its most ancient layers (fig. 2). If we study our corpus of exhibitions in terms of a system of centre and periphery, we immediately notice that the countries exposing popular artworks in Paris are invariably peripheral: Poland, Rumania, Latvia, Canada. Was this a choice of the organizers, a request from Dezarrois himself? The documents are not

very clear, but regardless of the more or less explicit role played by Dezarrois, here is a textbook example of a cross-construction of national identities, interiorizing the point of view of Paris.

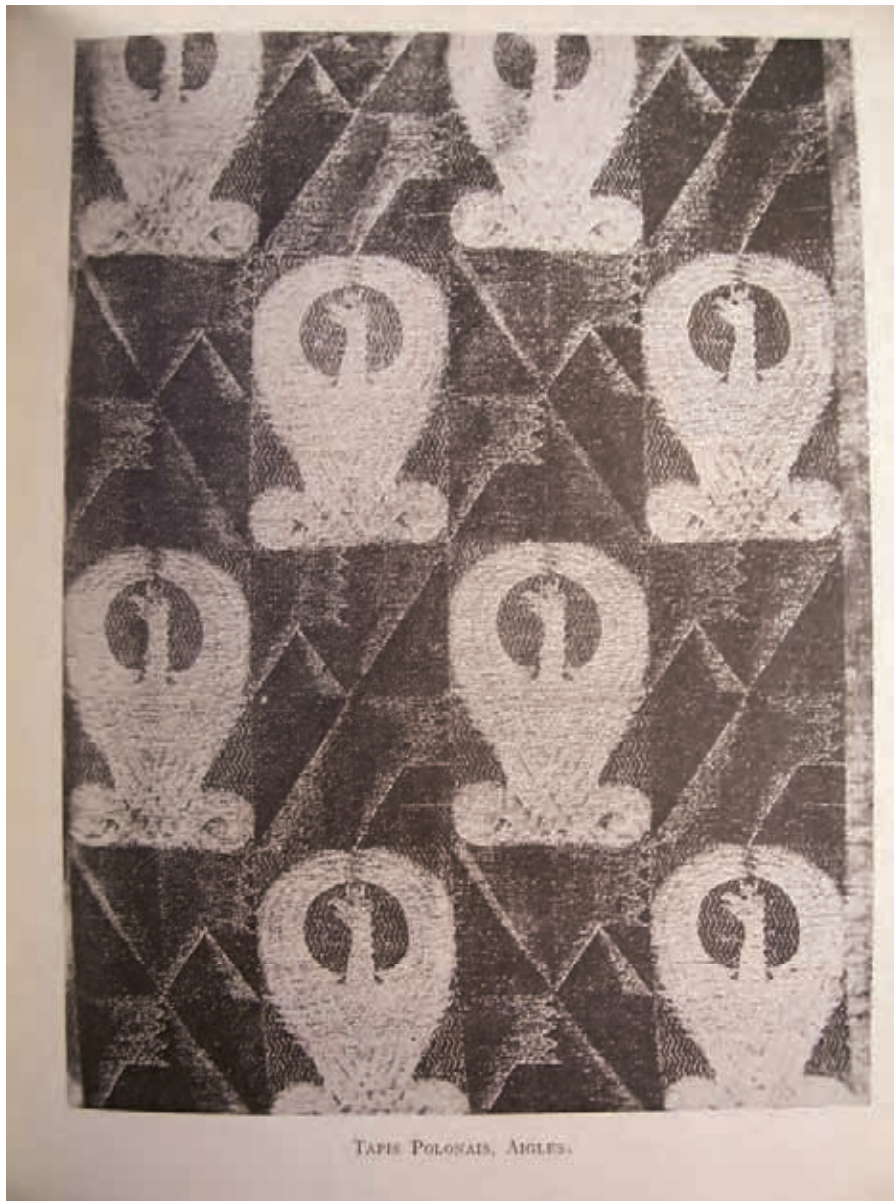


Figure 2: Polish carpet, in *Exposition polonaise: la Pologne 1830-1920-1930*, catalogue, Paris, Musée du Jeu de Paume, 1931, plate.

The policies adopted in the selection of works are essential to a study of exhibitions as construction and representation of a national aesthetic identity. Again, I will limit myself to a few examples that will hopefully clarify some of the political and intellectual implications of these events. As we shall note elsewhere, what is going on is a cross-construction of identities that can be studied both in terms of the design of an exhibition and its Parisian reception.

The 1923 exhibition of old and modern Belgian art, for example, placed national art under the sign of the “observation of nature” (Verlant 1923:28-35). This position had already been asserted at the seminal exhibition of Flemish primitives in Bruges, and the early twentieth century French discourse had assimilated it. The choice of works – promoted by a committee formed by curators of the Belgian Musée Royal de Beaux-Arts and the Anvers Musée Royal de Beaux-Arts –

reflected that representation. The 1923 exhibition significantly opened with the two panels of the Altarpiece of the Mystic Lamb by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, on loan from Gand cathedral, flanked by additional solo works by Jan van Eyck, such as the portrait of the artist's wife on loan from Bruges. These were followed by a gallery of primitives, the same that had been displayed twenty years earlier at the exhibition of Flemish primitives in Bruges, one of the cornerstones of the construction of a national aesthetic identity as founded on pictorial naturalism. Rubens' works led up to the section on modern Belgian art. This, too, was placed under the sign of naturalism, to stress the continuity of national traditions. The choice of works itself as submitted to Dezarrois by the Belgian board of organizers, is evidence enough: such painters as Alfred Verwée (fig. 3) and Rik Wouters were allotted considerable space, while Ensor was absent, even if many of his works had been purchased by Belgian museums, beginning with the Arts Museum of Ostend. Therefore, it seems particularly promising to analyze these exhibitions as a construction and "staging" of national stereotypes.



Figure 3: Alfred Verwée, *L'embouchure de l'Escaut* (oil on canvas, 1880, Bruxelles, Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts de Belgique), in *Exposition de l'art belge, ancien et moderne*, Catalogue, Paris, Musée du Jeu de Paume, 1923, plate.

Four years later, in 1927, the exhibition of Canadian art opened its doors. In his preface to the catalogue, National Gallery of Canada director Eric Brown insisted on the category of "pioneer art" as a foundation of Canadian aesthetic identity that was reflected in the country's artistic production, and he evoked the beauty of Canadian nature as a privilege object of said "pioneer art" (Brown 1927: 11-12). This non-European example appears significant from the point of view of a visual construction of national identity. Again, no photographic documents survive in the archives of the Musées Nationaux. However, the catalogue's cover, the only illustrated instance in the series, is a visual synthesis of an identity whose construction combined motifs of exploration, discovery and the taming of the wild (fig. 4). The illustrations of the catalogue insisted on these themes: landscape dominates (16 photographs on 26 are landscapes). Let us not forget that this kind of visual record, conceived for later reference, constitute as it were the memory of exhibitions. This visual summary of Canadian art must have exerted a powerful "canonizing" influence on the Parisian public.

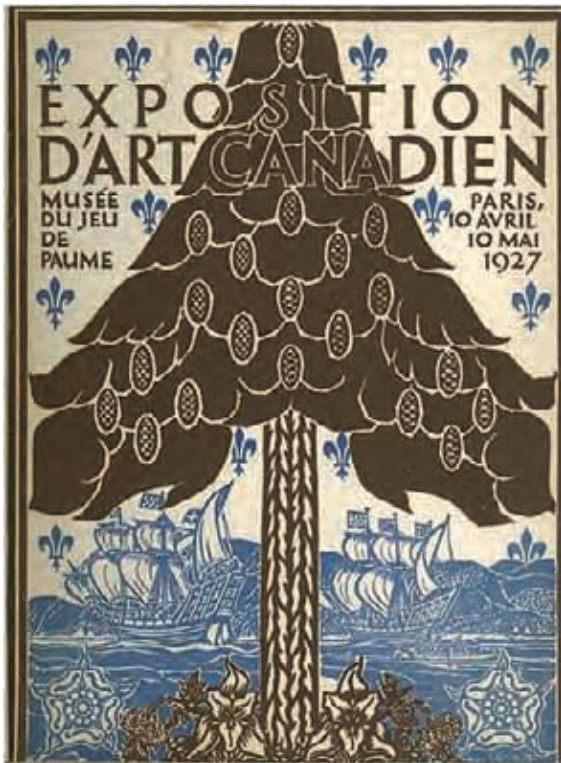


Figure 4: Exposition d'art canadien, Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris 10 April – 10 May 1927, catalogue cover.

The 1924 exhibition of Swiss art is particularly relevant from the point of view of a construction of national stereotypes, because it emphasizes its limits. French critics had a particularly hard time summarizing the specific “national genius” of Switzerland in a single formula. They invert the issue by claiming that Swiss national identity lies in the country’s openness, in its ability to mediate between contrasts and different identities. This was the solution provided by both Auguste Marguillier and François Thiébaud-Sisson in “Journal de Genève” and in the “Temps” of May 1924 (Marguillier 1924; Thiébaud-Sisson 1924). At the same time – and this is a point that needs to be stressed – French critics were obviously unanimous in clearing Swiss, Belgian and Dutch from any suspicion of German influence. It should be observed that Germany was conspicuous by its absence at the Jeu de Paume.

I will not insist on the meaning of this absence, discussed by Mathilde Arnoux in an excellent essay (Arnoux 2007: 160-169), but to conclude I wish to introduce some similar cases, in which the organizers of an exhibition sought to detach or disengage a corpus of national art from a rival tradition. It is the case of the 1937 exhibition of Catalan art from the X to the XV century. In a time when the Spanish civil war was raging, its chief promoter, Joachim Folch I Torres, director of the Catalunya Arts Museum of Barcelona, had conceived a history of national art that harked back to a reading of the Catalan middle ages that had been put forth in the 20s and 30s by a score of militant specialists of medieval Catalonian art, particularly Josep Puig i Cadafalch (Vidal i Jansà 1991). According to this reading, Catalan art was completely original and independent, and its privileged stylistic ties with France excluded at the outset Castilian influences of any sort. The choice of Paris can be explained in terms of the additional visibility afforded by the simultaneous presence of an International exhibition of arts and techniques, or by the cordial relationships that Catalan specialists of medieval art entertained with their French counterparts. However, it was

also a way of placing emphasis on a supposedly ancient and strong relationship. One of the goals of the exhibition, in fact, was an attempt at an integrated definition of a stylistically homogenous and wholly independent “Mediterranean region” comprising Catalonia, Southern France and North-Eastern Italy. That was the cradle of Romanesque art. By letting France into the genealogy of Catalonian art, in a word, it was possible to expunge Castilian Spain.

The above was a very brief introduction to some of the main topics of a work in progress on the representation of national identities in and through art exhibitions. My aim is to show how the construction of national identities as it takes place in the international circulation of items and knowledge that invests the museum in the twentieth century is essentially a cross-construction, a trans-national process. These experiences resonated in Henri Focillon’s 1937 preface to the catalogue of the exhibition *Masterpieces of French art*: when he set out to define the genuine characters of national French art, one of his explicit references was the cycle of national exhibitions hosted by the Jeu de Paume.

Notes

- ¹ The countries involved are: Belgium (*Exposition de l’art belge, ancien et moderne*, 1923, and *L’art belge depuis l’impressionnisme*, 1928), Switzerland (*Exposition de l’art suisse du XV^e au XIX^e siècle : de Holbein à Hodler*, 1924, and *L’art suisse contemporain depuis Hodler, peinture et sculpture*, 1934), Romania (*Exposition de l’art roumain, ancien & moderne*, 1925), Holland (*Exposition hollandaise : tableaux, aquarelles, dessins*, 1926), Canada (*Exposition d’art canadien*, 1927), Austria (*Exposition d’art autrichien : les trésors de Maximilien, prêtés par la République d’Autriche*, 1927, and *Exposition d’art autrichien*, 1937), Denmark (*L’art danois depuis fin XVIII^e siècle jusqu’à 1900*, 1928), Sweden (*L’Art Suédois depuis 1880*, 1929), Japan (*Exposition d’art japonais, école classique et contemporaine*, 1929), Poland (*Exposition polonaise: la Pologne 1830-1920-1930*, 1931), Portugal (*Exposition portugaise : de l’époque des grandes découvertes jusqu’au XX^e siècle*, 1931), China (*Exposition d’art chinois contemporain*, 1933), Italy (*L’Art italien des XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, 1935), Spain (*L’art espagnol contemporain, peinture et sculpture*, 1936), Catalonia (*L’art catalan du X^e au XV^e siècle*, 1937), United States (*Trois siècles d’art aux États-Unis*, 1938), Latvia (*Exposition d’art de la Lettonie. Peinture, sculpture et art populaire*, 1939)
- ² In 1932 the Musées nationaux organized the exhibition *French Art 1200-1900* at the Royal Academy of London. In 1935 *L’Art français du XVIII^e siècle* was hosted in New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Toronto and Ottawa (National Gallery of Canada); in 1937, the exhibition *La peinture française de Manet à nos jours* was presented first at the National Museum of Belgrade, later at the national museums of Warsaw and Prague.
- ³ The archival material for these exhibitions can be consulted at the Archives des Musées nationaux, serie X-expositions. The following notes will specify the call numbers of individual documents of interest.
- ⁴ The exhibition of contemporary Italian art organized at the Jeu de Paume in 1935 (*L’Art italien des XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, catalogue, Paris, Jeu de Paume des Tuileries, 1935) was the counterpart a great retrospective exhibition of Italian art, *Exposition de l’art italien de Cimabue à Tiepolo*, catalogue, Paris, Petit-Palais, 1935, that opened its doors at the same time at the Petit Palais. The archival material for both exhibitions can be consulted at the Archives des Musées nationaux, serie X-expositions, carton 22 “1935-Art italien”. The expenses for the organisation and the promotion of the event were covered by the Italian state on one hand and the Ville de Paris and the Réunion des Musées nationaux on the other: the respective quotas were 500.000 francs, later raised to 700.000 francs (X-expositions, carton 22, dossier 1 “organisation”). On the exhibition of American art, *Trois siècles d’art aux Etats-Unis* (1938), a partnership between the Jeu de Paume and the New York Museum of Modern Art, see I. Guyat, *Musée du Jeu de Paume 1938. Trois siècles d’art aux Etats-Unis, exposition présentée par le Musée d’art moderne de New York en association avec la direction des Musées nationaux français. Un échange culturel exemplaire ?*, “maîtrise” dissertation, Université de Paris I – Sorbonne, 1993.
- ⁵ Specifically, *La Nativité* (now at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Dijon) and the *Vierge Glorieuse* (Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence) : See *Exposition de l’art belge ancien et moderne*, catalogue, Paris, Musée du Jeu de Paume, 1923, p. 37.
- ⁶ *Exposition de l’art italien de Cimabue à Tiepolo*, catalogue, Paris, Petit Palais, 1935, p. 299-300.
- ⁷ “Le mouvement de l’Italie renaissante, sauvée et embellie par le fascisme”, *L’Art italien des XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, catalogue, op. cit., p. 35.

- ⁸ “C’est en témoignage de ce début d’une vie nouvelle qu’on été réunies autour des bustes du Roi et du Duce et de la ‘marche sur Rome’ des chemises noires de Primo Conti, les œuvres de cinq artistes [...] qui furent nos pionniers et nos maîtres dans des directions diverses mais en ayant tous, outre l’esprit rénovateur, un sens inné et profond de la tradition : ce sont les peintres Spadini, Boccioni, Modigliani et les sculpteurs Andreotti et Wildt”, A. Maraini, *Préface*, in *L’Art italien des XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, catalogue, cit., p. 26
- ⁹ “Jusqu’au milieu du XVIII^e siècle, les meilleurs parmi les artistes qui travaillaient au Danemark y avaient été appelé de l’étranger, au XVII^e notamment de Hollande. Ce n’est qu’après la fondation, en 1754, de l’Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts à Copenhague [...] que les talents nationaux commencèrent à se faire valoir”, K. Madsen, “Introduction”, in *L’art danois depuis fin XVIII^e siècle jusqu’à 1900*, p. 5.

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Maritime master narratives in European national museums

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Abstract

Some national museums have produced narratives of the nation and its history around specifically maritime themes. To what extent are those presented histories ‘European’? Preliminary research was carried out in two areas: first, narratives based on exhibitions of Norse culture and history (which had an impact across Europe); and secondly, narratives in or about historic ships, vessels created in the context of European conflicts, and often sited on Europe’s littoral boundaries. In each case a photographic survey was undertaken to contribute to an overall record of the physical aspects of each gallery, focussing on specific exhibits and text panels to provide detail. Plans and sample publications were collected, and websites examined to obtain as comprehensive a view as possible of the way different institutions display their collections. Specific national themes were prominent, although the exhibits are about events which were shared European experiences.

Introduction

Narratives based on maritime themes in some European museums are considered here. To what extent are those presented histories 'European'? Two illustrative case studies are presented in the form of initial findings. The first is based on Viking galleries in Stockholm (Historiska Museet) and Dublin (National Museum of Ireland, Archaeology). The second concerns HMS *Victory* and its setting in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Other collections studied will be referenced where comparisons are especially useful, including collections in: Berlin (Deutsches Technikmuseum, Neues Museum); Bremerhaven (Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum, Technikmuseum Willhelm Bauer); Dublin (Collins Barracks); Gdansk/Gdynia (Centralne Muzeum Morskie, SS *Soldek*, ORP *Blyskawica*); London (British Museum, HMS *Belfast*); Oslo (Kulturhistorisk Museum); Portsmouth (Historic Dockyard, HMS *Warrior*, Mary Rose Museum, Royal Naval Museum); St Petersburg (*Aurora*); and Stockholm (Armémuseum, Sjöhistoriska Museet).

To map Norse activity comprehensively is to outline Europe (and to touch the New World); and later, sailing ships developed in European commerce and conflicts were to express one aspect of the continent's global reach. At a time when, it is claimed, 'nowhere is the issue of borderlands more salient than in the context of contemporary Europe' (Kaplan and Häkli, 2002: 3), and when historians are claiming that borders deserve 'sustained and detailed study' (Frank and Hadler, 2011: 4), it seems appropriate to indicate how these exhibits might relate to that context, or at least to show how most of these maritime stories are told at the edges of nations, not at the metropolitan centre. The research is also part of a collaborative project and parallels Dr. Sheila Watson's work on origins.

Stories at the edge of Europe: the Norse

Attempts to utilise aspects of European history in an effort to find commonalities have sometimes drawn on common cultural themes, including a putative 'Viking' past (Davies, 1996: 42–45; Halewood and Hannam, 2001: 569), leading to comments about 'the sanitized narration of the Vikings as benevolent merchants' in pursuit of a common European myth (Levy, Pensky and Torpey, 2005: xxvi). Here, galleries in Dublin (National Archaeological Museum) and Stockholm (Historiska Museet) will form the focus of an assessment of how the Norse are displayed.

There is a historiographical subtext here, for arguably the 'Viking Age' is a creation of nineteenth century nationalism. With the Christianisation of the Norse and the cessation of their raids (in the eleventh century), Europe largely forgot them. The exception was in Iceland, where Norse myths were recorded in the twelfth century, though O'Donoghue also traced early connections between Norse mythology and Anglo-Saxon culture, due either to shared (if distant) roots, or significant later Scandinavian settlement (2008: 85–102). By the sixteenth century, Scandinavians were exploring this Norse past in more detail, and the early Icelandic texts 'were a gift to Scandinavian historians and politicians... [who] felt very keenly the disdain of other European nations for its [Scandinavia's] supposed cultural backwardness' (O'Donoghue 2008: 107). Meanwhile, in Britain, from the Renaissance until at least the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Saxons were seen as a founding element of the nation (Scragg and Weinberg 2000: 5). 'The struggles of Alfred the Great, perhaps 'the archetypal symbol of the nation's perception of itself' (Keynes, 1999: 225) against the 'Danes' was a well established story before

the (modern) 'Vikings' arrived, as the word 'Viking' was 'practically unknown' in Britain until it first appears in the 1807 *Oxford English Dictionary* (Wawn 2000: 304). The cult of Alfred, and the story of his conflict with what would become the Danes/Vikings was, by then, being drawn on heavily by the British in response to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (Keynes, 1999: 289), as the Viking revival came about.

Wawn argues that the current popularity of Norse history owes much to this renewal of interest in the nineteenth century in Britain, suggesting that early Scandinavian publications provided the raw materials for the Victorians (Wawn 2000: 17). In this period, Wawn argued, 'Vikings' came to feature in a wide range of media, such as 'paraphrased sagas, prize essays, popular lectures, poems, plays, pious novels, papers in learned journals, and the like' (Wawn, 2011). For the Victorians, this Viking past 'becomes the acceptable face of constitutional monarchy, democratic accountability, social Darwinism, upward social mobility, and family values spirituality' (Wawn 2011). It also inspired academic research and influenced the academy (in the founding of the Viking Society for Northern Research in London in 1892, for example). The Norse myths went on to be 'moralised, allegorised, nationalised, imperialised, colonialised, politicised, sectarianised, regionalised and genderised' (Wawn 2000: 371).

This popularity was affected by two world wars (and in particular the links between Norse myth, racism and Nazi culture), but it has since recovered, and the Historiska Museet in Stockholm has an exhibit ('Vem Berättar din Historia/Who Tells Your History'), which illustrates some popular modern uses of the Viking 'brand' in Sweden and beyond. Halewood and Hannam (2001: 566) noted a significant expansion in Viking related tourism since the 1970s, claiming as a result, 'a heritage tourism phenomenon that fosters a degree of European integration'. However, 'Vikings' and aspects of Norse mythology are also exploited among racist white supremacists (O'Donoghue, 2008: 163; Gardell, 2003).

Do museums present the Norse past as a European or a national story? It is noticeable that conventional history books, popular works and especially maps of Norse history will almost always be heavily marked around the edges of Europe, with Norse voyages around the coast in the north, west and south, and along the great rivers linking the Baltic and the Black and Caspian seas, relating to modern geopolitical perceptions of Europe.

This may be reflected in museums which present the story of the Norse in different ways, in their use of maps of Norse activity. The Archaeology Museum in Dublin shows information clustered richly around Europe's north-west littoral and the Baltic, that is with most Viking activity charted in Western Europe. This links to and builds on finds and historical references connected to Dublin's trade, in a wall panel, 'Archaeological excavation of Dublin' with its map, 'Dublin and the Viking World'. Here the focus is on the Norse contribution to Ireland's past. Oslo's Kulturehistorisk museum's Norsk forhistorie section, including the Vikings, lacks a significant map of Norse activity in Europe, presenting them largely as a Norwegian cultural phenomenon, as 'us'. By contrast, in Stockholm's Historiska Museet, an audio-visual display (*Den Europeiska Scenen* in gallery 2, Vikingar), focuses on Europe and Iceland in a series of frames on 'Anfallen mot Europa 900-talet e. Kr.' Here Norse activity in Europe is set in the context of attacks by Arabic and Magyar invasions, in a museum with a more complex relationship with the Viking Age, and where the association of the Vikings with 'us' is far from sure.

A more extensive map of Viking activity is in Berlin's Neues Museum (room 206, case 14 map 'Die Wikinger') including Norse journeys from Russia and the Black Sea in the east to North America in the west. A similar wide perspective is taken in Gdansk's Centralne Muzeum Morskie, where the map 'Podróże Wikingów VIII – XI w.' (room 1, case 3) is centred on Europe, but includes the Caspian and beyond in the east, and Greenland and North America in the west.



Figure 1: Europe outlined by Norse activity: Gdansk, Centralne Muzeum Morskie (© The Author).

In both Berlin and Gdansk, we could argue that the Norse are seen as the 'other'. London's British Museum has a map of Norse activity (room 41, information panel 'The Viking World AD 750-100'), which is very extensive, with large parts of north America, Eurasia and north Africa framing Viking journeys. These more inclusive maps (in terms of geographic scope) are wider ranging and in the case of London, seem appropriate for a museum, which claims to be a 'world museum' and to have a 'totally unique collection' (MacGregor, 2009). Here, whether the Vikings are 'us' or not may be less important. Even though Norse settlement in eastern and north-western England had a significant impact on Britain, the museum is about a wider, global story. These maps suggest that although the Vikings are often seen as a Europe-wide phenomenon, the Norse are used differently in different museums.

The galleries in Dublin and Stockholm, examined in more detail, serve to illustrate this. Currently, Ireland's national museums display the country's history at two main sites. The Archaeological Museum in Kildare Street exhibits prehistoric and medieval Ireland (including the Vikings). The Early Modern period onwards is covered in displays in the Museum's Collins Barracks site. Another key institution for 1916 is Kilmainham Gaol, which is funded separately by the Office of Public Works.

There had been growing interest in the island's Celtic, Gaelic past, reflected in the Museum in the 1900s (Bourke, 2011: 324-5). This had the status of a 'Golden Age' in the emergent nation, and Irish leaders in the struggle for independence, such as Collins and Pearse, greatly valued this Gaelic past, perhaps because it showed a vision of a 'Golden Age' which 'told modern Irish men and women what was "authentically theirs" and how to be "themselves" once again in a free

Ireland' (Smith, 1991: 67). Arguably, the Gaelic past was deployed to put distance between Irishness and Britishness. This is explored by Wallace (currently Director of the National Museum), who noted that until the 1960s, prehistoric archaeology, especially Ireland's ancient Celtic culture, was privileged at the expense of medieval historical archaeology (Wallace 2008: 168-70).

As for popular perceptions of the Vikings, the Irish medievalist Clarke summed up Irish attitudes in 1995, saying the Vikings were regarded as 'inveterate plunderers and psychopathic thugs who terrorised the Irish, and Irish monks in particular, until that outsize heroic figure, Brian Bóruma, denied them their conquest of Ireland by his noble victory at Clontarf in 1014.' (Clarke 1995:7). Since then, a new Viking past has been introduced to the national narrative. Clarke noted that the museum played a role here: A.T. Lucas (director of the National Museum from 1954 to 1976) highlighted collaboration between the Norse and the native Irish, and Wallace built on that legacy (Clarke 1995), aided by the discovery of a major Norse site in the Wood Quay area of Dublin. This became a centre of attention when, in 1975, the area was earmarked for development as new council offices. There were large-scale public protests against the destruction this would cause to the Norse archaeology of the area. Protests and a campaign by the Friends of Medieval Dublin failed to preserve the site, but, together with a rescue excavation led by Wallace, it did at least help restore Viking history to Ireland's story, and it preserved many valuable finds, for on investigation, the site seemed likely to have been the most important of its kind in Europe. Wallace goes on to say that its importance was not fully appreciated at the time, and the excavation led to some criticism, which his team found difficult to confront. Years later, Wallace reflected that the museum might have done more:

'we should have faced up to the commitment of our heritage. Philosophically we should have accepted the Vikings and the heritage of urbanisation as much a part of Ireland as the Celts or as any of the prehistoric peoples. I think there were philosophical difficulties, there were administrative difficulties, and there was a kind of bureaucratic shyness in facing up to our responsibilities' (Wallace 1989: 24)

However, since then, the Archaeology Museum in Kildare Street has gained a Viking gallery (called 'Viking Ireland') in 1995, and a medieval gallery (called 'Medieval Ireland 1150-1550'), marking a significant extension to a somewhat monolithic, ancient Celtic past. The Medieval gallery recognises the intervention of Anglo-Norman adventurers in Ireland, an event which was to set a trend for the next seven centuries of English and British involvement in, and usually domination of, Ireland.

The museum at Kildare Street is laid out on a loosely chronological basis. From the entrance, the visitor enters the ground floor galleries about pre-historic Ireland, including a Treasury, which includes Celtic designs in gold, silver and jewels. Finds in peat bogs are linked to similar discoveries in England, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, a wider European context. There is also a display on the Hill of Tara, an important prehistoric site, which played a significant role in Irish history. It was associated with St Patrick and the Christianisation of the island, and with the tradition of the 'High King' of the island. Here, stepping out of its prehistoric context for a moment, the museum explains more recent events connected with Irish nationalism which happened at the Hill of Tara, for example how in the 1590s the Irish O'Neil

chieftain celebrated successes against the English here, and how in 1843 Daniel O'Connell led a great rally demanding repeal of the Union of Irish and British parliaments.



Figure 2: 'Viking Dublin' gallery. At the far end, a room showing Christian art from the period 'closes' the Viking age, and visitors exit to the right to the Anglo-Norman exhibits (© The Author).

The Viking gallery covers the period c.795-1170 and the entrance to the gallery is marked by a replica of a small Viking trading vessel, a recognisable icon. The gallery commences with a video describing how Ireland's 'Golden Age' was shattered by the arrival of the Norse. It goes on to address several themes, in particular the coming of the Norse and their conquests in Ireland, around burials and weapons; then the culture of the Norse settlers, including textiles, jewellery and slavery; and displays around craftsmanship, especially from the Wood Quay site. The emphasis here is on the development of early medieval civic life, with many domestic exhibits and reconstructions of Viking homes in Dublin. Whilst violent aspects of Norse life are illustrated, with weapons, a slave chain and a skull showing signs of a violent attack for example, this is set in a much wider context. Although the exhibit focuses on Ireland, the detailed labelling of objects indicates that the Norse settlers had wide-ranging connections with Britain, Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. The gallery shows how, by the end of the tenth century, Christianity had been adopted by the settlers and a Hiberno-Norse culture had developed. Towards the end of the exhibition, a panel sums up the Norse legacy: they founded the capital of Ireland, introduced the first use of money, greatly increased and extended trading links, introduced changes in dress, developed improved weapons (and iron work generally), introduced spurs and stirrups, and contributed to the Irish language.

Overall then, the gallery makes a positive case for the Norse contribution to the development of the island. However, the text also notes that 'one of the most lasting legacies of the Vikings in Ireland was their unconscious contribution to interesting England, its clergy and rulers, in

Ireland' (Anon, a, n.d.), which explains that this led to Anglo-Norman intervention in Ireland. The gallery closes with a room on the church in early Ireland, incorporating Norse work, since the Vikings became Christianised, bringing the period to a close. The visitor is now primed for the next gallery, Medieval Ireland, where the impact of Anglo-Norman colonisation is explored.

The gallery relates the story of Viking Ireland closely to a large number of well-preserved finds, mainly from Wood Quay, leaning on the agency of 'science' (in as much as archaeological practise represents scientific methodologies) to present an authoritative, professional interpretation. By introducing new pasts to what had been a largely Gaelic preserve, the museum was instrumental in changing what was, to some extent, a monolithic Gaelic story. The richness of the site at Wood Quay aids the museum in presenting a strongly Irish version of the Norse. This is echoed in the Treasury, where 'Viking Art Styles' are incorporated into the Irish artistic tradition. The Cross of Cong, a famous ornamented processional cross is on display here, and its decoration reflects both native Irish Romanesque and Scandinavian Urnes styles. By the end of the tenth century, for this museum, the Vikings have almost become 'us' rather than the 'other'. This is not a European story, it belongs to Ireland, validated by archaeology and contextualised and related carefully to the preceding Gaelic era and the future Anglo-Norman dominance.



Figure 3: Stockholm, Historiska Museet, exterior showing the use of Vikings in sculptures, bronze doors and posters (© The Author).

Stockholm's Historiska Museet covers Sweden's history from prehistoric times until the modern day, in a series of galleries: Forntider, Vikingar, Medeltida Konst, Textilkammaren, and Sveriges Historia (Prehistory, Vikings, Medieval Art, the Textile Room and History of Sweden).

In addition there is a treasury (the Guldrummet/Gold Room) and space for temporary exhibitions. However, the Vikings have strayed from their home in the Viking gallery. Indeed, the museum's logo, the Norse god Odin on his eight-legged horse, features on its publicity, including the web page header. The austere facade of the museum features sculptures and bronze doors, both the work of Bror Marklund, with a Viking theme, but almost as a dark warning rather than a celebration (Odelburg, 1983). A replica of a carved lion with Norse graffiti (the real statue is in Venice), and (in 2011) a banner showing a child dressed as a Viking, are in the foyer, whilst the shop includes many Viking themed gifts.

The Vikings also appear in the Forntider galleries. In an imaginative display modelled on an airport departure lounge, the museum explores the role of archaeology in modern life ('Vem Berättar din Historia/Who Tells Your History') and here shows popular examples of the use of the Viking 'brand'. The (English) text of the panel explains that:

'It was not until the 1870s that leading archaeologists such as Oscar Montelius started to call the period between 800 and 1050 the Viking period. This period was seen as the high point of Old Norse development by the archaeologists of that time, a high point enjoyed by the Swedes but not by the Finns, Sami, Estonians or Slavs who lived in neighbouring countries.'
(Anon, b, n.d.)

The exhibits here deconstruct the 'Viking Age' from this emergence to the current wide use of the Vikings in a range of popular media, as for example in the logo of the 'Boro Vikings' (a club for Swedish supporters of the English football club Middlesbrough), in advertising, and in entertainment.

In fact the 'proper' Viking gallery itself is fairly conventional, organised mainly around the themes of aristocrats, crafts and life in the Viking period (and some modern interpretations of it) and the initial coexistence of paganism and Christianity. It has a model of a Viking ship (the Gokstad ship), audiovisual displays of the age of migrations (which provides a Europe-wide context for the Vikings), and a wealth of other artefacts. There is a small display illustrating the adoption of the Viking myth by the Nazis, the one moment when the gallery steps firmly aside from 'just' display and makes a judgement, offers an opinion. There are also reconstructions of Viking clothing and a model of the Viking town of Birkby, and exhibits of domestic life and agriculture, as well as the exploration of social hierarchies and examples and descriptions of the significant role of women in Viking society.

However, because the museum has invited visitors to 'deconstruct' the stories it tells, some visitors may be wondering if these really are the real Vikings, or whether Vikingar is just a museum version of Vikings – just what happens when you let curators use the Norse in their displays.



Figure 4: 'Real Vikings Monoski'. Stockholm, Historiska Museet, an example of modern commercial exploitation of the Vikings (© The Author).

In thinking about the Historiska Museet, it seems ambivalent about the Norse. In 'Who tells your history?' it frankly discusses the creation of the past, and the Viking myth in particular. But then it presents a musealised version of the Norse, and here the usual battery of techniques is used, based on the preservation and exhibition of objects. It is almost as though the Viking myth is a stage on which the museum can enact a series of plays about our relationship to the Norse.

The layout of the museum is also significant here: pre-history is grouped on the ground floor and can be approached in different ways (physically but also intellectually), whereas on the first floor (upstairs), there is a new gallery (Sveriges Historia), which has a very coherent, linear 'factual' story of the past, starting where the Vikings stopped – with the introduction of Christianity – and taking Sweden's history to the present day.

We have seen that the Vikings permeate the museum more than other times and cultures. They are almost always present. In many ways they seem to function as a 'founding myth' for Sweden. However, as the Viking gallery reminds us, there was no place called Sweden in that

period. Whilst the geographic extent of Norse activity indicates that it was a European story, large sections of this are inevitably missing from the museum: it does not explore in any depth the role of the Norse in Russia, the history of the Principality of Kiev, of the lucrative slave trade with Islamic markets around the Caspian, or of intrigues in the palaces of Byzantium, which are also part of the story of the Norse from what is now Sweden. Perhaps also the Vikings are an uncomfortable founding myth (see also Aronsson, forthcoming 2012): the messages from, for example, Stockholm's military and naval museums are very much about the futility of war, the benefits of peace, the role of Swedish forces in UN peacekeeping, and in combating piracy around the Horn of Africa. This is in tune with a country that has invested heavily in neutrality, a strong theme in both the Armémuseum and the Sjöhistoriska museet in Stockholm.

Sited at the edge of Europe: historic ships

Ships are usually large objects in their own right, usually built for specific purposes, for example the *Cutty Sark* was built in 1869 to serve the tea trade between India and Britain. Also, they are often strongly associated with specific historic events and often sited away from national centres, for example the *Aurora*, preserved in St Petersburg is linked to its role in triggering the October Revolution in 1917 and still preserved in Russia's 'window on the West'. We might therefore expect them to stamp their own shape on any narrative, but research suggests that this is not always the case, and museums are able to use master narratives (which are not always obvious) to shape the stories told by and on historic ships.

The example considered here is HMS *Victory*. It can be regarded as an iconic ship for the British, probably for two reasons: it took part in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, a significant victory over European opponents; and Admiral Nelson, regarded as a hero at the time and since, was killed during the battle, on board this ship. In addition, the ship itself is a typical, if large example of the impressive sailing warships used when Britain achieved a naval dominance that lasted until the early twentieth century. It represents European warship design from 'the great age of sail', an impressive example of the technology used in the age when Britain competed with other European powers, especially France and Spain, for global domination.



Figure 5: HMS *Victory* in dry dock at Portsmouth Dockyard, showing the complex rigging and guns mounted on three decks (© The Author).

The ship itself was launched in 1765 in Chatham, Kent, and was extensively overhauled around 1800. Repaired after Trafalgar, it saw further service until 1812, when it was moored in Portsmouth Harbour as a depot ship. Later, it was used as a training school, until 1906. By 1920, the ship was in very poor condition. At this point, the SNR (Society for Nautical Research, a UK based group) campaigned for its restoration, raising funds and supervising the work, and getting the ship moved into dry dock where it remains, as a major visitor attraction in Portsmouth. It had to be repaired following damage during an air raid in 1941, and a recent overhaul, restoring it as

closely as possible to its condition in 1805, was completed in 2005 (in time for the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar).

The ship is funded by the Ministry of Defence, as it is still technically a commissioned ship of the Royal Navy, is used from time to time by Naval staff, and has a commanding officer as well as a curator and other staff. The SNR oversees its preservation and contributes around sixty thousand pounds annually on this and interpretation (Anon c, n.d). The *Victory*'s story is also told in some of the galleries in the Royal Naval Museum nearby. This is run by Trustees, assisted by a grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Defence. It has four main galleries: the '20th Century Gallery'; the 'Trafalgar Sail Gallery'; 'Nelson's Gallery'; and the 'Victory Gallery'. The Navy has three other museums: the Royal Marines Museum (in Portsmouth), the Royal Navy Submarine Museum (in Gosport, nearby), and the Fleet Air Arm Museum, some eighty miles to the west. The National Museum of the Royal Navy is the coordinating organisation for these collections.

It is important to note the physical position of the ship and the Dockyard. A few miles to the north of the Dockyard, and overlooking the city, is Fort Nelson, one of five large forts built in the nineteenth century to defend Portsmouth. Now part of the Royal Armouries (a national collection), and open to the public, its displays include a Turkish cannon from 1464 which once protected the Dardanelles, and parts of the Iraqi 'super gun' commissioned by Saddam Hussein of Iraq in the 1980s. Also nearby is Portchester Castle, the well-preserved remains of a Roman fortress built to defend the coast in the last years of Roman rule, set at the far end of the harbour, open to visitors and managed by English Heritage. Spitbank Fort, a stone fortification set in the sea outside the harbour, can also be seen. It was completed in 1878, is currently privately owned, and can be hired for parties and celebrations. (Less well-known are dozens of other fortifications around the city and the Isle of Wight, many built in the 1860s in response to fear of an attack by France, and designed to protect the naval base). *Victory* is at the centre of a range of maritime heritage.

On entering the Historic Dockyard, the Visitor Reception Centre for the complex encourages visitors to buy a combined ticket, giving access to six attractions. Although the attractions are run by a variety of organisations, they are presented to the visitor in a unified way as one major venue. As well as HMS *Victory*, 'Action Stations' is an 'interactive experience', actually a series of displays based around life on one of the UK's Type 23 frigates, and centred on a short action film, *Command Approved* (Moore, 2000). The Harbour Tour is a forty-five minute boat tour of the harbour, taking visitors very close to modern warships. HMS *Warrior* is a sail and steam powered, screw driven Victorian era 'ironclad' launched in 1860. The Mary Rose Museum is dedicated to preserving and displaying the relics of the *Mary Rose*, a Tudor warship built for Henry VIII (whose iconic portrait confronts visitors at the entrance). These other attractions are not national museums, but draw funding from trusts (and in fact often have a complex range of sources of funding).



Figure 6: Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. On the left, the entrance kiosk and access to HMS *Warrior*. In the background, access to the Harbour Tour, and in the distant red brick building, the Royal Naval Museum. On the right, the Mary Rose Museum, Action Stations, cafes and shops, and in the background, the masts of HMS *Victory* (© The Author).

The Historic Dockyard is also the base for several other less well known historic craft. These include a high speed launch (HSL 102) built in the 1930s and used by the Royal Air force for rescuing downed pilots in the Second World War, and MGB 81, a Motor Gunboat launched in 1942, both normally moored close to the visitor route. HMS M33, built in 1915, is in a dry dock near the Victory. In addition, an hourly 'waterbus' runs from the Dockyard to two nearby museums: the 'Explosion!' Museum of Naval Firepower, and to the Royal Navy Submarine Museum. Shops and cafes sell maritime themed goods and food.

The Royal Naval Museum and HMS Victory are at the far end of the publicly accessible part of the dockyard, adjoining the quayside where current Royal Navy ships tie up when in port. Often, the berth nearest HMS Victory and the museum is occupied by one of the Navy's Type 45 warships. These are the Navy's newest ships and are sometimes referred to by the Navy as 'aircraft carrier escorts'. Nearby, the Mary Rose itself is being preserved and will be open to visitors when the building housing it has been redeveloped. So, Victory is at the heart of a very patriotic setting, surrounded by reminders of Britain's past greatness as a naval power, and by some of the most potent of the Royal Navy's current warships.



Figure 7: A patriotic setting for HMS *Victory*, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. To the left is the Trafalgar Gallery of the Royal Naval Museum, and HMS M33, just visible. In the background, HMS *Diamond*, one of the Royal Navy's latest warships, is berthed (© The Author).

The *Victory* is at first glance a technical exhibit: the complexity of eighteenth century warship design is very evident, together with some idea of the skill required to work the ship. It is divided into seven levels or 'decks' and visitors can access most areas. Highlights include the Great Cabin, where the admiral would have lived and worked, the Quarter Deck, from which the ship would have been controlled when in action, and the recently restored Grand Magazine, a complex area where around thirty five tons of gunpowder was stored, which had to be kept dry and safe from fire. During the tour, the social conditions of the crew are explored, with displays showing how the decks were used for working, living and sleeping, and how a crew of around eight hundred were provided with food. Other displays cover discipline and punishment, and health care for the crew.

However, it is more than a technical and social exhibit. There is a brass plaque on the Quarter Deck marking the spot where Nelson was mortally wounded. The lowest deck, the Orlop Deck, formed a medical station during battles, and is the part of the ship where Nelson was brought, and where he died. A painting (a copy of Nevis, *The Death of Nelson, 21 October 1805*, 1807), showing Nelson's last moments, surrounded by his officers, is displayed here. The significance of this place is indicated in the leaflet, which notes that photography is 'permitted throughout the ship with the exception of the Shrine' (Anon, d, n.d). Visitors board the ship via an entrance on the Middle Gun Deck, and this leads almost immediately to the Ward Room. This space was reserved for the commissioned officers of the ship and was where they dined and relaxed, an area with its own etiquette. Information panels here list some of the officers: Bligh, who was wounded and with Nelson when the admiral died; Pasco, the signal lieutenant responsible for hoisting Nelson's famous message that 'England expects that every man will do his duty'; and Adair, the captain of Marines, killed during the battle. Near the Great Cabin, a wooden plaque lists sixteen 'Flag Officers' (admirals) based on *Victory* between 1778 and 1812. Several other biographical references appear in the labelling around this area. This biographical focus is reinforced in the

Souvenir Guide to the Dockyard (Anon, e, 2010): the sections on HMS *Victory*, 'The World's Greatest Warship' (18), start with a cutaway drawing of the ship, and shows the position of Nelson's cabin, followed by a section on 'Lord Nelson's Flagship' (21), with the spot where Nelson was wounded, and so on.

The Royal Naval Museum, a few steps away, features several galleries including the 'Nelson's Gallery', which looks at Nelson the man and Nelson the 'hero', and the 'Sailing Navy gallery', the latter including an exhibit called 'The Professional Navy'. The *Victory* and the nearby museum are perhaps as much about the professionalism, courage and traditions of the Royal Navy's officers as about the ship itself.

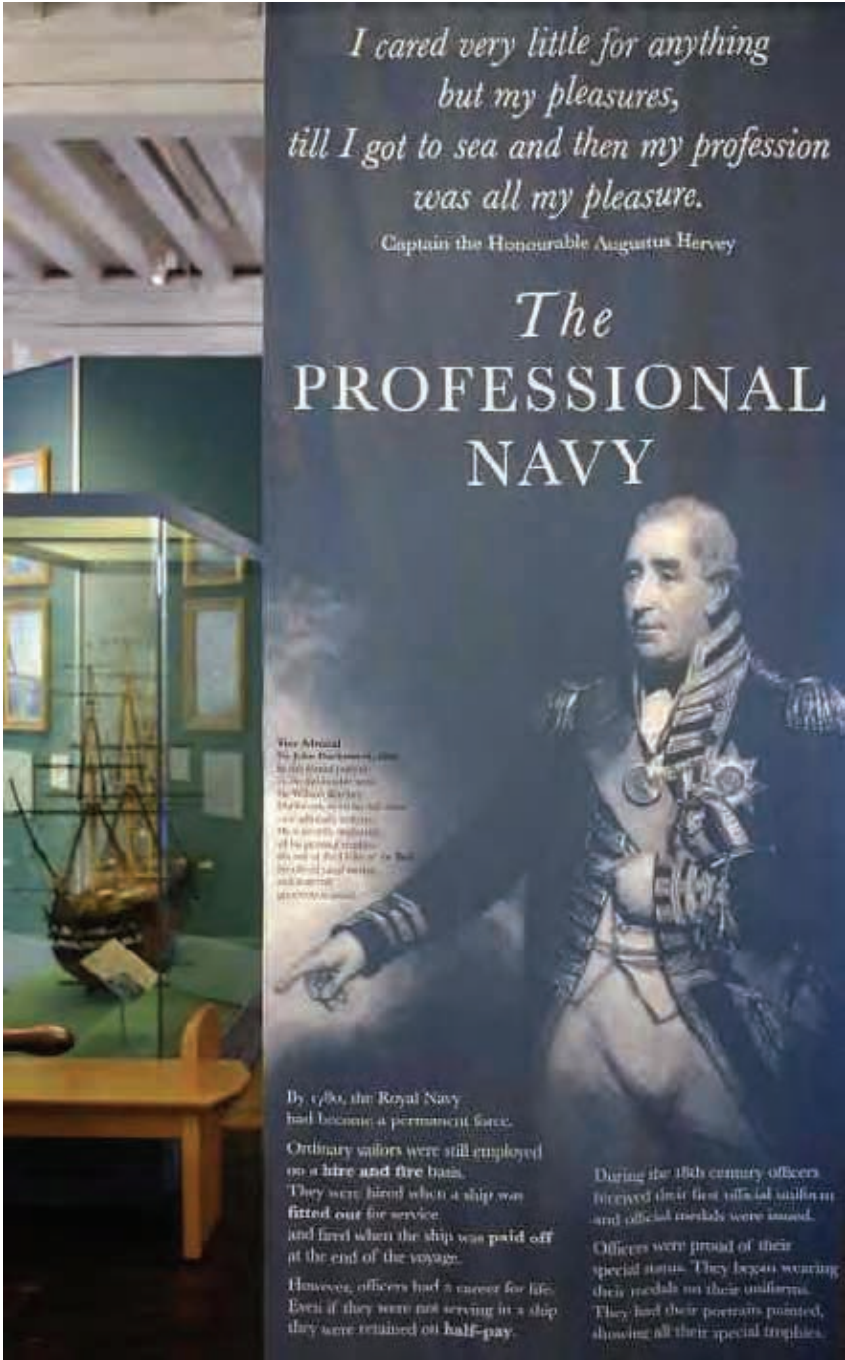


Figure 8: The Professional Navy. Banner introducing a display in the Royal Naval Museum's 'Sailing Navy' gallery (© The Author).

Moreover, the exhibits are not really concerned with Europe. There is very little about Nelson's French and Spanish opponents at Trafalgar, or analysis of how and why Britain became involved in a European conflict. The 'Victory Gallery' includes an exhibit on the Navy's work suppressing the transatlantic slave trade ('Chasing Freedom'), a global mission touched on in other galleries. The '20th Century Gallery' is divided into three sections: 'The Navy's People', 'The Navy at Home and Abroad' and 'Conflict and Change'. Although loosely chronological, and including items from the First and Second World Wars, the gallery takes a global view and stresses the role of submarines in the Cold War and the Fleet Air Arm in the Falklands conflict, with exhibits explaining and stressing the role of two new aircraft carriers currently under construction. Other exhibits explain what roles are available to naval recruits in today's Navy.

This is in a political context where the requirement (and cost) of nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers are subject to a great deal of criticism. On the one hand, nations tend to see possession of nuclear submarines and carriers as a mark of a 'blue water navy' capable of operating beyond its immediate littoral; on the other hand, recent UK governments have not been sure that they can afford such a navy. Hence, perhaps, the Royal Navy's concerns are echoed elsewhere in the Dockyard: for example, in the 'Action Stations' attraction, the film *Command Approved* explains the role of the modern navy through a (fictitious) operation. At one point, there is a close up image of the ship's commander as he endeavours to face a crisis in the operations. He says to himself (and by implication to the audience) 'I need air cover'. Meanwhile, on the Harbour Tour boat, the guide points out the docks where parts of the UK's new aircraft carriers will be built. The narratives here are about defence and identity, but with a very selective use of history, to support the Navy's need for recruits, ships (especially aircraft carriers), and a global role (an underlying, somewhat political narrative which may also be detected on HMS *Belfast* in London).

Of course visitors will have their own perceptions of HMS *Victory* and her setting. But the online review of a visitor to 'Action Stations!' who saw the film *Command Approved* suggests that these deeper narratives at Portsmouth are perceived by some at least:

'the producers presumably had a bit of a balancing act in making this film; attempting to make a good film, a realistic portrayal of Britain's modern Royal Navy and a suitable recruitment tool at the same time [...] the Captain (Jo Dow) slams his fist down and in his best Gene Hackman voice growls "I need air support!" [...] presumably to give an insight into how the navy likes to fight its wars [...]

But I find it difficult to dislike *Command Approved* [...] You can let it off for being a bit corny because, well, the guys up on the screen are pretty close portrayals of the guys you know and love who really are serving at sea [...] It's like watching your buddy in the navy at work.

All right, Captain, you can have your air support.' (Anon, f, 2004)

The anonymous reviewer's final comment acknowledges the effectiveness of the film and, perhaps, the Navy's desire for aircraft carriers. However, at Portsmouth, these concerns (funding, recruitment), are contextualised in a wider story about the Britain's traditional global outlook. This is in tune with some other UK national museums, but here the focus is on British naval power, and explaining the significance of that global outlook in a context where other nations

now 'rule the waves'. It is as though for Britain, the sea is a boundary, not just to Europe, but to a much bigger stage.

It may also be significant that maritime museums, including naval museums, are naturally located on the coast: although Paris has the Musée National de la Marine, its naval history is also told in annexes in Brest, Port-Louis, Rochefort and Toulon; Berlin has naval galleries in the Deutsche Technikmuseum, but naval history and ships such as the *Wilhelm Bauer*, (which touches on European history from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Cold War), are mainly displayed in Bremerhaven. In Poland, the national maritime museum is in Gdansk, with ships including the *Soldek*, a complex symbol of Polish recovery from the devastation of the Second World War, and at Gdynia, where the *Błyskawica*, something of an icon of Polish resistance in the Second World War, is moored.

In the UK's case, national funding for *Victory* and the Naval Museum are indirect (via the Ministry of Defence) and supplemented by other bodies (SNR, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Hampshire County Council). They are geographically and administratively distant from London. For example, the MOD funded Royal Naval Museum is not subject to the funding agreements between the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and other national museums, used instrumentally by the 1997-2010 Labour government in an unusually interventionist approach to museums and culture (Babbidge 2000, 4-5). Even outside of such exceptional moments (for usually, UK governments display little interest in museums), institutions at the periphery may be less influenced by informal social networking among London's elites. These museums and ships are often found at the boundaries of Europe.

Conclusion

Exhibits of Norse life and culture in different countries thus provide examples of how different nations shape what was in part a European experience to national ends. Presented as exhibitions about the Vikings, these displays usually co-opt the Norse as part of their own stories of origins. The ways in which these stories are told provides some contrasts: in Dublin, a conventional narrative is underpinned by rich archaeological exhibits to provide an authoritative description of the Norse in Ireland. This helped re-orient the Irish narrative of the past from a pastoral, poetic, and almost timeless, Celtic 'Golden Age', which had been closely allied to the needs of Irish nationalism. The opening video acknowledges the impact of Norse activity on Irish life, whilst the exhibition explains its contribution and ultimately its Christianisation and incorporation into Irish culture. In Stockholm, the Historiska Museet cannot escape the Norse, who appear in many places besides the Vikingar gallery, but by deconstructing the Viking Age and modern representations of the Vikings, as well as presenting the Norse in a conventional gallery, it gives visitors the tools to critique a culture whose more warlike aspects are out of tune in a nation with a strong commitment to neutrality. It is argued that both Dublin and Stockholm engage with the Viking myth in ways which reflect national, rather than European concerns.

Historic ships are often preserved at the borders of Europe, and sited in or near maritime museums. Although their purpose and the events to which they are linked may be evident, the example of HMS *Victory* suggests they can nonetheless be used as a platform or focus for narratives which reflect current concerns. The *Victory*, the *Mary Rose*, the *Warrior* and other vessels there were all the products of conflicts with other European powers, principally France

and Germany. But the underlying narrative here, it is suggested, reflects the concerns of the UK's naval forces: recruitment, ships (and the funding to support them), the desire for a global role, and the presentation of a sense of pride in a navy with a track record of professionalism. Europe is subsumed in a global story. Behind these concerns we may detect a sense of Britain's traditional concern with a wider world. Based on a review of a number of national museums and some historic ships in Europe, this report has also indicated the ways in which maritime exhibits touch on boundaries and notions of the 'edge' of Europe.

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Social Uses of Memory, Contemporary
and Critical Revisions

Revisiting Traditional Narratives
or Contemporary Traditions



Narrating a (New) Nation? Temporary exhibitions at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden between 1990 and 2009

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Abstract

Heritage management and many cultural historical museums in Sweden have had problems adjusting to Sweden becoming a multicultural society in the late 20th century. This is so because such institutions have been and still are a part of the nation-state and its master narratives. However, in the years between 1990 and 2010 the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden, tried to address this issue in parts of the museum's temporal exhibitions.

Adjusting to Sweden being a multicultural society would mean that the narratives expressed by the museum should have changed from what I would like to call a "nation-narration" to something that might be expressed as "non-nation-narration". The outcome of this study shows that the museum did for a short period shift focus in its temporal exhibitions from "nation-narration" to other forms of narratives that did not focus on the Swedish nation-state and its history. This was done explicitly to adjust to the shift in the society from what was believed to be a homogenous society to a multicultural society in a global and postcolonial world. But this was a short period in the history of the museum. Today and under pressure in a commercialised and on adventures based society the museum has again turned to the historical master narratives of the Swedish nation-state.

Introduction

This essay analyses the temporary exhibitions at the Museum of National Antiquities¹ in Stockholm, Sweden between 1990 and 2010. The question addressed here is whether the museum during these years changed strategies and perspective compared with its earlier days. My question is motivated by two main concerns: firstly, Sweden started to turn into a multicultural society already in the 1970s, having previously been a very homogenous country. Secondly, since the 1930s the museum has played a significant role in the construction of a society that strived for homogeneity. This being the case would mean that a shift to a more multidimensional society in the 1990s must have affected the museum and its strategies.

Before I move on I need to point out a few things. Even though Ernest Renan did write in a different time context his famous essay “What is a Nation?” can be used today to illustrate how heritage and archaeological remains can be understood. Renan stressed, “The modern nation is therefore a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts” (Renan 2006). What Renan proposes here is that the nation is the consequence of linking or intersecting historical facts, something I think is important to have in mind. If we take a closer look into this proposition from a hermeneutic point of view it becomes clear that there are no truths nor facts that are independent of an interpretation (e.g. Vattimo 1997). My first point is therefore that the relevance of these intersecting facts is dependent on how we interpret them and deal with them.

One of the most common ways of dealing with and interpreting historical facts has been and still is through a nationalistic approach. Nationalism is, according to my New Oxford American Dictionary, a many-faceted expression including “patriotism, patriotic sentiment, flag-waving, xenophobia, chauvinism, jingoism”.

Benedict Anderson has suggested “that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that precede it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson 1996). From my point of departure these “large cultural systems” are similar to the “convergent facts” that Renan speaks about, because they must be interpreted to be accessible for the present.

Homi K. Bhabha has underlined Anderson’s statement by stressing that “The nation’s ‘coming into being’ as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity, emphasises this instability of knowledge” (Bhabha 2006).

My second point is that a nation is unstable because the interlinked and interpreted historical facts that it is built upon can be reread or redistributed into a system that opens for a new interpretation and a new or different “nation”, which again underlines that it is a question of interpretation and instability. That the nation is unstable is clearly underlined by Appiah: “Still, a world in which communities are neatly hived off from one another seems no longer a serious option, if it ever was. And the way of segregation and seclusion has always been anomalous in our perpetually voyaging species. Cosmopolitanism isn’t hard work; repudiating it is” (Appiah 2007).

Working against cosmopolitanism is hard work according to Appiah and it demands, of course, much effort to glue together a nation on convergent facts, and it takes even more effort to make this unstable construct stable. A national museum such as the Museum of National Antiquities can be viewed as an institution that has been working assiduously with the convergent facts to ensure that the nation keeps its stability. The museum has played an important part, and

does so again today, in displaying the “convergent facts” and thereby piecing together the facts into an interpretation of what the nation is as history.

My last introductory point is therefore that the Museum of National Antiquities works and has worked as a nation-narration institution, hence trying to contribute to the stability of the nation, a nation of a affirmed united people and race, and has therefore worked against cosmopolitanism and diversity (see also Svanberg 2011). However, is this true? In the last part of this essay I will test this hypothesis. But before I do so I think that a short historical background to the Museum of National Antiquities is needed. In this overview I will try to show that the museum has played an important part in the construction of the Swedish nation, nationalism and Swedishness.

My main aim with this essay is thus to analyse the temporal exhibitions between 1990 and 2010 at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm. In this brief introduction I have tried to show that a nation and its cultural institutions are based on interpretations that aim to construct the nation and to uphold its stability. Yet, these interpretations are always unstable due to the nature of interpretations, and therefore the narratives – for example in museums – must work as some sort of excluders/includers. Globalisation, postcolonial perspectives and cosmopolitan movements are forceful unstableisers, if I may use such a word, that challenge the nationalised interpretations of what Renan called convergent facts. Between 1990 and 2010 the museum tried to adjust to this problem through its temporal exhibitions.

Copenhagen in the 1820s and 1830s

In the early 1820s Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788–1865) was appointed secretary of the Commission of Antiquities in Copenhagen. Thomsen came from a wealthy merchant home, but he lacked an academic education. He travelled the Danish landscape as a young man and experienced cultural heritage and the changes in agriculture that were taking shape in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was also a well-respected numismatist and it was because of this that he was appointed secretary of the Commission. In the 1820s the collection of antiquities was stored in the attic of the university church, Trinity Church, in Copenhagen. Thomsen started to organise the collection by chronology, which was something new and modern for the time, opposing an older historical perspective based on written sources (Jensen 1992). It was also important to define what were Danish antiquities and what were not. Early in his work Thomsen also started to organise the archaeological artefacts after a chronological system that he later published in a short essay (Thomsen 1836). This would be the starting point for the organisation of national historical museums throughout Europe and later throughout the world. His chronological system for the prehistory of Denmark was structured in three periods, the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Thomsen is also well known for his engagement in the public. He showed his exhibition on his own, which was something new and it was also new that the museum was open to the public (Jensen 1992). Being opened to the public also meant that the public had to be guided. Through this Thomsen orally narrated the history of the Danish nation. Thomsen worked with all museums in Copenhagen including the art museums and the ethnographic museum, and he did so until his death. Thomsen’s historical museum was moved from Trinity Church to Christiansborg Palace and in 1855 it was again moved to the Prince’s Palace, where it still is today. The museum was not, however, called a national museum until 1892 (Jensen 1992). The importance of Thomsen’s work is his focus on chronology, his focus on

narration and the nation. From now on nation-narration is connected with the chronological development and progression of the nation, and with academic subjects such as archaeology with its special discourse and master narrative.

The Museum of National Antiquities, Stockholm. 1866 to 1925

In the mid 1820s Bror Emil Hildebrand (1806–1884) had finished his numismatic thesis. He sent his work to Thomsen, who immediately invited him to Copenhagen. Hildebrand was impressed by Thomsen's work, and after returning to Lund, a university city in the south of Sweden, Hildebrand started to reorganise the Historical Museum in Lund according to Thomsen's chronology and Three-Age System. Thomsen and Hildebrand became close friends (Gräslund 1974; 1987; Hegardt 1997). In the early 1830s Hildebrand was called to Stockholm to help Johan Gustaf Liljegren (1791–1837) with his work at the Museum of Antiquities. At the time the museum was very small and placed in the Royal Palace. Liljegren was Riksantikvarie (Custodian of National Antiquities) and the museum was governed by the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. A few years later Liljegren died and Hildebrand was appointed Riksantikvarie. He now began to rework the museum according to the same principles he had used in Lund. He also strongly argued for a new museum. In 1845 the Parliament bought the house of the Ridderstolpe family close to the Royal Palace. The museum was moved to the house and was given three rooms for the exhibitions. More important is that in 1845 the Parliament had also decided to build a new national museum. Bror Emil Hildebrand responded immediately to this decision and wrote a rather long memorandum (Hildebrand 1845) to the Academy where he explained in detail how the museum of antiquities should be organised in the new national museum. On almost every page we find references to Thomsen and his museum in Copenhagen, which of course was the outcome of their close friendship and correspondence. The National Museum was finished in 1866 and the Museum of National Antiquities was placed on the ground floor. The museum follows in detail Thomsen's ideas of how a museum of antiquities should be organised, with the Three-Age System as the central chronological principle. This chronological system or principle of time and space was complicated and advanced and, as I have mentioned, it needed guidance to be understandable to the visitors. Bror Emil Hildebrand and later Oscar Montelius (1843–1921) and Bror Emil Hildebrand's son Hans Hildebrand (1842–1913) never ceased to emphasise the importance of social and cultural development with reference to the museum displays. The different galleries in the museum showed in a proper chronological order the development and progression of society and the nation. The narrative followed the chronology and so did the visitor. The museum galleries illustrated the narrative, like pictures in a book.

“Ten Thousand Years in Sweden” – the nation-narration exhibition

Until the 1920s the museum had worked very much in line with the ideas that Thomsen and Hildebrand had once introduced: with collecting, with chronology and typology, with displaying all the items and so forth. We must also remember that the discourse and the narrative about the evolution of the nation were new, modern and advanced. One important point, albeit not the most important, was to show a united people – one race – through prehistory and history. The major agenda was instead science: archaeology, chronology, typology, care and documentation.

Yet, this whole context of actions contributed to a stable nation with a stable history. Archaeology, chronology, typology, care and documentation are the essential actions when the bits and pieces of a nation's history are glued together. Narration, as text or orally, is crucial in explaining and structuring the historical plot – the nation coming into being.

However, destabilising crises would occur, and in the 1920s the museum was bursting its seams, being overfilled with objects. It is noteworthy that Swedish society had its own political and economical crisis during the 1920s. Nina Witoszek (2002) has shown in an essay that the crisis in Swedish society during the 1920s and 1930s became a kind of proof of temporariness, which removed the idea of a secure and infinite historical process. The bits and pieces of history and social order once glued together were now slowly falling apart. To meet these crises a welfare society was introduced during the 1930s, becoming central for Sweden and the Swedes. Europe was viewed with scepticism as neofeudal, patriarchal and unequal. During these days the “imperative of harmony” was shaped, which meant that conflicts and tensions had to be stopped. Society had instead to be built on rationalism, compromises and consensus. According to Witoszek, Sweden from now defined itself as the nation of goodness, and the museums followed this self-perception.

The leader of the Social Democratic Party, Per Albin Hanson (1885–1946), was behind the welfare society – the *folkhem* (the people's home or folk-home) – and the new Sweden. Sigurd Curman (1879–1966) took over the museum in the mid 1920s, introducing a new museum policy and new heritage politics – a folk-home heritage policy with its museums. In the 1920s it was also decided that a new museum should be built. It was finished at the end of the 1930s. It was time to glue the bits and pieces of history back again, this time on the principles of the society of goodness, rationalism, consensus and compromise.

The new museum was built in the fashionable district of Östermalm, very close to the Nordic Museum. This was intentional, because in the 1920s it had been agreed that the Nordic Museum should work together with the Museum of National Antiquities. Each museum was to be responsible for different parts of Swedish history. The Museum of National Antiquities was responsible for the period between the Stone Age and the Middle Ages until 1523, and the Nordic Museum was to care for the period from 1523 to modern times.²

The first exhibition opened in the new museum was “Folk och Försvar” (People and Defence) in 1941. Already in 1943 the first historical exhibition was finished. It was meant to be temporal but stayed with the museum until 2002, however rebuilt in parts during the decades. The exhibition was named “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden” and covered the history of Sweden from the early Stone Age to the Viking Age. It was built on the same chronological structure as the exhibitions in the old museum, with the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, but it was at the same time based on a new museological perspective with a “survey exhibition” (*skådesamling*) for the public and a more advanced collection behind the walls for the scientists, mostly archaeologists. A modern storeroom was placed in the basement. These new ideas had already been tested in the old museum, but could now be used substantively.

Even though the new museum with its exhibition showed a large difference from the old museum, the narrative was in many ways the same, but even more focused on the ethnic idea of Swedishness and social progression. The modern and functionalistic museum with its discrete and minimalistic displays was a beautiful place for contemplation, compromise and consensus,

but also a place of racialised narratives and discourse. My thoughts concerning the concept 'racialised' are based on K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann's book *Color Consciousness*. The colour consciousness in Sweden is related to the idea of blond and blue-eyed, neglecting the fact that many Swedes are brown-eyed and have dark hair, and to the thought that the Swedish "race" is and has been stable. Implicit racism has always been a part of these perspectives, although it did not become a practical reality (if the Sami are not included) among the public until the late twentieth century due to increasing immigration to Sweden. Swedish politics and authorities have recently been accused of having a profound problem with structural racism (de los Reyes & Kamali 2005; Hegardt 2005; Pred 2000). I think, however, that it would be too problematic for many to agree with the thought that the envied Swedish (social) democratic society has been and is racist in a similar way as South Africa or the US once was. Against this background I prefer the word racialised or structural racism, before racism. If we are to talk about Swedish pre-immigrant racism, this racism was directed towards faraway areas, for example Africa, Southern Europe or Asia. Swedes viewed themselves as superior without having to face the people that they classified as inferior from the standpoint of racist discourse. When these "inferior" people suddenly turned up in Sweden as immigrants, Sweden had to face itself and its history.

In sum. The museum represented and presented the united nation of the folk-home, of the ethnic Swedes. Through the new museum the bits and pieces were again in place and the national narrative strengthened. Since Hildebrand met Thomsen, the Museum of National Antiquities had been working with perspectives based on a complicated chronology, that, in the exhibitions and step by step, like pictures in a book, illustrated a narrative of how the nation had come into being and how the united Swedes and their special race became united (see also Svanberg 2011). The museum had all the ingredients of nationalism mentioned above. It created consensus and compromise on the fundament of a rationalistic epistemology of positivism. Through the museum the "convergent facts" and the "large cultural systems" were interpreted. Ernest Renan's essay on the nation is the classical text of "civic" nationalism, the French counterpoint to the "ethnic" nationalism of German writers like Fichte and Herder. Sweden has one of the world's oldest heritage legislations, dating back to at least 1666, but of course rewritten many times over the centuries. It was not a question of some kind of 'vernacular antiquities', but a legislation with concepts similar to those in use today, which might be important to have in mind. Swedish heritage legislation and organisation have been based on a civic structure rather than on an ethnic or linguistic structure. Nevertheless, the civic society and its capacity to organise a well-working system for heritage management has always been related to the ethnic idea of a united Swedish race. The Swedishness has been inscribed, narrated and interpreted as heritage, or the convergent facts or the large cultural systems that preceded the nation, creating and working for consensus, compromises and rationality, intended to guarantee the stability of the homogenous nation, a nation and a stability with its own myths only disturbed when faced with cosmopolitan diversity and global economies in later decades of the twentieth century (Hegardt & Källén 2011).

Temporary exhibitions between 1990 and 1999

In the 1970s Sweden, like many other Western nation-states, had to deal with new crises. The old nineteenth-century conception of the Nation was challenged in politics, in the academia and by a growing globalisation and postcolonial conflicts, and so were the political systems that had

guaranteed stability in post–World War II Europe. Sweden had gained from the war having its industry intact, but during the 1970s it was facing economic problems and political instability. There are many examples of how the museum tried to adjust to this new situation, but the question or hypothesis addressed at the beginning of this essay concerns the time between 1990 and 2010 rather than the periods before that. As mentioned above, Sweden screened off Europe already in the 1930s. In the 1990s Sweden – on its own – and Europe was again facing crises, in Sweden financial crises similar to those in Southern Europe today, and in Europe the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sweden was also turning into a multicultural society, which was problematic for a museum that had been the symbol of Swedishness and the one-race, one-history, one-people politics, with its consensus, rationality, compromises and idea of goodness, i.e. a nation with a very strong idea of its social and democratic greatness.

The question I address here in this second part of my essay is how the museum has interpreted the bits and pieces and how it has worked in temporary displays with the (new) Swedish multicultural society of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. My sources on each exhibition studied are for the period 1990–1999 media articles and for the period 2000–2009 the museums website, where the museum has placed short notes on each temporary exhibition.

I have studied a major part of the temporary exhibitions between 1990 and 2010 – n all 91 exhibitions. I have roughly classified the exhibitions in two major categories and four sub-categories. The two major categories are “Nation-narration” exhibitions and “Non-nation-narration” exhibitions. The four sub-categories are “Master narrative” exhibitions or “art”, “post-colonial” or “gender”-related exhibitions. The purpose of my categories is to find out whether the museum in any way tried to adjust to the new situation with multicultural diversity, cosmopolitan movements, interpretation and negotiation and, of course, the destabilisation of older structures.

By nation-narration displays I mean a narrative that works positively in line with Renan’s definition of the nation. Such a narration helps to build the nation and is mostly connected with the master narrative. It is this narration that we find in the museum from 1866 onwards, discussed in the first part of this essay. A master narrative is a narrative to which all other narratives must relate. A master narrative does not have to be a real story. It can also be an idea or an umbrella category under which the narratives must work.

The “non-nation-narration” exhibitions are to some degree exhibitions that destabilise the master narrative and the nation-narration narratives or work outside the umbrella category of the master narrative. Such narratives can be described as “surprise narratives” that, according to the master narrative, should not be at a museum such as the Museum of National Antiquities at all.

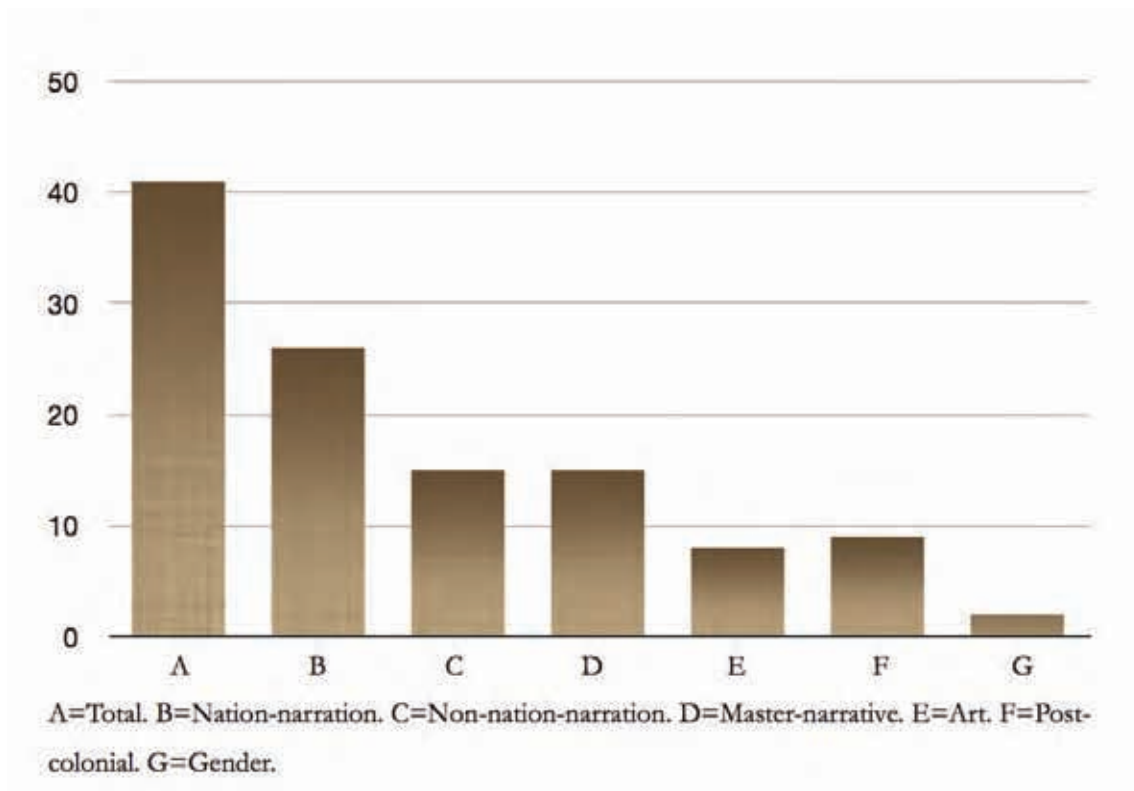


Figure 1: Temporary exhibitions between 1990 and 1999. Nation-narration exhibitions dominate over non-nation-narration exhibitions. The relationship between nation-narration and the master narrative is also strong

By post-colonial exhibitions, I mostly mean non-nation-narration exhibitions, but more precisely exhibitions that, to some degree at least, work inside post-colonial theory. For example gender exhibitions are mostly nation-narration exhibitions, but not always master narrative exhibitions. My very rough categories can be described as follows: 1990–1999: 26 nation-narration exhibitions and 15 non-nation-narration exhibitions. Out of the 26 nation-narration exhibitions, 13 were clearly related to the master narrative. They were stable exhibitions related to the idea of the nation according to Renan’s definition. Five of the nation-narration exhibitions were art exhibitions of different kinds. Two exhibitions were only nation-narration exhibitions. Two were about gender. One was post-colonial. Of the 15 non-nation-narration exhibitions two were related to the master narrative. Two were related to art. Eight concerned the post-colonial situation, and six of these were connected to post-Soviet times and one also related to art. Three of the exhibition fell outside of my categories.

Exhibition examples – 1990–1999

In 1990 the museum organised five temporary exhibitions. They were all nation-narration and master narrative exhibitions. Here I will discuss two: “Birka i vikingarnas värld” (Birka in the World of the Vikings) and “Alla tiders landskap” (Landscapes through Time), mentioned in the media.³ Only a few of the museum’s temporal exhibitions were mentioned in media.

The article on “Alla tiders landskap” was introduced with a question: “Is your summerhouse, your family home, your villa or your apartment situated in an area of national importance (*riksintresse*) where one must show special consideration to heritage?” What this question stressed

was that if your home was in such an area you were lucky, because your home was deeply rooted in Swedish history. The background to the exhibition was a survey conducted by the National Heritage Board where 1700 heritage sites of national importance had been defined. The survey had been done because a new legislation called the Natural Resources Act (*Naturresurslagen*) had been passed in 1987. The connection that we see here between different public authorities was and is typical for Sweden, something I think should be emphasised. Compared with many other European countries, the Swedish society is extremely controlled by the authorities. The collaboration between the museum, the Heritage Board, the legislative authorities, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and so on was thus not a coincidence but an ordinary example of how heritage is managed in the Swedish society. The authorities worked together to define the fundamentals for a nation-narration identity and a master narrative, which again is an example of creating and working for consensus, compromises and rationality, intended to guarantee the stability of the homogenous nation. The exhibition showed a large-scale map of Sweden and through enormous wheeled magnifying glasses the visitor could move over the map and study in detail each of the 1,700 important heritage sites.

The media article on the Birka⁴ exhibition described Birka as a place where wealthy merchants received precarious objects from far away. It was important that the merchants were described as native. The exhibition also introduced a large project on Birka, financed by Gad Rausing, docent (associate professor) in archaeology and the owner of Tetra Pak. The National Heritage Board managed the project and a publishing company that had the contract on the book publications coming out of the Birka project sponsored the exhibition. Here I want to underline the relationship between one of the world's most famous and leading packing companies, the authorities, the museum and a private publishing company. Together, in consensus and of course in power, they constructed a national narrative. These two exhibitions are, according to my rough categories, typical of nation-narration and master narrative exhibitions, and it is also because of this that the media mentioned them. The other three temporal exhibitions were too small to be mentioned by the media, but they were also nation-narration exhibitions.

The following year – 1991 – the Soviet Union had collapsed and old nations once swallowed by the Soviets were taking shape again. Even though Sweden had done almost nothing for the Baltic countries during the Cold War, the museum now took a more active part.

That year the museum showed “Latvija – Sagan om Lettland” (Latvija – the Story of Latvia). The exhibition was a clear political statement from a Swedish point of view for a free and independent Latvia, and the media responded.⁵ The exhibit was opened by the Swedish prime minister at the time, Carl Bildt, together with the first vice prime minister of Latvia Ilmars Bisers. The exhibition focused on the prehistory of Latvia and the time of independence between 1918 and 1940, but also on folk art and nationalism during the nineteenth century.

From my point of view this is a clear case of post-colonial narration. It helps to construct and stabilise a new nation on the fundamentals of nation-narration principles.

The same year the museum showed an exhibition that was described in the media as: “Not everything has to be history at the Museum of National Antiquities. Apart from outgoing activities, temporary exhibitions other things sometimes happen outside the regular programme, as now when art by the Czech artist and modernist Jiri Kolár is shown at the museum.”

Kolár was a rather complicated artist with connections to futurists and dadaists and worked with collage in his art, hardly an artist that you would find at a museum such as the Museum of National Antiquities in the 1990s. This is a good example of what I previously called a "surprise narrative", an exhibition that hardly anyone would connect with a museum such as the Museum of National Antiquities. Why then was he there? I am not absolutely sure, but he was probably there because Kolár had been a dissident during Soviet times and because someone at the museum had some sort of relation to him, and probably because the museum wanted to take part in the post-Soviet experience.

No criticism was ever expressed against the museum showing art during the 1990s, contrary to what happened later when the museum director Kristian Berg used art to problematise history, something I will return to. The use of art in the museum in the 1990s was apparently no problem. However, it was artwork that would create the first big scandal at the museum during the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, which will be my last example from the 1990s.

In 1998 Stockholm was appointed the European cultural capital of the year, and this was celebrated through many different events. The museum did not participate but its space was used in one of the events. The provocative Norwegian artist Bjarne Melgaard had been engaged as a curator for an art exhibition. Without really knowing what was happening, the museum had accepted pictures of naked young men taken by the artist Donald Mader and called "Soft Core". The pictures were destroyed by a group of neo-Nazis, and when the debate started, the museum director Jane Cederqvist responded by stating that the exhibition was not produced by the museum. She underlined that she did not want the pictures in her museum and that she had thought that it would be an art exhibition, but this was not art, but child abuse, she concluded. She was also upset because the organisers of the European cultural capital of the year would not remove the pictures. She was even supported by Ecpat, who argued that this was not art, but images of innocent naked children.⁶ The neo-Nazis who destroyed the images distributed leaflets for the defence of culture and against destructive and degenerate art. In the debate that followed, sensible art critics such as Ingela Lind criticised Cederqvist for failing to stand by the artist against the neo-Nazi attack and for not following the law of freedom of expression.⁷ Others, not as sensible, argued that artist had to show some sort of responsibility and even argued that they had thought – for the first and last time – that the neo-Nazis had done something good.⁸

The art exhibition "Soft Core" was, of course, very provocative, going far beyond many norms, guidelines, morals and the master narrative, something that the neo-Nazis made a point of. But this was the artist's intention and he did not only start a debate but also a trap for us all, not only the pedophiles that came to the museum, to fall into. He made people that otherwise would never accept neo-Nazi arguments cherish the actions of the neo-Nazis, and he even showed that an important organisation such as Ecpat could express itself in a dangerous and unacceptable way. However, was an old cultural-historical institution such as the museum the right place for a problematic debate? Most people did not think so, and because of this they looked the other way when the neo-Nazis attacked the art at the museum. The "Soft Core" exhibition showed that the Museum of National Antiquities was standing on a very unstable foundation. Nevertheless, provocative art would again return to the museum only a few years later.

Even though the museum had exhibitions that in one way or another destabilised its history as an institution for narrating the nation, the nation-narration exhibitions dominated during the decade. It is noteworthy that there was no special theme that the museum followed. We could maybe argue that the post-Soviet exhibitions were based on such a theme, but there were only six exhibition of that kind. The temporal exhibitions during the 1990s show instead a museum that was very insecure in a time of rapid change.

So far it can be argued that my hypothesis concerning the museum as a nation-narration institution is correct even though, and as we have seen, the nation-narration perspectives are not totally dominating. One important thing is that the museum could show art in different exhibitions without any critical remarks that art was irrelevant for an archaeological museum, except, of course, the “Soft Core” exhibition (but that was, according to the majority – and the neo-Nazis – not art).

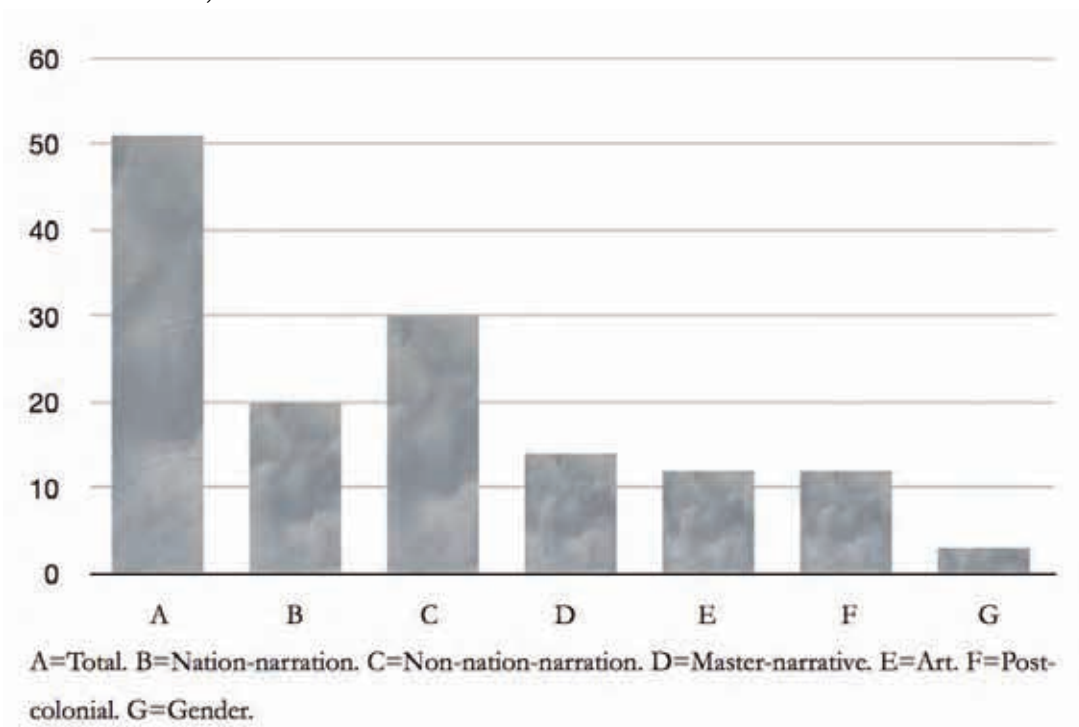


Figure 2: Temporary exhibitions between 2000 and 2009. Non-nation-narration exhibitions dominate over nation-narration exhibitions. The relationship between nation-narration and the master narrative is still rather strong, but not as strong if compared with Figure 1.

Temporary exhibitions between 2000 and 2009

In 1997, the museum was turned into a public authority of its own, having since the 1930s been a part of the National Heritage Board. In 1999, Kristian Berg took over as head of the museum. Berg was a creative personality with a bureaucratic background in the Social Democratic party and government, something his critics would emphasises.

The public authorities are every year given political instructions by the government. It was underlined in the instructions given to the museum during Kristian Berg’s first years that the museum should work with democracy-related questions, human rights, and diversity. Berg published an internal policy document in 2003 where it was stressed that the museum should strengthen democracy in society through a deeper understanding of history and heritage.⁹ In 2002

the exhibition “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden”, which had been standing since 1943, was taken down to give way to a new permanent exhibition on prehistory, an exhibition that focused on the similarities and differences between us today and people that lived in the past, through questions such as what it means to be human and what it means to be in the world.

During the period between 2000 and 2009 the museum had 51 temporary exhibitions. According to the same very rough categories used for the period between 1990 and 1999 the exhibitions can be classified as follows: 20 nation-narration and 30 non-nation-narration exhibitions. Twelve of the nation-narration exhibitions were related to the master narrative, three to art and one to gender. The other four were on their own. Of the 30 non-nation-narration exhibitions nine were related to art, eleven to post-colonial perspectives and two to gender. Art and post-colonial perspectives dominate inside the non-nation-narration exhibitions, and non-nation-narration exhibitions dominate over the nation-narration exhibitions. Eight of the exhibitions fall outside of my categories.

Exhibition examples – 2000–2009

In the year 2000 the museum produced seven temporary exhibitions with a rather wide variation according to my categories. Only two had a nation-narration angle and one only one had a master narrative connection. Two of the exhibitions were post-colonial and two were art exhibitions. One of the art exhibitions was a nation-narration exhibition and the other one a non-nation-narration exhibition. The seven exhibitions were: “Källan – om Sveriges kristnande” (The Source – on the Christianisation of Sweden); “Dokument: Holocaust” (Document: Holocaust); “Portugal – när världsbilden vidgades” (Portugal – when the World Picture was Expanded); “Vaxkabinettet, en studie i förakt” (The Wax Cabinet – a Study in Contempt); “Glas – dagens konstnärer möter Historiska” (Glass – Today’s Artists Meet History); “Noll Koll” (No Control); “Lenke Rothman – Inskrifter” (Lenke Rothman – Inscriptions).

Note that two out of seven temporary exhibitions dealt with the Holocaust. The reason is that in 2000 the Swedish government arranged an international conference on the Holocaust because it had become clear that young people in Sweden were starting to forget or neglect the Holocaust. This could be expanded, since relates to common European trend of dealing with 20th century conflict history.

I will have a closer look at “Källan – om Sveriges kristnande”, “Portugal – när världsbilden vidgades” and “Lenke Rothman – Inskrifter”. I classify “Källan – om Sveriges kristnande” as a nation-narration and master narrative exhibition because the exhibition emphasised historical places in Sweden that were decisive for the change to Christianity.

The exhibition “Portugal – när världsbilden vidgades” dealt with Portugal during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the discovery of new parts of the world and cultures, and Portugal’s relationship to other civilisations. The exhibition was mounted in cooperation with Portugal’s National committee for the ceremony of Portuguese’ Discoveries and the Portuguese Trade and Tourist Office. I classify the exhibition as post-colonial, which might be a bit strange given that the Trade Office and the National Committee were involved, but the exhibition did deal with colonial mapping and some of the problematic aspects of Portuguese colonialism. It had nothing to do with Swedish nation-narration, nor with the other categories that I use.

“Lenke Rothman – Inskrifter” is a good example of my category non-nation-narration/art. Lenke Rothman was a Hungarian-Swedish artist with Jewish roots. In the exhibition she showed works that related to various nameless experiences she had of loss, suffering, and vulnerability.

In 2002 the museum decided, as I mentioned earlier, to close the permanent exhibition “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden”, which had been in place since 1943, albeit partly rebuilt during the years. The plan was to make place for a new permanent exhibition on Swedish prehistory. This made it possible for the museum to use the premises for other exhibitions for some time, which would also be the case

Prime Minister Göran Persson had arranged three different world conferences during the first years of the twenty-first century. The conferences in the series were: 2000: “The Holocaust – Education, Remembrance and Research” (mentioned above); 2001: “Combating Intolerance”; 2002: “Truth, Justice and Reconciliation”; and in 2004 the last conference in the series was called “Preventing Genocide – Threats and Responsibilities”.¹⁰



Figure 3: Kristian Berg together with museum staff in connection with the closing of “Ten Thousand Years in Sweden”. Photo: Digital image, © The National Historical Museum, Stockholm.

Having worked with the first conference in 2000, the museum was again asked to participate in this last conference. The government wanted to have a series of cultural and art events that related to the conference and many institutions were involved, such as museums, cultural centres and theatres. In 2004 the museum opened not only an art exhibition related to issues discussed at the conference, but also five other temporary exhibitions: “Medeltid – dead or lajv” (Middle Ages – Dead or Live), “Olga & Ingegerd – vikingafurstinnor i öst” (Olga & Ingegerd – Viking Princesses in the East), “Textil konst för själen” (Textile Art for the Soul), “Tokyo Style in Stockholm”, “Ögonblick och synvillor” (Moments and Illusions). Out of these five exhibitions

two were nation-narration exhibitions and one of these two was also related to the master narrative. The other three were non-nation-narration exhibitions.

The art exhibition that was connected with the conference had nothing to do with the nation-narration perspectives or with the master narrative. Instead it showed the works of six different artists and photographers: “The Weeping Wall”; “God Made Me Do It”; “The Hmong – Secret War in Laos Continues”; “Dawn of a Genocide”; Installation with Poems”; and “Snow White and the Madness of Truth”. The installation “Snow White” would create international media hype when the Israeli ambassador destroyed the installation by throwing the lights that surrounded the installation into the pool where it was placed, claiming that the installation honoured Palestinian suicide bombers. This became the second big scandal at the museum after the scandal with the Mader pictures. The complicated story about the “Snow White” installation cannot be dealt with here, but I must emphasise one point. The installation did not honour suicide bombers. On the contrary, it called suicide bombers murderers, but the question was so infected that people, depending on political, ideological or religious perspectives, interpreted it in any suitable way regardless of whether they had seen it or not.

The museum and Kristian Berg stood behind the artists and their work at the museum, contrary to what Jane Cederqvist did during the Mader crisis. Berg also moved on with his will to use art to problematise history or the concept of history, which, against the background of the “Snow White” scandal, resulted in even more criticism against the museum for not working in line with its tradition, a tradition that for many was more a myth than a reality. Yet, the tradition that many wanted the museum to return to was the tradition of the master narrative of the nation, and being a museum that is stable and safe and tells the history of Sweden based on archaeological and historical facts. Kristian Berg left the museum in spring 2005, but his exhibition ideas were implemented until at least 2007, with exhibitions such as “The Maya Game”; the video installation ”Deliverance”; the photo exhibition “Nepal – State of Emergency”; the art and video installations “Approach” and “Shine” and others.

During the period between 2000 and 2009 the museum tried to adjust to contemporary Swedish society. Non-nation-narration exhibitions dominated during the time, and the museum was constantly criticised for this. However, Sweden was changing rapidly during these years partly because of a growing immigration, global financial systems, a change from an industrial country to a country where the service sector is employing more and more people and so forth. Heritage, the old symbol for Swedishness, was for many the only safe harbour to hold on to in a world of change, but instead of strengthening this connection Kristian Berg did nothing or very little of that. On the contrary, his work at the museum was instead a very creative and important response to a new society, however regarded by many as some kind of post-modern nonsense that was not only provocative but also a part of a political strategy to destabilise the country even more. But, it might be able to argue that Berg only opened the lid and let the uncanny out of the bottle.

Conclusion

Thomsen and his colleagues changed the museum policy during the early nineteenth century from universal and curiosity cabinets to national museums with special interests, for example historical museums, art museums and so forth. Chronology became most important, instead of written historical sources. In Sweden Bror Emil Hildebrand used the work of Thomsen to organise the Museum of National Antiquities. These new perspectives demanded a new narrative

that not only told the story of how the nation had come into being, but also explained how time and space was structured and how cultural progression worked. These new ideas and perspectives were advanced and complicated for the visitors to the museums and had to be explained orally or in written text. Guiding in the museums became important, and both Thomsen and Hildebrand and later Oscar Montelius and Hans Hildebrand did what they could to explain these new perspectives. The galleries, structured chronologically, worked like pictures in a book when the story was told. The museums played an important part as nation stabilisers in a time of rapid change.

In this essay I have tried to find out whether the nation-narration perspective dominated temporary exhibitions between 1990 and 2009. Through my rather rough categories, we have seen that this was the case between 1990 and 1999, but not in the period between 2000 and 2009. It is important to remember that the museum has always had exhibitions that have been criticised for not being good enough or not telling the right things, but in the period between 2000 and 2009 Kristian Berg's position and work with the museum was increasingly questioned. By working as he did, with art, on concepts such as democracy, diversity and so forth he destabilised not only the museum but also Swedish society; at least this is what those who criticised him claimed. We could argue that Berg not only opened the bottle and let the uncanny out of the jar, but he also deconstructed the construct, and the bits and pieces so neatly glued together through the nation-narration perspective fell apart.

In 2010 the Museum of National Antiquities not only changed its name to the National Historical Museum, it also opened a new permanent exhibition – The History of Sweden. Through this exhibition the museum has returned to its history and we again find the nation-narration perspective. The idea was that people were tired of art and scandals. It was time to give the public what they wanted, a neatly and chronologically structured exhibition – however in a contemporary style – that told the story of how the nation came into being and how the Swedes became what they are. Whether good or bad, the bits and pieces of the nation as history are again in place at the museum.

Notes

- ¹ The museum changed its name to the National Historical Museum in 2010.
- ² The date 1523 was chosen because that was the year when Sweden became an independent state.
- ³ "Sverige under förstoringsglas". *Dagens Nyheter*, Thursday 29 March 1990. Cecilia Steen-Johnsson. National Library of Sweden Archive. "Birkas sopor undersöks". *Dagens Nyheter* "På Stan" 9–15 June 1990. Bengt Henryson. National Library of Sweden Archive.
- ⁴ Birka is an late Iron Age site situated on an island in the Lake Mälaren west of Stockholm. It is not only known as an early urban dwelling but also as a symbol for Swedish national identity.
- ⁵ "Lettiska skatter från forntid till nutid". *Svenska Dagbladet*, Friday 15 November 1991. Peo Österholm. National Library of Sweden Archive.
- ⁶ "Vem får styra din blick?" *Svenska Dagbladet* http://www.svd.se/opinion/ledarsidan/vem-ska-fa-styra-din-blick_5069161.svd. Accessed 4 April 2011.
- ⁷ *Dagens Nyheter*. "Kommentar: Konsten som spottkopp." <http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/kommentar-konsten-som-spottkopp-1.236475>. Accessed 22 July 2011.
- ⁸ "Provocerade konstmöte." *Svenska Dagbladet* http://www.svd.se/kultur/konst/provocerade-konstmote_4777617.svd. Accessed 4 April 2011. "Konstnärer har ansvar." *Göteborgs-posten*, Monday 19 October 1998. Karin Storm. National Library of Sweden Archive.
- ⁹ Policy för Statens Historiska Museer (Enligt styrelsebeslut den 13 augusti 2003)
- ¹⁰ http://www.humanrights.gov.se/stockholmforum/forum/conference_overview.html. Accessed 23 July 2011.

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Greek Modernism: A National Scenario. Experiences and Ideological Trajectories

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Abstract

This paper aspires to comment on the idea of suggesting an alternative scenario concerning the national narrative about Modern Greek Art, in the context of the curatorial approach I personally followed for the exhibition *Versions of Greek modernism: experiences and ideological trajectories* (actually one of the sections of a broader temporary exhibitional project, entitled *Unknown Treasures from the National Gallery Collections*, that took place in the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum in Athens from October 2011 to January 2012).

Choosing the works for this particular section I was responsible for, was a great opportunity to challenge the certainties of linear presentation adopted in the permanent exhibition of the museum and the rather outdated historiographical scheme it is based on. More specifically, instead of continuing the reproduction of long perpetuated stereotypes, motivated by a sometimes compulsive need to showcase masterpieces, to demonstrate an unbroken continuity in space and time, exclusively based on superficial formal comparison of the output of the Greek visual arts production and its international counterparts, I suggest it is about time that we enrich the issues posed and focus on broader cultural, historical contexts.

In other words it is essential to discuss the terms of modernity in Greece wondering about the specific artistic production and reception conditions, the broader social and institutional reality, the viewing of art itself as a means of constructing certain social identities, the connection of various social and national identities, the notions connected with image production, the creation eventually of *le champ artistique* (to borrow Pierre Bourdieu's term).

Introduction

The temporary exhibition *Unknown Treasures from the National Gallery Collections*, took place in the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum in Athens from October 2011 to January 2012 and it was made up of different smaller exhibitions. The curators of the museum were asked to select the pieces for their sections, in an independent spirit. That means that each section could function as an absolutely independent unit. In other words, each one of us was assigned to select works from our respective areas of expertise in order to propose individual exhibitions that eventually would be united into one, proposing an alternative narrative to the one presented in the National Gallery's permanent exhibition. What is important to clarify right from the beginning is that suggesting a different approach or another way of interpreting featured works was not requested or even considered. The proof is that most of these separate exhibitions simply ended up reproducing the story told in the permanent exhibition.

The different sections were structured following the main principles on which the permanent display is based, they reflected it and enriched its respective subsections; the 19th century Greek painting collection, the early 20th century Greek painting modernist experimentations, versions of Greek modernism during the Interwar period, post-war contemporary art collection, selections from the National Gallery sculpture collection, paintings from the Western European art collection. Nevertheless, *Unknown Treasures from the National Gallery Collections* exhibition offered also the chance to present part of the National Gallery Prints and Drawings Department, which is not represented at all in the permanent display, due to preservation reasons and to lack of room. Dr Marilena Cassimatis made quite an interesting effort to comment on the prints and drawings collection formation in accordance with the museum's acquisition history, and also to communicate recent research findings and attributions. Furthermore, as the initiator of the project, Professor Marina Lambraki-Plaka, Director of the National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, put it in her introductory catalogue text it was an idea mostly related to the National Gallery expansion project that is about to happen. The main question was to prove that the Museum has numerous "masterpieces" in its collections that deserve to be exhibited:

Featuring works from the National Gallery and Evripidis Koutlidis Foundation collections, this exhibition is important on several grounds. The most obvious *raison d'être* for this event, which realizes a personal vision of mine, is an indication of things to come: we wished to bid our farewell to the old museum by displaying a selection of the important works scheduled to form part of the permanent display after the completion of the expansion project. With twice as large a display area, the new National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum will be able, not only better to preserve the artistic heritage of Greece in its collections, but also to mount exhibitions featuring a far larger number of works for the benefit of the public; a wider-ranging exhibition agenda, moreover, will be made possible. (Lambraki-Plaka, Mentzafou 2011: 442)

So, perhaps it would be more accurate to rephrase my initial phrase and explain that this paper does not refer to the temporary exhibition *Unknown Treasures from the National Gallery Collections* as a whole, but specifically to the section that I was responsible for, entitled *Versions of Greek modernism: experiences and ideological trajectories*. The works selected in this particular exhibition section were especially chosen in order to interact with the body of works that comprises the

narrative of the permanent display of the National Gallery concerning the history of Modern Greek art in the 20th century. In my opinion, these works from the exhibition provided an opportunity to challenge some certainties and to re-examine the way main historiographical questions may have been transformed into perpetuating stereotypes, motivated by the, sometimes compulsive, need to showcase masterpieces. This need also feeds into the desire to demonstrate an unbroken continuity in space and time, or to superficially compare, based on formal analysis of the output of the Greek visual arts production and its international counterparts.

What I am arguing is that it is impossible to keep using the discussion on aesthetic, morphological terms, to avoid focusing on a broader historical and cultural context. That is basically the main symptom, probably the most characteristic one, of the hectic situation that the history of modern Greek and European art is suffering from in Greece as a field of productive academic research and knowledge. A situation which has started to change slowly, mainly in the last two decades. Instead of discussing art works in a self referring, introvert way or suggesting a linear, homogenizing scheme for their presentation, it would be far more appealing to engage more the politics of representation, attempting to trace various subcultures and reflect on the interplay of ideologies and representations, on questions of context, identity and group membership.

It has already been sufficiently discussed who resembles whom and it is not that fruitful to keep suggesting Greek analogues for Matisse, Derain, Braque or Picasso, to name but a few. The loans and influences on Greek artistic production are often prominent, and at any rate traceable. (Καφέτση 1992: 17). Further and perhaps more interesting comparisons may certainly exist, or emerge in the future, yet any such discussion should include attempts to interpretation, or example, to seek the causes and historical conditions that helped to shape the development of modern art as such in Greece. It's not a question of tracing superficial resemblances; on the contrary, there is a strong danger that these hypothetical parallels could end up providing a distorted version of reality by suggesting the false idea that the field of cultural production in both Paris and Athens is similar. At least if one agrees with Pierre Bourdieu's statement that art is a social practice, a certain social field, which includes certain agents and their interaction.

Thus it is rather pointless to keep insisting on the linear scheme of presentation adopted in the permanent exhibition of the museum, a presentation which actually reproduces a rather outdated historiographical scheme based on two main ideological myths regarding Greek national identity. The first myth corresponds to the "renaissance of the Greek civilization" and the second one to "its uninterrupted continuity" from ancient to modern times (Μαθηόπουλος 2003a: 428-429). These two myths, strongly present in political and cultural realms, as well as in the collective consciousness, have been supplemented in the second half of the twentieth century by a third one, the myth of (or yet better, the strong desire for) the Europeanisation. Emphasising the European identity, as integral part of the national identity, became indeed a constitutive aspect of modernism in Greece.

According to the Director's greeting, written (or, revised) almost two years ago, on the National Gallery's official website "the care for the creation of artistic collections is almost contemporaneous with the independent Greek state and expresses the desire of the Greeks to see a renaissance of the arts *in what has been their ancient cradle* [...] The institutional role of the National Gallery is to collect, safekeep, preserve, study and exhibit works of art towards the aesthetic

training of the public, the on-going education through art and the recreation that it is able to provide, *as well as the self-awareness of the Greek people through the history of art, which expresses the national history on a symbolic level.* [...]” (<http://www.nationalgallery.gr/site/content.php?sel=66>, emphasis added).

Strangely enough though –at least for somebody who is not familiar with the deficiencies of Greek institutions, their inadequate relationship with social needs and the acanonical nature of the Greek bourgeois class (due to the rather abrupt and awkward transformation of a former province of the Ottoman empire to a modern state, and the subsequent conversion of a rather traditional society to a capitalist one)– despite the fact that a National Gallery was founded as early (for Greek standards) as in 1900, it “essentially remained a nomad until 1976, when the current building, designed by the architects and professors Pavlos Mylonas and Dimitris Fatouros, which began to be built in 1964, was completed and inaugurated” (<http://www.nationalgallery.gr/site/content.php?sel=66>). As for its permanent exhibition mentioned above it was organized and presented to the public just twelve years ago (in 2000).

Conditions are probably now mature to stop taking this nationalist discourse for granted and to start examining it as a powerful ideological product with certain historical parameters. Perhaps today even more, when, at a time of a pervasive crisis, museums around the world regard their collections as living, renegotiable, constantly redefined fields, sometimes succeeding to serve a very powerful social function (Heuman Gurian 2010: 15-25, Chainev Gagnon 2011: 375-378).

In Greek art history frequent reference is made to “modernity”, or “modernism” vs. “academic” or “tradition”, yet the historical connotations of these terms and their signification in the Greek context, which in turn is neither homogeneous nor informed by commonly shared ideals or mutual pursuits and objectives, is not frequently clarified. Of course, it needs to be clearly stated that there is no such phenomenon as *a unique* Greek case, or, as Professor Matthiopoulos indicates the multifaceted realm of art “cannot be limited – either geographically, socially, or ideologically – within the confines, behaviours and aesthetic concerns of the upper social classes in Athens. If we were to identify on the map the main geographical areas and social environments where Greek artists produce and market their work, three distinct areas would emerge:

- Greek provinces, from Crete to Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace, as well as the lower-class districts and areas around the capital and other large cities, such as Thessaloniki, Volos, Patra, Corfu.
- The urban centre and middle-class districts in Athens and their scarce equivalents in other major Greek cities, such as Piraeus, Volos, and Thessaloniki.
- Finally, Paris, where all artists – with very few exceptions – who left to study abroad between 1920-1940 gathered and remained, some for a shorter or for a longer period.” (Ματθιόπουλος 2003: 402)

The above distinction, of course, must be seen in relation to an overall scheme of progressive interaction between all three areas, and certainly in conjunction with their broader cultural connotations. Geography in this case is suggestive of a number of existent cultures and subcultures.

The artworks for the section, *Versions of Greek modernism: experiences and ideological trajectories*, part of the broader project *Unknown Treasures from the National Gallery Collections*, were selected with the

intention to inspire a debate in this direction; they were sourced from the National Gallery–Alexandros Soutzos Museum collections, specifically from the department corresponding to the sections described in the permanent display as: “*Interwar Period 1922-1940: Generation of the 1930s: Tradition and Modernism, Expressionism: Projection of the Inner Image*” and “*In the Aftermath of World War II – Continuity and Rupture: The Generation of the 1930s and its Successors.*”

The selection included both artists whose work, at least of specific periods, is already featured – extensively, in some cases – in the permanent display of the National Gallery (as is the case, of well-known names in the Greek context, such as Yannis Tsarouchis, Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika, or Yannis Moralis, as well as Yorgos Gounaropoulos, Spyros Vassileiou, Aginor Asteriadis, Errikos Frantziskakis, Nikos Engonopoulos, Diamantis Diamantopoulos, Nikos Nikolaou, Yerassimos Steris, Alekos Kontopoulos), and accommodated artists who are not featured at the permanent display at all, such as Dimitris Vitsoris, Orestis Kanellis, Dimitris Yoldassis, Dimitris Davis, Kostas Plakotaris, Kostas Iliadis, Polykleitos Rengos.

“We took into consideration as our guiding principle for the display and the guidebook the immediate needs regarding expression and function that art was expected to meet in the new society and the new State,” explains Marina Lambraki-Plaka, Director of the National Gallery, in the introduction to the permanent display guidebook, in 1999.

However, it would be more accurate to admit that the twentieth century material presentation at least, expresses a clear effort to prove the connection between Greek artistic creation and common European trends. It is basically an obvious attempt to strengthen the official national scenario about Greek modernism, taking into consideration the two of the three above mentioned areas of artistic production; the urban centre and middle-class districts in Athens and their scarce equivalents in other major Greek cities, and, by all means, to suggest their strong connections with the main artistic centre of the first half of the twentieth century, Paris.

In the *Versions of Greek modernism: experiences and ideological trajectories* section the scope expanded to reflect the varying rates in the perception and deviating alternatives in the management of the modernist models. The works were contextualized in conjunction with what can be described as the *champ artistique* (Bourdieu 2006), the possible social areas of circulation of these models, the expectations that these created and to which they were expected to respond during the time of their emergence. A clear effort was made to examine the different kinds of audiences that different works had been produced for and also show their mingling and coexistence in a certain artistic environment, mostly supported by the State (i.e., by organizing the Panhellenic exhibitions), as the powers of the market were weak and anemic at the time.

Another key point of convergence has been that all works selected in this section were but different versions of the cityscape, whether true landscapes or genre paintings, interiors or still lifes, nudes or portraits. Cityscapes in the sense that they capture representations of city life, social roles and functions and which ultimately contribute to the establishment of role models, evaluations, social and cultural relationships.



Figure 1: Dimitris Yoldassis, Samarina, ca. 1960 (?), Oil on canvas, 128.5 x 194 cm. National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum (inv. n. Π.5448)

Even the landscape paintings by Yoldassis, depictions of rural scenes, or people engaged in farming activities, could be considered cityscapes, in the broad sense of the word. Both because they are informed by a bourgeois outlook and because, already by the interwar period, “capitalism, not only as a broader economic framework and institutional environment, but also as a cultural structure, was expanded to dynamically penetrate throughout Greece, the older as well as more recent regions, incorporating rural microcultures financially, politically and culturally” (Ματθιόπουλος 2003: 403).



Figure 2: Yorgos Gounaropoulos, The Exhibition, 1912, Oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm. National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum (inv. n. Π.3037)

To this modernist lifestyle and its distinct domains, to mentalities and attitudes one painting serves as the best possible introduction – so that we may begin the story from the beginning –: *The Exhibition* by Yorgos Gounaropoulos, the earliest (1912) from the works in my section. Whilst Gounaropoulos is featured in the permanent display with paintings made in the distinctive style that characterized his later work, based on a stand-alone colour background and on drawing, which defines outlines in the figures, in this section we decided to exhibit two of his early works: *The Exhibition*, and a *Self-portrait*, both very close to the academic atmosphere in the Athens School of Fine Arts, from which the artist graduated in 1912.

The Exhibition, a dark interior in an art gallery, takes as its subject – and as a distinct category as far as social identities are concerned – art lovers, the viewing of art itself, aesthetic enjoyment as an organic characteristic of the urban identity, and as a rite of initiation to it, creating a *mise en abyme* situation for the viewer. An understanding of the requirements and conditions for modernism in Greece does not only imply the notion of rupture. Beyond convergences or deviations, differences or similarities, “what links Greek art with the European models of each period on the morphological level in an internal, essential manner is the reproduction of more or less the same production and reception conditions” (Καφέτσι 1992: 18). It is this key aspect that this work illustrates, albeit in an academic fashion concerning iconography and style.

It is important that private art galleries, such as the Stratigopoulou Art Gallery and Nina Rocque’s Studio, emerged in Athens in the mid-1920s and early 1930s. If this work by Gounaropoulos provides an opportunity to partly identify the conditions of a distinct social domain, that of art, it is worth noting as well, that this work was produced in 1912, when the Balkan Wars broke out. This date is considered by historiography as Greece’s entry into the 20th century (Ματθιόπουλος 2003: 401). The reference to the creation of a modern Greek cultural identity developed during the interwar period, largely during the second decade of the 20th century, and in most cases was realized in the aftermath of Second World War.

“Modernity and history seem condemned to co-exist, in a self-destructive union that endangers the survival of both.” Reading Paul de Man, Dimitris Tziouvas argues that there is “some sort of analogy between the degree of the modernity of a period and its dependence on history and tradition. The more urgently the former is manifested, the more evident is the attachment to the latter. This perhaps explains the emphasis on Greekness at a time of modernity and a prevalent modernist tendency.” (Τζιόβας 1989: 20).



Figure 3: Yannis Tsarouchis, Banner painted for the Panhellenic Popular Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1949, Glue and colours on cloth, 206,7 x 141,2 cm. National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum (inv. n. Π.1560)

Indeed, from a certain point onward and in gradual progression up to the 1930s, modernism in art was identified with the acceptance of the “non-Europeanized” (Ματθιόπουλος 2003: 406). At the same time, paradoxically, it was in this sense that the connection with Europe was identified. Underlining “Greekness” meant being more modern. Thus, a second landmark work in this section is the banner by Yannis Tsarouchis (1949), made for the Panhellenic Popular Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the Zappeion Hall. If already by the 1930s, the theoretical debate on Greekness had met with entrepreneurial activity, by the late 1940s, the notion of Greekness had become a State-supported, institutionalized activity with financial implications.

Associations for the production of ‘folk’-popular handicrafts had enjoyed ample support and promotion by the State at the permanent display of Greek products installed at the Zappeion Hall in 1933, supported and encouraged by Prime Minister Venizelos and managed by the banker D. Loverdos. This was not so much because these products met the contemporary consumer needs as because they responded to the demand for a ‘Modern Greek culture’. [...] The consequences of setting up a national network for marketing ‘folk’ – traditional art and handicrafts in the form of local associations and limited companies brought into contact ‘folk’-traditional art with urban consumers (Ματθιόπουλος 2003: 414, 416).

The content and connotations of “Greekness”, did not remain immutable in time, and its various manifestations in art were diverse and often unexpected, since they did not always adopt direct morphological correlations. In other words, an artist did not have to paint figures in traditional costumes in order to prove his interest in tradition and in the modernist associations that this implied.



Figure 4: Dimitris Vitsoris, *Lady*, ca. 1925 (?), Oil on canvas, 39 x 28 cm. National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum (inv. n. II.6663)

Even artists such as Vitsoris, whose work is characterized by an introverted style of a psychological, expressionistic nature, dealt with the fabricated argument of Greekness and the will to produce an art of national characteristics and modernistic character. Seeking to dispel “a misunderstanding that is deeply ingrained in the public, as well as in several artists, regarding the content of Greek art”, the artist wrote: “The light, the Attic sky have been regarded as the main, the only Greek quality. Wrong. Who confines Greek art within the narrow geographical boundaries of Greece does injustice to it. It is unfair to limit Greek artists to the touristic beauty of the Greek landscape only, as they have the right to be touched by the inner human conflicts and to allow their inner self to respond to external events” (Βιτσώρης 1940: 28).

His view is ultimately not too different from a statement made by the Greek minister of Education, Yeorgios Papandreou, – which reflected his policy, of course – ten years earlier, in 1930, or from the remarks made by Yannis Tsarouchis in *Zygos* magazine, in a special issue questioning: “Are there any points of contact between Modern art and the ideal of Greek art?”, shortly after the mid-1950s, a time when this debate was still going on strong.

According to Papandreou, it was necessary “to grasp the truth that only National art is of international interest,” (Papandreou 1930) and Tsarouchis, ultimately very close to Vitsoris, remarked that, “Even though we Greeks are appreciative and proud of the fact that so many

columns, Caryatids and pediments adorn Gothic buildings, it is no less true that the true religion of our ancestors is to be found, rather, in those works that, irrespective of the form that they take, whether neoclassical, or not, are the product of that bliss we feel by accepting ourselves – for what we are – and by the unlimited respect for our great desires” (Τσαρούχης 1956: 19).

Yet, the works on display, and the concept of their configuration in my section, firstly trace another, also preeminent, manifestation of the – distinctive – artistic domain in the modernist period: the fact that artists formed groups in order to facilitate their access to the market, to deal with the bureaucratic procedures required in order to organize an exhibition, to communicate with the public and related institutional entities, sometimes even some demands of a trade union nature.

In theory, these groups ought to originate in stylistic and ideological agreements, and reflected common aesthetic pursuits. In practice, though, this was not the case, as demonstrated on various occasions, since aesthetic and ideological aspects of the convergence were most of the time fragile and uncertain. Their divergence, similarly, was not important, even though a climate of false tension was sometimes created and, moreover, groups often functioned as communicating vessels. Such collectivity ultimately served as a supporting mechanism for the careers of individual artists (Μάλαμα 2009, Ματθιόπουλος 2009: 226-228).

Most works in this section were produced by artists who were associated during the interwar period with *Omada Techni 1930* [Art Group 1930] or *Enossi Eleftheroi Kallitechnai* [Free Artists’ Union] (created in 1935) before most of them went on to form *Omada Stathmi* [Group “Level”, as stathmi is the Greek word for “level”] (1949) and *Armos* [Joint] (1949) in the aftermath of the War, while some also became members of the artists’ branch of EAM (the communist National Liberating Front).

In all cases mentioned above one may discern an honest effort on the behalf of the artists to escape from academic painting and conservative styles by trying to renew their artistic codes. Still, none of these attempts actually goes further than visual experimentations, nor challenges the principles of an empirical rationality. Therefore the role of the art is inevitably being limited to decorative aims.

Omada Techni 1930 [Art Group 1930], in which modernist artists of a liberal political background became active, was formed by D. Stephanopoulos, M. Tombros, and A. Theodoropoulos and developed a very active exhibition agenda. Participating artists were interested in current artistic developments in Paris and at the same time made an effort to equally distance themselves from academism – which continued to be popular – as well as from the Impressionist and Post-impressionist styles ideologically supported by Zacharias Papantoniou, who was the Director then of the National Gallery and an established art critic.

Group members included the followers of the school that came to be known as the Paris School, Vitsoris, Gounaropoulos, Kanellis, Vassileiou, Asteriadis, Hadjikyriakos-Ghika. In 1935, the group splintered; Ghika, Gounaropoulos, and Tombros organized their own event, Vitsoris, Asteriadis, Vassileiou continued as *Omada Techni* until the War.

The year 1935 was also when *Enosis Eleftheroi Kallitechnai* [Free Artists’ Union] was formed, mainly by left-wing artists, including Dimitris Yoldassis, a former member of *Omada Techni*, Dimitris Davis, Kostas Plakotaris, Alekos Kontopoulos. They were joined by Nikolaou, Moralís, and Rengos. Their stylistic tendencies were “primarily realistic and neoclassical, in the manner of A. Derain” (Matthiopoulos 1999: 161); their first exhibition took place in 1935, and D. Galanis, a

Greek artist with an established presence in Paris, and Y. Halepas, a sculptor, who, till today in many cases, functions as a kind of archetype of the deviant artist social type in Greek art history, were guests of honor, in a gesture to show who the group considered as their guides in contemporary Greek art.

Almost immediately after the end of the Civil War, new collective schemes emerged, which seemed once again to reflect an indeterminate landscape in the arts. Vassileiou, Asteriadis, Frantziskakis, Kanellis, Rengos were members of *Stathmi* [Greek for “level”], formed in October 1949. Ghika, Moralis, Nikolaou, Tsarouchis, Engonopoulos were members of *Armos* [Joint], which was formed shortly after.

It is certainly not unjustified to associate the output of the members of *Stathmi*, artists who had been actively involved with the causes of the Resistance and EAM [the communist National Liberating Front], with an anthropocentric, socially aware, realistic art, with stylistic and morphological references to “folk” and post-Byzantine art (Μάλαμα 2009, Ματθιόπουλος 2009: 226-228).

Similarly evident is the association of the *Armos* members with the liberal political circles and the pursuit of a European version of Greekness, the “irrationality of surrealism” (Ματθιόπουλος 2009: 228), or abstraction.

Yet, irrespective of any deviations in subject matter, style, even quality, in these artists’ output, it is hard to identify any distinct aesthetic and ideological qualities that set them apart, unless one knows in advance the group of which a particular artist was a member (Καλλιγιάς 1950). In fact, it is possible that members of different groups may sometimes share more affinities compared to members of the same group.

The group *Akraioi* [Extremists] was also formed in the same year as *Stathmi* and *Armos*; its manifesto was signed by Alekos Kontopoulos. Members of the group were also Antypas, Gaitis, Maltezos and Hytiris. *Akraioi* may not have developed an exhibition activity, yet they were the ones to propose an artistic stance that seemed to redefine the broader role and function of art for the first time, at least as far as their statement of principles is concerned, which was ultimately their only public gesture.

As mentioned in their manifesto, “original contemporary art seeks to break through the impenetrable screen between reality and the imaginary, between the world of common sense and the realm of dreams. Never before has a similar effort been made to demonstrate the inextricable relationship between man and the cosmos [...]. In the face of the collapse of the context and content of tradition, where we all stand in awed longing, authentic contemporary art hopes that there will come a day when man will be able to establish a new intellectual synthesis, in which to be free and integral!” And goes on to affirm: “And we are on the side of those who believe that the poetic reality of inner human truth was never before so close to becoming an activity adapted to the manifestations of life, a way of life, an expression of life” (Κοντόπουλος 1949: 349-350).

In the context of the vague distinctions between groups, it is interesting to note that the *Akraioi* manifesto might well have been signed off, at least up to a certain point, by artists such as Vitsoris and Tsarouchis, whose views were discussed above. Nevertheless, in a broader, sober consideration, not necessarily a praise, nor a criticism, the potential of these views was never realized, and experimentation in Greek modernist painting limited itself within the confines of an

aesthetic treatment, oscillating between realism and Greekness, dramatically changing, at any rate, the relationship between painting and the reality as perceived by the eye.

Conclusions

Revisiting a National Museum collection is inevitably, even unintentionally, a clear case of restructuring a national narrative, by creating or reintroducing a sense of national self. The *Versions of Greek modernism; experiences and ideological trajectories* temporary exhibition section attempted to propose an alternative scenario concerning the national narrative of Modern Greek Art; more specifically the Greek artistic production covering the Interwar period and the first decades after the Second World War.

One fundamental precondition of course was the fact that the approach suggested by the current curatorial choices could function in relation to the respective subsection of the permanent display of the museum, present in the same building. It had to provide complementary material to enrich the already existent presentation and at the same time challenge the certainties of the rather outdated historiographical scheme that its permanent counterpart is based on. Nevertheless, by expanding the criteria of selection for work on display, beyond purely qualitative criteria in aesthetic terms, my curatorial approach intended to broaden the view and suggest works of art which may not claim the title of the “masterpiece” but which are far more representative of a broader cultural context and more honest as far as the image of the art field in Greece is concerned. In order to strengthen a line of argumentation that reconsiders stereotypes, the exhibition focused on introducing the presence of parallel artistic currents and respective subcultures instead of reinforcing the scheme of a linear, homogenizing presentation of Greek artistic production. At the same time it implied the importance of highlighting specific production and reception conditions, necessarily taking into account the institutional context.

It is important to point out the constant need to determine national identity by referring both to Greekness and Europeaness, the use of tradition as a means of achieving modernism and, paradoxically enough, of modernism as a motive to discover and explore tradition so to claim a Europeaness of sorts. Furthermore, the inevitable exhaustion of modernistic experiment in the limits of the parisian *retour à l'ordre* artistic movement (with quite few exceptions), during the Interwar at least, is indicative enough of an artistic field not emancipated enough in order to deeply question the terms of its own existence and identity. Thus, it remains unable to test its own limits beyond empiricism.

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Four narrative perspectives on Swiss history at the Swiss National Museum

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Abstract

In 2009, the Swiss National Museum in Zurich chose a new approach for its permanent exhibition, and made a thematic narrative – based on four major research areas of contemporary historiography – the centre of its exhibition rooms. Underpinning this concept was the realisation that the main focus of contemporary research must be reflected in the presentation of history, even if it is in a constant process of change and reformulation. The collection of objects in the National Museum's possession reflects earlier areas of research into Switzerland's cultural history. The second new permanent exhibition, the 'Collections Gallery' reflects this emphasis on collecting, and shows the outstanding pieces in a display that is solely focused on the objects.

In contrast, the permanent exhibition on Swiss history had to find new ways of presentation, since the National Museum's collections have gaps in the areas of political and economic history, as well as in contemporary history. And yet, a new narrative of Swiss history must offer visitors precisely these links between outstanding objects of cultural history and the narrative of a national history, which addresses themes that are not shown in the collection. The four chapters of Swiss history are structured chronologically and enable the historical study of the settlement, religious, political and economic history of Switzerland – from the pre-Christian era to the 21st century. The objects in the collection have now been given 'a new mediality' in the nation's venerable 'Hall of Fame'. The modernity of the scenography, the presentations and arrangements of the objects break with the earlier presentation of political history which was characterized by the depiction of military victories. It now takes the visitor along a path – which can be physically followed – to consensual Swiss democracy and thus makes a contribution to the contemporary understanding of political developments in Switzerland. The other rooms give visitors a picture of Switzerland that is shaped by immigration and emigration, by religious conflicts and splits, by its political system based on consensus as well as early economic successes. The narrative strand links transformational processes with the great ruptures in history, and thus places itself entirely at the service of historical learning, one of the most important tasks of a history museum.

The Swiss National Museum, which is situated next to Zurich's main station, was founded in 1898. In 2016 a modern – and long overdue – extension will be added to the existing building, allowing 19th century historicism to meet modern 21st century architecture. The planning stage for the extension began in 2001, and after several popular referendums and votes in parliament, the project is now finally entering the implementation phase. However, existing buildings need to be renovated first – a process that will take place in several stages. The renovation of the so-called “station wing”, was completed in 2008.

In 2006 the director of the museum, Dr. Andreas Spillmann, announced that two new permanent exhibitions would be installed in this part of the museum. These were officially opened on the 1 August 2009, that is, on the same day as the Swiss national holiday.

As work began on the historical exhibition, it became clear that the National Museum's collections were evidence of an early understanding of Swiss cultural history and corresponding fields of research. The Swiss National Museum has collected outstanding arts and crafts objects. In addition to a significant archaeological collection, there has been a focus on collecting military history items (weapons and uniforms), gold and other precious metals, textiles, ceramic stoves, paintings, prints and historical photographs. The acquisitions policy followed that widely adopted by national museums of cultural history in the beginning and in later years. It was therefore self-evident that one of the new permanent exhibitions would be dedicated exclusively to the museum's early collection activities, and that a number of prized objects from the museum's various collections should be put on display. The first exhibition, “Collections Gallery”, therefore reflects the Swiss National Museum's collecting activities and shows a variety of exceptional items displayed in a purely object-oriented manner. (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The other permanent exhibition: “Collections Gallery” (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

However, for the second exhibition, “History of Switzerland”, new approaches had to be adopted due to gaps in the museum’s collections in the areas of political and economic history, as well as recent contemporary history. A new account of Swiss history provides visitors with a link between exhibits of outstanding cultural interest and a narrative of national history covering topics not illustrated by items from the collections.

Preparatory work on this national narrative was developed in collaboration with professors of history from Swiss universities. This group adopted an approach whereby their narrative would be structured into four main sections – four areas of contemporary historical research. This was done with the knowledge that within a few years the concept would already be out of date and probably have to be re-formulated.

A basic decision was taken to dispense with a continuous chronology that would define the organization of whole exhibition. However, each of the exhibition’s four sections is in itself structured in a chronological manner. This decision was made in order to avoid focussing on any one period of history in particular. The aim thereby is help people comprehend an overall historical development, without getting too distracted by tangential narratives.

The four sections of the exhibition deal with the following topics: the history of migration, religious history, political history and economic history. A short tour through the exhibition will provide an impression of the overall concept.

Part one: No one has been here all the time

Beginning with the first section, “No one has been here all the time”, emphasis has been placed on addressing questions regarding the area now known as Switzerland, immigration and emigration, settlement traces left by past cultures, and finally, the extent to which migration shaped, and continues to shape, Switzerland’s development.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors are greeted by the plaster bust of a woman, a reconstruction from the skull of a supposedly typical Swiss woman from the Neolithic Age, which, however, actually dates from the 19th century. This plaster bust, known as “homo alpinus helveticus”, caught the imagination of the eugenics movement, which in the 1920s and 1930s tried to research and define a pure Swiss race – a hopeless undertaking as we know nowadays (Figure 2).

As well as looking at (material) traces left behind by people from pre-Christian times, there is a focus on the history of immigration and emigration from the 17th to the 21st century. When one considers immigration, one thinks first of the religious refugees (the Huguenots) and, later on in the 19th century, the political refugees. However, until the end of the 19th century Switzerland was primarily a classic emigration country, and only later became an immigration country.

After the Second World War, Italians started immigrating into Switzerland, where there was a great demand for manual labour to complete huge construction projects, such as the Gotthard railway tunnel in 1880. The arrival of the Italians coincided with the political Right’s introduction of the concept of *Überfremdung* (literally “over-foreignization”). In the 1970s there were six national referendums proposing measures to counter “Überfremdung”, all of which were rejected. However, it is a political issue that continues to be debated today (and not just in Switzerland), as the exhibition makes clear by exhibiting a referendum poster produced recently by a major Swiss party in conjunction with an initiative aimed at limiting immigration.



Figure 2: Homo alpinus helveticus – in the entrance of the exhibition (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

Since Switzerland and the EU signed the Freedom of Movement Agreement in 2002 a new group of people has been immigrating into Switzerland: highly qualified Germans that are needed by various highly specialized sectors of the Swiss economy. At the end of this section of the exhibition the visitor’s attention is drawn to this development.

Part two: Faith, diligence and order

Now let’s look at the second part of the exhibition: “Faith, diligence and order”. This section is entirely devoted to religious history – with the focus being, naturally, on the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism, and the turning point of the Reformation at the beginning of the 16th century.

Before continuing with the narrative it is necessary to focus on the exhibition design. Two staged spaces are used to comment on the role of architecture in exhibition design. To answer the important questions of how did the curators see the role of architecture and what can be accomplished with exhibition design? (Figures 3 & 4). The designers of this exhibition considered the scenography as fulfilling three roles:

- Exhibition design is communication. Visitors interpret whatever they see. They try to extract statements from the form and arrangement of the material presented, which is why scenographers and curators are always aware that architecture can be used to make statements. The exhibition design “carries” the subject; i.e. it incorporates its contextual guidelines and principle ideas.
- Exhibition design must create atmospheres, a resonance between space, object and spectator: *“Ein Miteinander von Raum, Objekt und Person (Janelli 2008: 49) The main focus is*

on the sensations engendered by the room, the way the room is perceived by the visitor. *“Durch die Schaffung von starken Atmosphären eröffnen sich den Besuchern Möglichkeiten für ästhetische Erfahrungen, die zur Reflexion der eigenen Meinung anregen”* (Janelli, 2008: 46)

- Exhibition design is interpretation. The way something is displayed is already an interpretation – and this is true not only of the narrative and the choice of objects or texts: scenography, which plays an essential role in the exhibition, is subject to the same fundamental principles of representation in museums.



Figure 3: View to the first room of the second part of the exhibition: religious history (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

These three points are clearly demonstrated in the two rooms devoted to the medieval world of religion and the Reformation. First a space evoking the medieval world of religion – then a break: A space designed in a deliberately sparse manner, mainly in grey, is evocative of the churches stripped of decoration and beheaded saints – the visitor is made to realize that he is in the Reformation room. Statements are accentuated by the scenography. In these two rooms the visitor, the “perceiving subject” (Jannelli, Hammacher, 2008: 47), experiences an abrupt change (of style), a break that in reality one does not encounter in this form or to this extent).



Figure 4: The Reformation room (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

The exhibition continues along a corridor, where the subject is the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic reform in the Catholic Church heralded by the Council of Trent, including for example the consolidation of the church authorities, adhering to celibacy, establishing seminaries (founding of a Jesuit College in Switzerland).

From here one has access to the so-called Hall of Fame. But just before the impressive arch becomes visible, the visitor is confronted with the history of the exclusion and persecution of Anabaptists, Jews and witches. In a narrow corridor the history of these heretics is told by images of torture and exclusion by both the Catholic *and* Protestant church of the 16th and 17th century.

If you enter the Hall of Fame directly to the left, you find yourself in an area dealing with the Enlightenment and the introduction of compulsory education for all children, which is where the second part of the exhibition ends.

Part three: Through conflict to concordance.

The third section of the exhibition is devoted to political history and is called “Through conflict to concordance”. This part of the exhibition is located in the Hall of Fame, mainly on a wooden ramp that is modelled on a mountain pass road: Visitors are greeted by a nine-metre-high “Wheel of Myths” (Figure 5) that is, as it were, driving the development of national “myths”. Within the wheel, Swiss myths and stereotypes are presented: crossbows, cowbells and Heidi. It is the wheel of history, the wheel of constantly recurring historical images, familiar to – and made use of by – every nation.

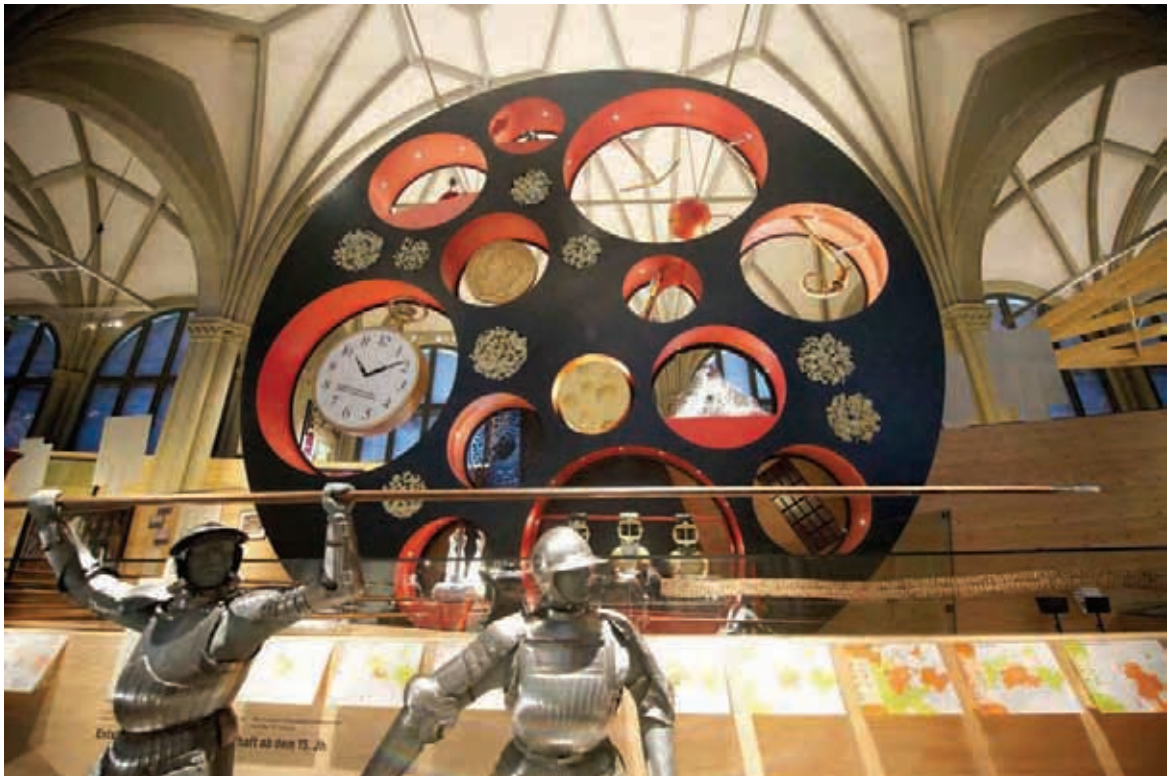


Figure 5: The “wheel of myths” (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

However, the narrative begins with the ascent up the mountain pass road punctuated by a series of display cases that relate stories of military conflicts, political unions, and the way in which the federal state finally came into being in 1848. Along the way one encounters, among other items, the famous royal Gobelin tapestry – one of the museum’s outstanding exhibits. It shows Louis XIV at the signing of a mercenary alliance with the confederates – one of the most striking testimonies to the close ties between France and the Confederation.

At the top of the ramp we come to an area dealing with the founding of the state and the constitution, and a (modified) reconstruction of the Federal Council Chamber. The desks have been fitted with monitors providing information on the Swiss political system and the premises and history of the political parties. This serves mainly as a complementary resource for school groups studying the political system.

The final section is devoted to two major social conflicts, or strike movements, that arose at the beginning of the 20th century: the *Landstreik* (the general strike) of 1918 and the campaign for women’s voting rights. It should be remembered that it was only in 1971 that Swiss women obtained the right to vote.

A projection visible from this point shows images of Europe’s battlefields during the First and Second World Wars, illustrating the disaster that threatened from abroad at this time. This subject is further addressed on the lower floor, under the wooden ramp. Various aspects of the role played by Switzerland, a country spared the horrors of these wars, are looked at here, such as refugee policy, economic links with Nazi Germany, mobilization and the everyday lives of people in Switzerland. The area leading to the exit of the third section of the exhibition is dedicated to a film footage relating to the Cold War and the consequences it had for Switzerland. In the 1990s Switzerland was much criticized for its long-dormant assets, bank secrecy laws and fiscal policy, all of which gave rise to

diplomatic disagreements and foreign intervention. A media station displays extracts from foreign news media covering this period.



Figure 6: The room of proto – industrialization (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

Part four: Switzerland becomes rich abroad

The fourth and final section of the exhibition is called “Switzerland becomes rich abroad”, and is devoted to economic history. The visitor’s attention is drawn to Swiss products, as well as the stories and people behind them. Switzerland is a rich country, and in the next two rooms questions such as “How did Switzerland become rich?” or “Where does this prosperity come from?” are examined.

Switzerland’s success is partially based on the textile industry, which is presented in the first room, (Figure 6) which deals with the period of proto-industrialization: A hand loom stands in the middle of the room, while on the walls and in the display cases one can see the products – the textiles – that in many places were being produced by a cottage industry, and were already being exported successfully. Other topics include the history of the mercenary, and the trade in foreign produce and textiles, which made some merchants extremely wealthy at this time.



Figure 7: The room of industrialization: in the center of the room: the alternating current generator of 1895 (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

In the second room, which deals with the Age of Industrialization (Figure 7), three large banks of display cases feature not only textiles, but also important Swiss watches, milk products and chocolate. In the centre of the room stands a symbol of the machine industry, an alternating current generator made by a major Swiss company. The back row of display cases covers the history of the chemical industry, which started to take off at the beginning of the 20th century.

The last room is devoted to the history of banking and the significance of Switzerland as a financial centre. The ascent of the major Swiss banks started during the second half of the 19th century, when banks put aside capital – in addition to capital invested by Germany, England and France – to finance large-scale infrastructure projects. In the centre of this room, as a symbol of financial power and glory, stands a customer safe from a large bank. In some of the safe's deposit boxes visitors can find references to critical aspects of this highly topical subject: banking secrecy, lists of long-dormant assets, tax evasion, etc. (Figure 8). The history of banking concludes our tour through the 1200m² exhibition, and leads us to the question of the narrative of national history.



Figure 8: The room of the history of banking: the customer safe of 1912 (© Donat Stuppan, Swiss National Museum).

The narrative of national history

Before reflecting on the Swiss National Museum's narrative, let us underline some basic principles that define the various components of a narrative:

An open view of history (Sommer-Sieghart, M., 2009: 77): Rather than getting bogged down in negation and a frantic deconstruction of old images and narratives, one should reflect on what national history can actually achieve. At the heart of this discussion is always the question of how democracy evolved (a process that happened much earlier in Switzerland than in other European states – and of course not without conflicts). This is why political history is central to our permanent exhibition, and why this subject is dealt with in our Hall of Fame of the Nation, which used to be concerned with military history.

Constant interaction with influences from abroad: No narrative of national history is possible without a contextual understanding. It is important to convey to visitors the great extent to which Switzerland has been shaped by foreign influences, immigration, and the cultural achievements and discoveries that foreigners have contributed.

The constructive character of the storyline should be discernible: Thus, objects should be carefully chosen, texts formulated in a scientifically correct manner (avoid texts claiming to divulge “the truth”), and authors clearly identified. The goal is to make the constructed nature of history “readable” by dividing the narrative into four sections – the aim is to neither produce a linear nor a teleological narrative. Reconstructions (such as the huge statue of the so called “*Wehrwille*” (the will to defend), or the model of the Müstair Monastery) help us to realize that a narrative always represents a construction and an interpretation. Any elements of the exhibition design that exaggerate or are monumental, entertaining or playful are admissible as techniques – they are communication tools and as such contribute to the process of conveying the narrative.

The investigative horizon of the visitors is channelled by the exhibition’s curator, the aim being to create information platforms that are as large as possible: texts that are eclectic yet easy to understand, media stations as additional sources of information, and lounges where visitors can not only relax but also consolidate what they have learnt through additional reading.

Conclusion

A history museum is a place to learn about history, even if the museum lends itself to a particular way of learning. Lepenies (2003) describes learning experiences during a visit to the museum as an unintended but welcome side effect. She calls it “collateral learning” - a specific learning that museums should be more aware of. In light of this, the curators approach to the content should be neither over-didactic or disabusive, and certainly not ideological. But it should adopt an approach whereby history is explained. We aim to encourage an understanding of how Switzerland became the country it is today. The narrative helps to answer questions concerning identity and common values. And at the same time it serves to further our understanding of how a state functions. It is important for Switzerland to realize that multiple narratives are at play here – that the Swiss live in a pluralistic society, in a country of different identities and languages. There is not one but a multitude of factors that explain how the political system has developed. To understand the state (of Switzerland) as it is today and to recognize its achievements, it is important to understand not only the way economic and political systems have evolved, but also the country’s religious and cultural developments.

Our narrative links these processes of transformation with major turning points in history and explores the various connections. Nowadays, a linear narrative style – i.e. the classic chronological and monothematic master narrative – seems to have been largely superseded in many museums. The focus is now more on representing different – and sometimes opposing – processes and developments. Omissions and gaps are the price one has to pay for this more open interpretation of history. As are original objects that often have to be replaced by reconstructions and models in order to support the narrative being presented. Scenography therefore plays a decisive role in this approach and is possibly the curator’s most important narrative tool.

The Swiss National Museum has decided to pursue this direction by presenting four narrative perspectives aimed at making Swiss history more accessible.

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Museums and History in Contemporary France

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Abstract

France's history museums have undergone extensive and rapid change over the last two to three decades. Following on from major changes in the world of France's art museums, the major projects that characterise the new take on history in the museum lead us to ask what they tell us about the relationship between history in the museum and academic historiographical practice. History museums are perhaps more related to the present and the needs of society than to the practice of historical erudition in the traditional sense. Is there such a thing as an ideal formula for these new history museums or displays? In what sense can one observe a radically new vision of heritage that refuses a nostalgic mode of representation but also any kind of spectacular merchandising and dramatizing of history, whilst leaving room for critical historical knowledge?

Introduction

As the result of a series of constructions, renovations and announcements for new projects, the landscape of France's history museums has been changing fast over the last decade. This tendency follows on from a wave of developments in the field of the art museum that precluded this transformation. This is a fact that needs to be remarked in the context of another remark; the absence of an immediate impact of the considerable success of the French historical school of the 1960s to 1980s on the renewal of museums and exhibitions. During that period, France's most eminent historians were broadly published, establishing their media presence by appearing on television shows etc., but they participated little if at all in the major museum projects of their time.

The relationship between history museums and historiography might at first appear to be an obvious one. For indeed history museums do not merely present collections of objects from the past but also claim to represent the historical discipline and the point of view of professional historians, mainly academics. Yet, it remains difficult to establish whether museums follow precise rules that govern their relationship to academia. Do they look to academia for criteria of organisation, for the selection of their collections and its quality? Does the need to reflect current historiography have an influence on the financing or the management of the institution? In other words, the objectives and obligations of museums appear to be considerably different from those of the historical sciences.

In scholarly history, the relationship to the function of the archive is clear, but generally speaking the museum is not so much dedicated to the indexing and storing of source materials as to seeking out emerging curiosities by illustrating the vicissitudes of scholarly interests and by more or less vulgarizing the latest finds of research for visitors (Le Goff 1977; Kavanagh 1990). And whilst successive revolutions in historical writings have systematically produced revolutions in documentation processes – the same cannot be said for the collections of history museums. The question of the reverse effect of museographical representations on the writing and understanding of history is rarely considered.

Historians and the Critique of the History Museum

French historians only really began to show an interest in history museums at the beginning of the 1990's when a series of major conferences and exhibitions was organised to deal with the issue of museum history – beginning with the 1993 conference celebrating the bicentenary of the Louvre (Pommier 1995; Joly, Compère-Morel 1998) and the 1994 exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay, *La Jeunesse des Musées* (Georgel 1994). Art historians' interest for the question of museums is older – but was traditionally limited to looking at the relationship between artists and the museums – or simply focused on the history of its decors (Gaehtgens 1994, 1996; Chaudonneret 1991, 2004; Allard 2006). More specifically, for many an academic historian, the museum (whether or not they played an active role in relation to it) was a place to be celebrated as a tribune or as a tool for civic engagement, for social unity and for the representation of the intellectual authority of the findings of history.

For another group of academics however, the analysis of the museum was generally the subject of strong criticism considering the relationship between history and fiction – be it in

museographical or scholarly work; this kind of thinking about the museum was much inspired by the intellectual currents of the 1970 (Michel de Certeau) and the semiotic perspectives that had been established by Roland Barthes' « reality effect » or the poetics of tropes recognised by Hayden White as « metahistory ». Finally a radical critic of the relationship between museums and power, as a kind of public spectacle led to a general condemnation of museums of contemporary history that appeared as serving the consumer needs of tourism and a conventional duty to memorialize certain historical events. Such a perspective was particularly developed in the reactions to the development and establishment of two museums which respectively deal with the first and second world wars: Peronne and Caen (Wahnich 2005). In the case of Peronne, debates concerning the museums became polemic opposing the so-called « école de Péronne » and those who criticized it Nicolas Offenstadt or Rémy Cazals. Whilst the Péronne school claimed the development of a new approach that established a portrait of the war in a contemporary social context of consensus and patriotic participation, historians such as Offenstadt and Cazals underlined that it is not only our present day humanistic sentiments that lent so much importance to cases of mutiny and their repression. They claimed these to be the significant products of the sentiments of the time itself, identifiable as a culture of peace, which could be convincingly observed in such sources as the press and war diaries. The remarkable point here is that in these debates, though they have gone beyond the scholarly circles, they nevertheless do not really take the reaction of the visitors to the museum into account.

It remains that in France the museum is often considered by the majority of historians with condescending disdain. In some cases it has been clearly formulated in appeals addressed directly to the government by historians themselves. In response to this we find the no less stereotypical discourse of curators and other professionals concerning the specificity of their work and the presentation of museum media. In short, it is as though historians are deploring the fact that they do not, or that they no longer control history museums, their discourses and scenographies and are aspiring to conquer them back and so to rediscover a lost scholarly activity. This explains their criticism of the museographical inventions of curators, considered as amateur historians – in opposition to the academic. A spectacular manifestation of this could be read in a group of articles published by the journal *Le Débat* to mark the opening of the *Musée d'Orsay*. The debate generally looked at the possibility for the museum to become - more than a place of conservation and presentation of objects - a site for the construction of a specific form of visual culture history. Maurice Agulhon presented his appreciation of the historical information provided by the new museum and its chronological divisions. He did so, much as a professor would correct a student's work by noting the good and the bad points, much as the expert might judge the work of an amateur encroaching on his territory (Agulhon 1987; Sherman 1990).

The expression of regret, which has become nearly banal in the face of what one might call the divorce between the museum and historians seems to suppose that at one point there was a happy union between them – an idea that can only be recognized as an invented golden age – against which one can better develop the legitimate lament over a current state of affairs. In fact, if we consider the situation of history museums in the past we can see that they were never under the direct responsibility of historians. In France, professional historians have never been at the origin of the creation of a history museum. Whilst they have sometimes presented petitions or appeals in favour of the creation of their ideal establishment (as was the case with the program of

the Mucem, Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée planned in Marseille) their initiatives appear as corporatist and are generally met with silence. The initiatives for museums in the twentieth century generally emanated from those who had been part of history – deportees or members of the resistance during the Second World War for example, or indeed passionate collectors (Boursier 1997). The decision to build history museums in contemporary France has always emanated from local or national political entities and always as a reaction to some kind of specific issue that was the subject of topical debate or attention. For example the creation of the House of the children of Izieu and a museum in Lyon dedicated to deported Jewish children was decided upon in 1987 during the tribunal hearing of Barbie, one of the leaders of the Gestapo in Lyon (the Centre d'histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation opened in 1992), whilst it was the commemoration of the bicentenary of the French Revolution that led the department of the Isère to open a museum of the Revolution in Vizille – though it had as yet no specific collection.

Shifting Temporal References

One of the most common strategies of the contemporary museum is the presentation of objects and images of the past as symbols of the abjection, designed to inspire horror and disapprobation of a phenomena or a situation. From this perspective many history museums are indeed museums of historical criminality. In France during the Revolution the contagious effect of the images of royalty and religion was feared, and so Lenoir used the monuments of the monarchy to show the barbaric character of former times. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the criminality of the *Ancien Régime* was the equivalent of the barbarous acts carried out by enemies of the nation in the twentieth century.

The first institution to document and expose contemporary history of the twentieth century was the library and museum of war, founded in 1917 by a rich Parisian industrial baron, Henri Leblanc, and his wife in their apartment on the avenue Malakoff. Established in the castle of Vincennes from 1925 onwards it is still conserved today with the library in Nanterre and the museum at the *Invalides*. The appeal to emotion of remembrance, the *damnatio memoriae*, is clearly expressed in the first catalogue written in 1916 by Leblanc : « Over the centuries people will be able to come to our home to recall the glories and the horrors of this immense conflict – they will find documents that fill their soul with a love for France and a horror of Germany and Germans ».

The objective is the same in the museum for comparative sculpture at the Trocadéro, there Camille Enlart, after World War One, placed special cartels to show which of the plasters had been damaged by the Germans. He stated that this does not only apply to the recent war but that such « green cartels will be extended to other monuments of the Trocadéro. They need to be placed alongside those monuments of Roman Gaul that were destroyed by the first invasions of the Barbarians or the vestiges of Théroouanne (French commune), wiped out by their descendants in 1553; the busts destroyed in Strasbourg in 1870. The museum that resumes the history of our artistic culture needs to point to the hatred and disdain for civilization that has been the work of the enemies of its civilization in the past ». Such episodes confirm the process of construction of national identity and the feeling of having lost a common heritage – illustrating what Renan had already intimated in the text of his famous conference held at the Sorbonne in 1882 « What is a Nation ? » : « In terms of national souvenirs : grief is worth more than trophies as they imply

duties, they command a common effort ». The commemoration of the destructions of the First World War through these collections makes them appear as veritable national « *lieux de mémoire* ».

The « *histoire immobile* » so dear to Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie triumphed and depicted the « world that we have lost » (Peter Laslett) in the network of museums of popular art and tradition initiated by Georges-Henri Rivière, definitively eclipsing older out-dated traditional history museums. The ideal of the museum as a laboratory of French ethnography was best illustrated by the museum of Beaune in the 1950s and 1960s (Bleton-Ruget 2006). In the course of the 1970s and 1980s it was in a series of museums sometimes called the second generation of Rivière that the modernity of the historical *école des Annales* was presented as a social history from the « bottom up ».

The invention of the ecomuseum or the museum of society did have a considerable impact on turning the gaze of anthropology back onto itself, from far off societies to our own: the anthropology of France was elaborated during this period, replacing the anthropology of the others by an anthropology of ourselves (Weber 2003). The reasons for this are complex, the combine processes of decolonialisation, the reconversion of academic anthropology and a public policy demand emanating from the state *Mission of ethnological heritage* (Segalen 2005; Cuisinier 2006).

A Generation of Memory Museums

When the 20th anniversary of the Liberation was celebrated in the 1960s, the foundation of museums of the Second World War that were related to these commemorations came about at the initiative of private associations. These museums are the direct representatives of their ideals of the memory of the war and were often created on symbolic sites – such as the camp of Struthof, the execution site of the citadel of Besançon or the Vercors countryside – sites of resistance combats. The museum of national resistance was founded at Champigny-sur-Marne in 1965. Set in a large home from the nineteenth century, on the banks of the Marne, in a park baptized as the *Vercors*, after the pseudonym of the founder of the secret *Editions de Minuit*, it brought together the most important collections pertaining to the French resistance during the Second World War – the product of more than 2000 donations and private and public deposits. The museum also aimed to deal with French social history from 1929 to 1947.

The current presentation still echoes the principals set out at its creation – that is to perpetuate the memory of an exemplary history. In the decades just after the war the politics of memory initiated by the state remained traditional in spirit and in form – the museum itself was created by former members of the resistance – and for over 20 years they collected objects and documents from friends and family. In 1963 teachers in Grenoble, who were former resistance fighters, established, with the help of the departmental archives of the Isère, an exhibition dedicated to the Resistance in the region. The success of the exhibition led to the creation of a permanent museum inaugurated in 1966 renamed in 1970 the Museum of the Resistance and of the Deportation, supported by Pierre Mendès-France, at the time deputy of the department.

Twenty or thirty years later, as the last direct witnesses of this time were dying out and the associations of the Resistance and the Deportation losing strength– it became necessary to think about these forms of transmission of a past of militant efforts and to save the heritage collected by these museums, their archives and collections. The museums needed to be restructured to

cater for a generation that has no direct memory of these events. Mona Ozouf remarked on the fact that very often local museums of the Second World War were museums where the feeling of having lived through something together was expressed – no matter how insignificant the particular events being described might be – the point was not to represent a « grand history » but to affirm a memory of a local community, to recall that something had been gone through together as a solidary group. The range of history museums is large with considerable variations – from those that commemorate traumatic events such as the destruction of Oradour – to those that speak of the shortage of food– as in the Museum of daily life during the Occupation, where ration tickets and wooden shoe soles are displayed.

Caen and Péronne are in a sense symbolic of two opposing notions in the creation of a new generation of war museums: one is a museum of ideas and humanistic implication – the other is a museum of objects. The museum-memorial of Peace in Caen was inaugurated in 1988 (Quétel 1992; Brower 1997). The Historial of the Great War opened in Péronne in 1992. The museum of Péronne is the only one of the current museums that one might say directly bears witness to the latest work and research of historians, as led by the Research Centre that has been adjoined to the museum itself. Both are however the self-conscious kind of *lieux de mémoire* whose development was predicted by Pierre Nora in 1984 in the first volume of the famous series of books bearing the same name. They both clearly break with the typical military museum, exemplified by the *Musée de l'Armée*, founded in 1905 as a fusion of the Artillery museum (born during the Revolution and established in the *Invalides* from 1871 onwards) and the army's historical museum, founded in 1896 by the society called La Sabretache, whose president was the painter Edouard Detaille – it was based on the idea of the retrospective Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1889 (Barcellini 2009).

In Caen, an attempt was made to create a « new kind of museum » that could take you on « a journey through history » thanks to a highly theatrical scenography. The visit ends with 3 films of which the “D-Day” is the most popular. But visitor numbers do not match those of the private and local museums set on the sites of the D-Day beaches themselves. For several reasons the Caen memorial became the focal point in the debate being waged between historians and critical intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s. The memorial was judged according to perfectly contradictory perspectives, making it a turning point for the representation of history in the museum in France. Its influence is visible in the Memorial Charles de Gaulle of Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises (2008) that is set in a building constructed by the same architects as the Caen Memorial at the foot of the hill where the huge Lorraine Cross was erected.

The Péronne museum also tried to found itself in opposition to the tradition of history museums: the name historial is designed to situate it somewhere between the notion of memorial and history. Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau, a historian closely related to the institution wrote in 1992 that it is a history museum and a memorial. In 1987 the Historial organized a movement called « Bring your name into the museum », in order to collect objects from donors offering to have their names mentioned in the activities of the Historial as their objects would become part of inalienable national historical heritage. This needs to be set in the context of initiatives such as the very mediated series « words from the veterans » (France Inter) and the growing financial value (and sometimes aesthetic value) of objects from the trenches that occurred in parallel to growing scholarly literature on the subject. We might borrow the interpretation given by Sophie

Wahnich (2005): “The historical of Péronne is a place for writing a history that judges and condemns a conflict that it is working to erase. In this way the Historical is a place for the invention of a European memory for the present (...) Caen gives way to a memory of the Second World War. It proposes a very constructed history (...) For the needs of our contemporary time, in addition to a purely historical discourse, it also develops an ideological one, which is not exactly that of a memorial of the war as one can observe in the memorials dedicated to the D-day and the battle of Normandy”.

Outside of these two major establishments, local history museums have also been affected by the renovation and construction of new museums underway since the 1970s and which by the end of the 1990s could be numbered at about 300. These last 30 years have witnessed a decisive evolution in terms of history museums – as much due to territorial cultural politics as to a mutation in professional practice. An example of this might be the creation in 1984 of a communal museum of Estivareilles (musée départemental de l’Armée Secrète et de la Résistance) inaugurated by Lucien Neuwirth, an important personality in the Resistance and the Secret Army of the Loire.

History museums became the subject of cultural policy and tourism development with the ecomuseum, society museums, museums related to archaeological sites, regional park houses etc.(Duclos 1992; Ifri and Gueneau (dir.) 1997). One of the singularities of history museums is that they are often managed in a shared partnership between the State and local authorities, contrary to major national museums that are directly affiliated to a central administrative entity. The administrative history of these museums reflects this specificity.

The investment into history museums made by local government needs to guarantee the scientific quality of their new museographies and in order to fulfil this task an association of history museums was created. At the central Direction des Musées de France, Marie-Hélène Joly, was put in charge of the inspection of History museums. It appeared necessary in the 1990s to gain an overview of the general state of history museums dealing with the Second World War – in order to understand how these museums work, their status, the ownership of the collections, their public etc. (François 1996). In 2000 the inspection of the museums stated that « These museums suffer from an absence of conceptual thinking on the notion of resistance itself. The future of these museums can only be insured if they develop a nationwide reflection on this issue. For if their creation was brought about by a myriad of individual initiatives there possible progressive disappearance needs to be examined and lead to a collective idea of their role » (Georges 2000). New criteria need to be applied to scientifically evaluate the conservation of the often personal objects that form the collections of these museums. The fact remains that the state has not intervened in any significant way in relation to the 200 museums that make up the category of World War museums (Barcellini 2005).

The *Guide to France’s history museums* that was published in France in 1996 by Marie-Hélène Joly underlined the fact that keeping these museums alive only made sense if their conservation was organized and structured. Simply maintaining them open to the public is not enough – as their unique objective is not mere contemplation or aesthetic pleasure, as in the case of *Beaux-Arts* museums. Their main purpose is to incite curiosity, interest and establish memory. The other aspect of their mission is clearly to provide objects that explain history itself and the existence of the institution. In writing this guide, she affirmed the specific values of history museums as

opposed to the art museum, which is indeed the major museum model in the French tradition of the DMF. The aim of the history museum was to serve the explicatory work of the historian – giving him specific sources such as visual imagery (propaganda images – etc). The conference organized in 1996 on the Historial of Péronne and coordinated by Marie-Hélène Joly and Thomas Compère Morel, was edited as *History museums for the future* (1998) and it constitutes what I would call the « disciplinary » moment of the history museum in France.

Its lessons were fruitful, inspiring Robert Bresse, director of the National Army museum, in charge of the museums modernization programme that has since taken place, to state that “My mission is to transform a museum of objects into a history museum” (quoted in Guillet 2012: 73). The conference helped orientate this important renovation – whose most significant addition was the Historial Charles de Gaulle, a spectacular site – it is conceptually and physically an audiovisual monument structured around the idea of sound and image as the “matériaux muséographiques gaulliens” without any objects (but with a movie theatre of 200 seats at its centre. Just like a film the visitor follows a story where he is not invited to rewind, to compare or analyse – to stop for explanations, it is a call to an emotional reaction that does not give room for reflection. Shock aesthetics (to use a term from J. L. Déotte) govern this kind of museum experience. More widely the museum spectacle is given over entirely to a relationship governed by emotions.

New Museums and the Ethics of Sustainable Development

The notion of « fair » memory (Paul Ricoeur) or more largely speaking the critical revision of national *lieux de mémoire* have since the 1990s made the museum into a new site for civic power of a specifically republican kind, that is as citadels against the rise of the Extreme right and anti-Semitic tendencies. The national political agenda has become involved in their conception – sometimes in competition with certain associations and local powers. Jean-Yves Boursier observed in relation to museums of the Second World War that we’ve gone from museums created and supported by a specific interest group to museums that express a normative kind of moral discourse in the form of elaborate operations of communication. This has led to the development of spaces that are not really history museums but as termed by Gilles Vergnon (2005; 162) they are “memorials hors sol” that is to say conceptual memorials that transmit global messages: “the horrors of war, the ignominy of its barbary, compassion for its victims providing a de-historicisation of the Resistance – which appears as an episode in an eternal combat between Good and Evil”. This funerary trend in recent French history museums might be understood as a manifestation of what John Lennon (2000), a British specialist of the tourist industry, termed as « dark tourism ».

Constructed as a way of exorcising an experience of trauma, an instrument for dealing with grief, the Caen memorial has extended its geographical and chronological coverage to include the cold war and peace movements all over the world. Péronne has chosen a European perspective, whilst the European Centre of deported resistance members in the Camp of Struthof seeks to represent as many examples as possible of active militant engagement against Nazism. The Alsace Moselle Memorial dedicates an exceptional scenography to a description of the changing frontiers between France and Germany, from 1870 to the Second World War, as a history that still conditions the identity of the region and is relative to the construction of Europe itself. In the

museum of Resistance and Deportation in Grenoble reference is also made to other crimes against humanity such as genocides in Rwanda or Cambodia.

The opening up of French historical museography has been very much related to an affiliation with international networks such as ICOM and more specialized associations. So it is that these new constructions show the influence of contemporary criteria in terms of professionalism and meet an international standard of museography that is also related to the needs of international tourism and to the global success of international architects and the legitimacy provided by the adherence to internationally recognized models (Whitmarsh 2001). The most significant example of this is perhaps the program of the *Cité de l'immigration* at the *Porte dorée* in Paris. Jacques Toubon, former minister of Culture and project leader for this new museum travelled around the world to consider other immigration museums as sources of inspiration for his team, indeed, Ellis Island and has often been cited as a model by the minister's team. Finally an international conference on immigration museums in the world was organized at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* to prepare for its creation.

In a country that had stopped building history museums, the last decades have witnessed a sudden flowering that has to be recognised as a particular phenomena. The buildings that house these new museums are part of their general program. In Caen and Péronne, the metaphor of the break or the tear has been integrated into the architecture, symbolizing the martyrdom of the town during the Second World War for Caen and the murderous battlefields of the Somme in the second case. Henri Ciriani chose the visual of a « crack » to symbolize the idea of the trenches and the break with the past caused by the war, thus playing with a post Le Corbusier architectural vocabulary. James Young (1993) has identified the syndrome of the absent tomb in relation to the buried architectures of memorials and other museums. Elsewhere again from Oradour to the Vendée, these buildings are hidden, erasing themselves behind the importance of the memorial site itself or behind the natural environment, as influenced by the context of sustainable development models.

The Vendée Historial, managed by the Regional council and situated close to La Roche-sur-Yon, in the village of Lucs-sur-Boulogne, cost 14 million euros for the museum building alone, to which we should add 4 millions in scenography costs, half the cost of an average museum in France, according to the curator. Its architectural particularity is its vegetal roof, developed by Plan 01, a collective of Parisian architects. The inside of the building, with its industrial-type structure, is modulable – a hall of over 1.020 m² gives access to seven spaces developing chronologically every historical period from Prehistory onwards. Based on the model of the multiplex cinema it can only be understood in the context of modern entertainment culture, with its cafeteria and a museum for children, a feature that is exceptional in France. Its exhibitions are all temporary, generally illustrating famous people originating from the region, such as Richelieu or dealing with issues related to the War of the Vendée. This establishment marks a decided break from earlier local institutions such as the ecomuseum of the Vendée and from the nearby *Puy-du-fou*, which is the only major site of theatrical historical re-enactment shows in France.

The Historial of the Vendée prefigures a new institutional culture of history museums. It represents a culture of entertainment capable of conciliating educational agendas with more playful distractions, to the detriment perhaps of certain local traditions of historical scholarship and the preservation of a higher quality of museography such as museum inspection has tried to

maintain on a national level. As such it is the product of new conditions of financing and management, and of the new status of history, cultivated as a market strategy for tourism as well as an expression of identity. The construction of a regional identity of the Vendée, though a classical topos of local scholarly history does not appear as a determining element here.

The history of immigration in Grenoble might be considered symmetrically to the Vendéen case. Les expositions dedicated to minorities present in the region, Greeks, Italians and North Africans, were the first examples of a recognition of these communities and their history in French Museums (Duclos, 1999). According to their curator, J.-C. Duclos « regional museums of heritage cannot consider their role to be complete if they do not widen their horizon beyond their own regional history and origins ». Following this policy the museums conceived of and organized a series of exhibitions beginning in 1989 dedicated to the memory of members of foreign communities: Italians of the Apulia (*Corato* - Grenoble en 1989), Greece (*Des Grecs* en 1993), Armenia (*D'Isère et d'Arménie* en 1997) and the Maghreb community 2000, (*D'Isère et du Maghreb, Pour que la vie continue...*). It was dedicated to the scientific examination of transplanted identities, their objective « to constitute a collective memory and to contribute to teaching about difference and respect of other cultures and to the idea of sharing a composite culture » (J.-C. Duclos, 2000). In fact, the study of the public undertaken on this occasion concluded that the museum could teach us to recognize differences. The museography that was adopted presented for each exhibition a person who became the voice of a whole community; this was an adaptation of a North American model of museography that calls upon authentic life stories and witnesses – or even on fictional life reports to give the visitor a sense of having a participative point of view (Idjéroui, Davallon 2002). This museology of immersion, a term often used in relation to science museums, has also come to be used in relation to history museums. French museums have modestly even timidly adopted the history-fiction approaches to be found in America or Canada, nevertheless, it is a clearly observable tendency, for example in the Vercors museum where the story of an assassinated little girl is told. It has also led to the introduction of the use of sound and recorded stories such as in the Museum of Resistance in Grenoble where the streetscape is accompanied by a soundscape.

The Variable Scales of History-Memory

The history museums illustrates particularly well the dilemma presented by the opposition between « a history that teaches more but explains less and a history that explains more but teaches less » as observed by Claude Lévi-Strauss. For indeed biographical history and anecdotal history are at the bottom of a scale, they do not contain their own explanation but only find their place when they are considered as a building block of a wider history, which in turn might also be part of something greater. However, we'd be wrong to believe that these incorporations could constitute a total form of history, for what is gained on the one hand is lost on the other. Biographical and anecdotal history are the least explicative but they are rich in information because they consider individuals in all of their particularity, detailing for each, nuances of character, the detours of their motivations and the different stages of their deliberations. Such information is schematized, then slowly erased and finally disappears when we move towards greater or « stronger » histories (Lévi-Strauss 1962; 346-347).

Today one of the major challenges facing the new museum being established at Marseille is the historicisation of what was the museum of tradition and popular art. For indeed its founder, Georges-Henri Rivière was not a historian, and the museum presented a kind of eternal vision of French traditions constructed through an empathetic, loving relationship with traditional objects. In opposition to this, the director of the new museum, Michel Colardelle, intends to consider the objects as clearly inscribed in an explicit historical context. This is the counter attitude to the “ideology of Malraux”, as it is sometimes referred to, and a call for contextualisation – that of the contemporary Mediterranean world. It will be considered through five themes to be renewed every five years, presently these are : Paradise, water, the way, the city, Masculin/Feminin.

The appeal to memory has become the leitmotiv of a history « in the second degree » (Bacot, Coq 1999). From Paul Valéry’s statements on the new consciousness of the mortality of civilisations to those of Daniel Halévy concerning the unprecedented acceleration of history – a need has appeared for reassurance in terms of the permanence of the nation, of society and community. It is the theory of compensation in the face of what appears to be the acceleration of history pointed out Hermann Lübke and developed by him in relation to contemporary museography.

If we consider the current situation in comparison to that of the 1950s and 1970s, history museums benefit from a renewed positive image in the eyes of the visiting public (Donnat 1994). They have taken into account modifications of the ambitions and practices of historians, their exhibitions have become more thematic and specialised, even fragmented in a certain sense, always conserving the legitimacy and claiming the authority of an anonymous author, a fact that is not entirely unproblematic from the point of view of ego-history. Current developments are characterised by the multiplication of memorial museums that deal with everything from the colonial history of North Africa to site memorials, victim memorials and peace memorials. There is a new profusion of what Annette Becker (1998) has termed as « musées ouverts », created on the site where dramatic events need to be commemorated. Their intentions are heavily underlined by ethnic concerns of human-rights, which they express far more explicitly than was the case in history museums, traditionally thought of as places for teaching history. Here the agenda of the history museums presents a space for the performance of the visitor’s duty to engage with a memorial issue.

The history museum enjoys a great deal of credibility as it presents authenticity in the form of real physical witnesses of the past that are presented as pieces of evidence of its presence. They appear as proof of the truth of the museum’s discourse. But today’s history museums are much more museums of the present than traditional history museums. In the museums of the 1980s “the immersion in practices of the past, far from being nostalgic was a way of stirring present day problems” (Préface de la brochure de la Fédération des Ecomusées, 1990). The ecomuseum in particular elaborated a new representation of heritage conceived of as a new awareness of ourselves in society, thanks to its constant updating by its “owners” (Benzaid 1980; Fleury 1988; Segalen 1989). In this way it partakes of the new dynamics of “heritage” in society. Whilst the classical history museum used the past for a vision of the future, the ecomuseum, to use Freddy Raphaël (1987) excellent observation, is « a provocation « a provocation of memory » The utopia of Rivière’s ecomuseums in the 1970s attempted to make the visitor an actor in the museum,

even though such ideas were often based on failed memorial experiments, as has been shown by Octave Debary with the example of the Creusot.

In the last century, *patrimonialisation* has been a process that has tried to give a voice to an otherwise silent heritage – to all those remains of the past addressing the feeling of urgency due to a fear of loss. The domain of heritage was that « of another country or place » a more beautiful one (« Time beautifier of things ») one that was foreign and that had disappeared (Lowenthal 1985). The contemporary history museum is more occupied with giving meaning to the way life was lived, through exhibits that present a succession of view points of the life of a particular population or territory. Through these tentative efforts, this new kinds of museum sought an alternative to the constructions of the last century. Many a museum of history and archaeology that today enjoys spectacular development satisfies a particular need in terms of the conservation of a form of heritage but they also seek to fulfil a social mission related to a particular community or to themes that are today considered as important: identity, ethnicity, gender... History museums of the Resistance are particularly revelatory of current concerns (Boursier 1997; Young 1993).

Whilst at the end of this complex evolution, the history museum appears as a central institution today and continues to enjoy a relatively uncontested place in western culture, the fact that it is represented by a wide variety of museum types, varying both in terms of the collections they hold and the ideas that they represents, allows its definition to be constantly questioned. Considering the work of the post-modern critic, Andreas Huyssen, and after a comparison of the museums of Péronne, Verdun and the Caen Memorial, Daniel J. Sherman also underlines the necessity for museums to remain open to different types or modes of memorial discourse – so as not to fall into the trap of the spectacular merchandising of history that excludes a critical and scholarly approach or the direct equation of museographical discourse with the work of the historian that can frustrate the needs of memory itself (Sherman 1995). The contemporary interest in important sites, historical monuments, private castles and other sites or territories affected by their transformation into heritage sites, has become a subject of study for the ethnologist of our own societies. The inhabitant and the visitor receive attention in a discourse that might be considered as an effort to « domesticate history » (Fabre 2000). The relationship between heritage and the writing of history is the current issue that history museums have to deal with, in their revision of notions of identity and traditions they need to find a midway between a continuity of intentions and the appearance of new horizons of reference.

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Museums and the Origins of Nations

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Abstract

Research into the ways in which museum exhibitions tell stories about the origins of nations suggests that these are, in some ways, dissimilar from many traditional historical and archaeological narrative texts in that they depend, in part, on the physical experience of moving through space. Using case studies this paper pays attention to the way in which this immersive process enables museums to tell contradictory and contrasting stories of the foundation of nations. The notion of the ethnic origins of nations and the way museums re-invent nations over time are examined. Websites and guidebooks are also considered. Representing work in progress this paper suggests other areas of investigation for further study.

Introduction

This paper is based on work carried out for Eunamus, (<http://www.eunamus.eu/>), on the grand narratives of the origins of the nation in Europe. It examines the way in which exhibitions in National Museums telling a national story appear to today's visitor, and how these displays can be experienced, read and understood. It acknowledges that readings of the museum, as made by visitors (McLean and Cooke 2000), and by curators, will be different, and that each individual will draw on a range of cultural and historical references and experiences to read the museum. However this analysis of some current exhibitions in selected museums considers how exhibitions offer certain types of narratives, particularly those relating to the origins of the nation. The report attempts to identify the ways in which these display certain implicit and explicit notions of these origins and how the nation is reinvented over time. As Ascherson points out in history '[T]here is an almost universal tendency to slip backwards in time as emotions mount' (Ascherson 2003: 37). He points out that France now starts in the Gaulish/Celtic millennia before the Romans, having once been understood to have been created in the reign of Louis XIV, the Sun King. The Germans default to Germanic warriors ambushing Romans in the great northern forests. Meanwhile

'In the nineteenth century the "Oxford School" of historians laid down that England's "when" began in the Anglo-Saxon period (although the English people have obstinately continued to think that the Welsh-rooted Tudor dynasty and Good Queen Bess brought England to its true self).' (Ascherson 2003: 37-8)

Likewise National Museums, as institutions which collect evidence for history and archaeology, tend to present evidence of an ancient communal past to explain how and why nations came into existence even when some nations, for example Germany and Turkey, are modern constructions.

Narratives of origin are not, however, permanent, though they are often presented as essentialised and unquestioned. They change as circumstances change as this Scottish example illustrates. Towards the end of the last century the Scots revived the Medieval Wars of Independence with England as the time when the nation found itself. The Declaration of Arbroath, 1320, an appeal to the Pope against the English King's attempt to establish his overlordship over Scotland during these wars, is a key text in the National Museum of Scotland.

As you enter the Kingdom of the Scots section you see a small case in front of you and on either side of the walls are two inscriptions in black ink written in script. One on the right states 'As long as one hundred of us remain alive we will never under any condition be brought under English rule.' The one on the left states 'For we fight not for glory, nor riches, nor honours, but for Freedom alone, which no good man gives up but except with his life'

The text panel explains the background to these assertions:

Scotland defined

The Declaration of Arbroath

These still resounding words appeal for freedom in the face of conquest by England. The 'Letter of the Barons of Scotland' to Pope John XXIII dated at Arbroath on 6 April 1320, was a declaration in the name of the '*whole community of the realm (italics in original)*' of their determination to retain the independence of Scotland and to support King Robert Bruce. The words in their original form in the declaration were in Latin:

The text panel then repeats the words in Latin.

The Declaration of Arbroath has enjoyed a resurgence of interest within popular culture, particularly in the United States where the 1995 film, *Braveheart*, starring Mel Gibson, articulated a modern sense of 'freedom' which resonates within America today. On 6 April some states celebrate 'Tartan days' with state tartans to 'commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath that inspired the American declaration of independence' (Minnesota State Legislature Resolution, cited Bruce 2007: 127). In Scotland the Declaration has been used repeatedly in support of popular devolutionist and independence movements, again partly prompted by enthusiasm for the film (ibid). In the nineteenth century when Scotland was, on the whole, satisfied with its place in a Britain that dominated world politics and economics, the Declaration and the Wars of Independence attracted less attention. The National Museum of Scotland opened in 1998, just after the Scots had voted for a devolved Parliament, their first since the Act of Union of 1707 when England and Scotland joined together and the Scots sent representatives to the Westminster parliament. We can, perhaps, at the very least see this focus on the Declaration of Arbroath in the Museum as a sign of the reassertion of a separate Scots identity within the Union.

Methodology

Research was undertaken in the British Museum, The Imperial War Museum, London, The National Maritime Museum, London, the V&A Museum, London, The Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, The National War Museum, Edinburgh, German Historical Museum, Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) Berlin, The Neues Museum, Berlin, The Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Norway's Resistance Museum (Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum), National Gallery (Nasjonalgalleriet), Norway, the Armed Forces Museum (Forsvarsmuseet) Oslo, Historical Museum (Historisk Museum), Oslo, The National History Museum (Historiska Museet), Stockholm, the Army Museum (Armémuseum) Stockholm and the Military Museum, Askeri Müzesi, Istanbul, Ancient Orient Museum, Istanbul, the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, Hagia Sophia Istanbul. While only some are designated national museums all display national stories.

The report outlines some of the first findings of this ongoing research. As a British citizen of English extraction the author recognises that she views most of these museums as a foreign visitor, without the specialist insider knowledge that a citizen possesses. In some respects this is no bad thing for all National Museums present the nation to people from other countries as well as to their own citizens. This report presents a general overview of some of the research to date, with selected case studies, and further research will be presented in later publications.

In all museums the author collected and analysed printed material and looked at websites. The main part of the research involved detailed analysis of selected exhibitions, looking at text, objects, layout, lighting and location within the museum. In the national Museum of Scotland two senior curators, involved in the development of the exhibition designs of the Museum when it opened in 1998, were interviewed. This research is part of a collaborative project and Dr Andy Sawyer's parallel report outlines his research into grand narratives relating to maritime nations, borders and Vikings. All the research was undertaken between December 2010 and April 2011 and thus refers to exhibitions as they existed during that period. Several of them were relatively

new, such as the History of Sweden exhibition in Historiska Museet, Stockholm, opened in 2010. Others were older, such as the national Museum of Scotland opened in 1998, The Military Museum Istanbul 1993 and, older still, the Medieval Gallery in the Historical Museum in Oslo, created in 1979 by the architect Sverre Fehn. A decision was taken early on in the project to review permanent galleries only. While science, art, geology and natural science museums also offer versions of the origins of the nation the research here focuses on museums that ostensibly offer a historical and archaeological narrative and whose collections were mainly those which could be classified as archaeological and historical.

Research into the construction of national narratives in historiography suggests that the nation is the lens through which most historians establish their sense not only of what they do but who they are. Berger points out that national history writing continues to flourish not only in post communist nations but also throughout Europe (Berger 2009). Many historians do not look beyond their boundaries and compare their histories or, if they do, they start from the premise that their own nation's history is 'just "there"' (Breuilly 2009:18). This is despite the fact that 'No serious historian ... thinks that there exists an "essential" nation, most truly itself within particular borders, or in a particular fashion of poetry, or at a particular season in the past' (Ascherson 2003: 37). Inadvertently historians, by accepting the notion of nationhood, assume certain mental constructions such as the nation in time and in place. Even when it appears not to exist, historians seek its origins, attempting to distinguish signs of embryonic development in the past; at the same time, they draw parallels between previous versions of the nation state and society and politics today, often attempting to use history to explain current issues.

This report approaches the nation from the perspective of the national museum, a place where material culture, architecture and the experience of the visitor in a multi media space influence the creation of master narratives. The kind of history written in a museum is not the same as that written in books or on the web. Writing is only part of this narrative and history is only one form of knowledge through which the story is told. The disciplines of archaeology, science, art, geology and geography all produce meanings that complement, supplement and compete with those of the historical narrative and material culture can be interpreted through all these lenses. However, in the process of exhibiting the nation, museums find themselves imitating the role of historians. Even when they attempt to deconstruct the nation they imply its existence. Objects chosen to debunk myths about origins may, by the impression they make on the visitor, function differently, particularly if the visitor omits to read the text accompanying them. For example, the national Museum of Scotland has an internationally important collection of Roman material, much of which is on display in the Prehistories Galleries. Despite strong textual prompts to view the Romans as the alien other the overwhelming number of Roman artefacts, along with their quality, gives the impression that the Romans were part of the story of the Scottish nation. Moreover, museums tend to exhibit what they have, and thus certain types of narrative may be omitted simply because the collections do not exist to allow their exposition.



Figure 1: One of the large Roman commemorative inscriptions in the national Museum of Scotland (©The author).

Historians have identified the ways in which nations are narrated, the key common master narratives which impact upon our understanding of the development of the nation over time, and Berger suggests we can work out master narratives by asking the following questions:

...[W]ho are the central actors of national histories?

Which historical figures populate the national stage?

Who are described as enemies of the nation?

Who has agency?

How is the passing of time structured in national histories?

What importance is attached to concepts such as progress or contingency?

What periodisation does the story follow?

What origins are constructed?

(Berger 2009:34, *tabulated by author; original appears as normal text*)

This report will focus on the last and ask how do museum exhibitions deal with origins? In so doing it will touch on all other aspects of the questions. Certain important commonalities can be discerned. Ethnicity is ever present even when, for example, as in the case of Historiska Museet in Stockholm, its importance is overtly challenged. Religion also appears as a common denominator; the nation is often understood through the lens of its Christian or Muslim destiny. Many nations locate their beginnings in the medieval period when the material culture of the church and the ruler provide symbols of unity and status. The nation is periodically re-invented over time, thus possessing several, sometimes competing, and occasionally contradictory narratives of origin. Progress is implicit even when there are dreadful setbacks such as military defeats or plague. However, before we go further we need to consider how nations and nationalism have been defined.

Definitions of the nation and nationalism

Historians often use the concept of the nation as a kind of shorthand for a group of people who live within a clearly demarcated territory, have common legal systems and a sense of communal participation in the life of the group, share a common culture, claim autonomy of government with outside recognition of their existence as a nation state and tell stories as to how and why their nation came into existence (from Smith 2008: 12-3). For them the nation cannot exist until the conditions that allow this shared concept of nation and state come into existence, and for most nations this only occurred in the last two hundred years with notable exceptions such as England, where even modernists appear to recognise some elements of early national feeling (Gellner 1983 and Hobsbawm 1990).

This 'modernist' view (Smith 2008) tends to place the origins of nations in the recent past, at a time when mass education, democratisation and media enabled groups of people to collaborate effectively together with or against other such groups. This civic – territorial notion of the nation (Smith 2008: 13) relies on historiographical interpretation of the ideas and actions of mainly middle class and elite groups who overthrew traditional monarchs and emperors and justified many of the reforms they demanded in the name of the 'nation' as they conceptualised it at that moment in time. Museums are seen as one of the agents by which the nation 'imagines' itself and encourages others to accept its imaginings (Anderson 1991) and are thus understood to be agents of the modern nation state. However, this instrument of modernity, the museum, often presents the nation existing before the creation of the modern state. Thus a study of the origins of the nation in current museum displays illustrates the way in which the modern nation is a paradoxical mix of old/ primordial and the new/modernist ideas. Indeed research suggests that the historiographical attempts to locate the origins of the nation through text in books and written articles, rather than material culture and symbolic representation, may underestimate the importance and persistence of material culture in producing the notion of the nation. This materialised nation exists before modernist ideas acknowledge its formation. It also illustrates how modern notions of the nation, for example, the idea of mass participation in the life of the nation (Connor 1994 cited Smith 2008: 14) are projected back through time within displays. Such an impression may not, in fact, have been the intention of the curators and designers. However, we will see that the very act of accumulating material culture from a particular geographical region and displaying it tends to imply that the nation is ancient, even if the text accompanying the objects attempts to challenge this assumption as it does, for example, in the Historiska Museet, Sweden and the Museum of Scotland.

While some origin stories of nations suggest that they demonstrate continuities across space and time and some nations remain imagined as the same essential entity during long periods, all nations have been subject to periodic re-imaginings. These may be reactive, for example, after a military defeat as experienced by the Norwegians in 1940. This narrative is implicit and explicit in various museums in Oslo. In the National Gallery, part of the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, a painting by Aulie Reidar in 1943, titled *9 April 1940*, shows a lorry driving out of a snowy scene with a coffin draped with the Norwegian flag. This suggests that on this day, the day the Germans invaded, (note not the day the Norwegians surrendered), the Norwegian nation, as it existed in the land of Norway, died along with many combatants. In the Norwegian Armed Forces Museum (Forsvarsmuseet) in Oslo the nation survives after 1940 by

allying itself to Britain, as many individuals, sailors, military personnel and civilians fled to the UK. The museum makes a great deal of their contribution to the British war effort and it in a sense equates the British war effort to the Norwegian one. Churchill's image (the same as used in the Churchill Museum in London) and British resistance are foregrounded.



Figure 2: Visitors can hear excerpts from speeches by King Haakon VII and Winston Churchill in the Norwegian Resistance Museum by touching the screen (©The author).

Similarly in the Norwegian Resistance Museum Churchill and his voice become symbolic of the Norwegian nation's rebirth. He is positioned alongside King Haakon VII and speeches by both in 1940 can be heard sequentially. The King and his government fled to Britain in that year, and it was from London that he broadcast to his German occupied nation, offering them leadership in exile. The nation as a self governing entity thus disappears under Nazi rule but, at the same time, survives in an imagined way, becoming one with Britain in its fight against Nazi Germany through the contribution its citizens made to the British war effort. It later emerges as an independent country again, its honour and pride intact, because of the level of resistance civilians showed to German rule, both at home and abroad. Thus the Second World War becomes the testing ground in which the Norwegian nation, despite defeat and humiliation, rises phoenix like to take its place in the world once more.

Other examples of the nation reinventing itself are pro-active, reflecting historical constructions of the past which can be positioned to demonstrate positive aspects of a nation to which museums draw attention. For example, in the Museum of Scotland a great deal of emphasis is placed on the role of the Enlightenment and the industrial and agricultural revolutions in transforming the nation into a prosperous contributor to the great British industrial revolution. The visitor moves from the Medieval and Early Modern galleries up stairs to a hall in which the great Newcomen engine dominates. Scotland emerges in the eighteenth century more secure, more prosperous and, despite union with England in 1707, more sure of her identity as a world leader of a new age of industrial progress.

European values

Most of the case studies for this part of the project have been taken from Western Europe with its particular constructions of nationalism based on notions of shared values of liberalism and democracy (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 9). Here certain essentialist views on the ethnic origins of nations have been challenged, albeit they still exist to a greater or lesser extent in all museums. Here also there are some common assumptions about the way in which European civilization developed. Rome was influential in the dissemination of classical culture and is understood to be foundational to the notion of Europe and some nation states such as Britain and France (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 10). At the same time historically there was a second, apparently contradictory, dominant myth of origin which focuses on the indigenous nature of European origins and ‘situates “Barbarism” as the original source of uncorrupted freedom providing a vital alternative to the despotism of the Classical empires’ (Kristiansen 1996: 138). This can be seen in the Museum of Scotland where the Roman invader is depicted as a brutal tyrant with little or no influence on the native peoples. Certain indicators of civilization such as writing are seen here to be instruments of conquest and unjustified imperialism.

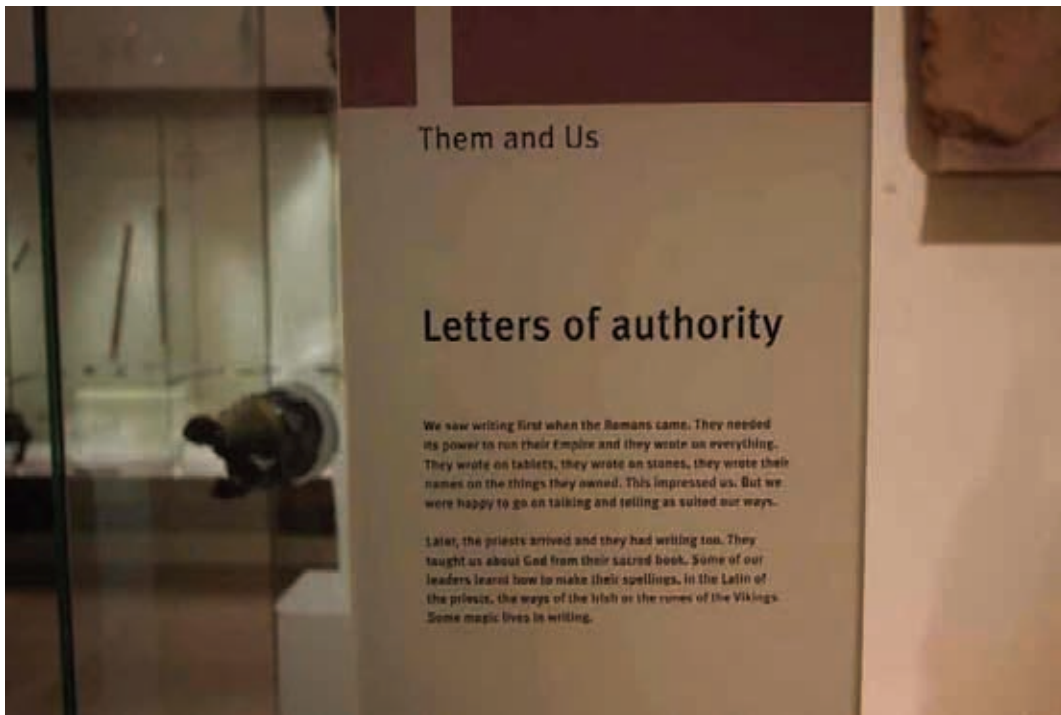


Figure 3: This text panel in the national Museum of Scotland suggests that the indigenous Scots were indifferent to Latin and adhered to their own traditions (©The author).

Similarly the Deutches Historiches Museum, Berlin, positions the Romans physically opposite to the Germanic tribes in the gallery and presents the latter as the heroes who stopped the expansion of the Empire. However, Rome and Greece are also understood to be key in the foundation of European identity and both had empires and influence far beyond modern Europe. The Pergamon Museum in Berlin exhibits the Classical World as ‘our’ possession. Only when visitors walk through the reconstructed Ashtar Gate do Europeans, trained to see the classical past as the foundation of civilization, move into the exotic other, beyond Europe’s boundaries (Knell 2010: 23). In Turkey the heirs to Greece and Rome, Byzantium and its

peoples, are all displayed as the 'other' in both the Istanbul Archaeology Museum and the National Military Museum. These museums trace the origins of the nation to Attaturk, who is still revered, and to the Conquest of Constantinople in 1452. For the Turks understand themselves in their museums to be ethnically and culturally descended from the peoples who migrated into what is now Turkey over several centuries, adopted Islam, and conquered the ailing Christian Empire, heir of the classical world. In so doing they imposed in its place a tolerant but emphatically Muslim state which owed nothing to this past. Text in the Archaeological Museum about the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and its impact on the Byzantine world through whose gallery the visitor has just passed, states unequivocally that

Within a brief period the city had adopted a new identity characterised by Ottoman-style architecture and way of life.



Figure 4: The Market Gate of Miletus, Pergamon Museum, Berlin (©The author).

Interestingly the Pergamon Museum in Berlin exhibits much classical material from the geographical area that is now Turkey including the Pergamon Altar and the Market Gate of Miletus. In the past Turkey has indicated that it would like such material culture returned though it accepts that many of the pieces were taken with the consent of past sultans. In this case the Turkish material in Berlin is unlikely, in the current political climate and with existing laws of restitution, ever to be returned. Moreover, unlike the Greeks who seek restitution of the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum, the Turks do not appear to regard such material as representative of a key part of their cultural identity as the Greeks do the marbles. Rather it represents a desire to own material culture originating from within its current national boundaries.

All National Museums position the nation within a religious framework, so Turkey is not exceptional in its conceptualisation of the nation through its Islamic destiny. Hale (1994) suggests that most people in the Middle Ages would not have been aware of the concept of Europe but would have been conscious of Christendom, and Christianity remains a defining identifier of nations and of Europe even today. The Deutches Historiches Museum, Berlin, displays considerable amounts of medieval ecclesiastical material and foregrounds the Imperial nature of the state, thus implying that the Germans were heirs and defenders of the Christian Roman Empire by their association with, and rule by, the Holy Roman Emperor. Later, with the rise of Lutheranism, equal emphasis is placed on the Protestant character of much of Germany, suggesting that the nation was in some way chosen by God to be the leader of the reformist movements, even though not all the states that now constitute modern Germany were Protestant, and Germany today retains both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism as part of its religious inheritance.

Museums are physically experienced by the visitor and often this religious origin of the nation is encountered by movement through the Galleries. On ascending the stairs to the new displays in Historiska Museet, Stockholm, one is met by a crucifix suspended above the displays, casting a shadow across the embryonic nation. Visitors pass below this great object and, even if they do not read the text which explains that ‘Christianity with its network of parishes and bishoprics will be the most important of the pillars sustaining the young Swedish monarchy’ (Anon 2010, no page number), they are reminded of the Christian nature of the early state.



Figure 5: The Medieval Galleries, Historiska Museet, Stockholm. Note how the crucifix casts its shadow (©The author).

In the Norwegian Historical Museum Oslo, (part of the Museum of Cultural History) visitors move from the Viking galleries into a room adorned with the magnificent Chancel Ceiling of Al

Church, Hallingdal, Buskerud with images of the creation, Christ's birth, the last supper, the crucifixion and the resurrection. Around the gallery the glories of medieval Christian architecture, sculpture and painting, exhibited dispassionately in traditional glass cases, emphasise the Christian nature of medieval Norway. Only when visitors have passed through this section will they come to material culture relating to objects from daily life.



Figure 6: The Medieval Galleries in the Historical Museum Oslo are dominated by this decorated chancel ceiling (©The author).

Archaeology, growing out of its nineteenth century context has tended to ‘accept modern political boundaries as frameworks for analysis of the past’ (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 12). Despite attempts to break away from this intellectual constraint, national museums, on the whole, perpetuate this tendency, albeit sometimes unwittingly. Only the British Museum amongst our case studies, positions itself as a museum of world cultures. It deliberately eschews the notion of national archaeological frameworks in some galleries, though even there its older exhibitions tend to group material culture by national origin. More recent galleries such as the Medieval Europe gallery, as its name suggests, attempt a more international view rather than national perspective on objects and events.



Figure 7: The Royal Gold Cup, owned by many English monarchs. Medieval Galleries, British Museum. The text panel stresses the international history and significance of this object (©The author).

Different periods in the distant past have been adopted at various times as foundational moments for European civilization: the Celts and the Iron Age, the Bronze Age and the Neolithic have all been seen as key periods of time when Europe moved out of a savage early period into a time of progressive cultural and social development (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 14). The Bronze Age, for example, has been understood to be the time when Europe developed the foundations of a competitive ‘capitalist’ and individual society in contrast to a more ‘totalitarian’ and ‘despotic Near East’ (Childe 1925, 1958, cited Jones and Graves-Brown 1996: 15). However, in the Ancient Orient Museum, Istanbul, the Bronze Age Near East is exhibited as a civilization geographically partly located within what is now Turkey and outside modern day Europe. Thus do nations reinterpret archaeological narratives to suit their views of themselves in the present. Some national museums attempt a type of post-processual archaeology such as that advocated by Hodder (1991) who focussed on the diversity of individuals rather than monolithic cultural norms (Creighton 2006:11). For example the Historisk Museum, Oslo, for the most part avoids the use of traditional archaeological terminology and instead focuses on general human interest themes. For example the text ‘The burial grounds where men and gods meet’ is used besides a recreated mound into which have been inserted three perspex viewing portals and

behind which are a range of objects placed in burials. Other examples of such text include 'Hosting great feasts brought power and status' (3193) and 'only a few carry swords or large lances: they carry spears.' We are not told who the 'men' or 'they' are. Such approaches thus carry with them the danger that, in avoiding a chronological narrative anchored in traditional time frames, museums will confuse visitors.



Figure 8: The side of one of the recreated burial mounds in the Historical Museum, Oslo. Objects from the mounds can be seen through these viewing holes (©The author).

Themes

Bearing in mind all these many varied ways in which national museums understand or exhibit the origins of nations over time, the final part of this paper focuses on two main themes:-

1. The ethnic origins of nations
2. Nations re-invented over time

The ethnic origins of nations

Smith (2008: 30) points out that there are several different concepts of ethnic or ethnic groups upon which nations are premised. For the purpose of this report we will focus on the idea of so called full blown ethnic communities or ethnies whose members are united by shared memories and traditions. These can be defined as '*named and self-defined human populations with myths of common origins, shared historical memories, elements of common culture, and a measure of ethnic solidarity*' (Smith 2008: 30-1, italics in original). These ethnies often have members abroad and have common symbols and values. Their stories may involve self sacrifice and are often linked to landscapes which have been defended in times past. What is important here is felt or imagined history which is crucial to a sense of group identity (Smith 2008: 41). These ethnies do not necessarily involve racial

groupings and identification but may well do so. National museums, whether deliberately or unwittingly, promote such ideas in their galleries even when, as for example, in Scotland and Sweden governments adopt an official civic nationalism that attempts to ignore history and ethnic ties to the nation, replacing it with something akin to an allegiance to common values.

Case study: The British Museum's website on Anglo-Saxon England

The British Museum now positions itself as a museum of world cultures and, although it appears to try to avoid a distinct British history narrative, there are places in the Museum where this story becomes manifest. The older galleries exhibiting post Roman and early Medieval Europe present some cases which are dedicated to British history and archaeology, and the website illustrates some traditional forms of thinking. This is an extract from the website's description of the origins of the Anglo-Saxons and their contribution to the formation of the English nation state.

The Romans officially withdrew from Britain in AD 410. It is from around AD 450 that we notice large-scale evidence for new and different kinds of people in the archaeological record of the area today called England.

Following a new burial ritual, the dead received grave goods. Dress accessories suggest that a different costume was worn. Weapons and hand made pottery are of previously unseen form and decoration. We also see new house forms and the adoption of a Germanic language that would later become English.

Historical sources mention incomers from regions called Angeln and Saxony, so we call these newcomers Anglo-Saxons. Their way of life can indeed be paralleled in northern Germany and Denmark, but also in northern France, the Netherlands and Scandinavia and there would have been an element of the original Romano-British population.

By the seventh century a number of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had formed. The treasures from the ship burial at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, for instance, may bear witness to an East Anglian royal house. At the same time Christianity became established, the first towns formed from trading centres and the Anglo-Saxons started minting their own coinage.

With time, the kingdoms were united, notably under Alfred the Great in the ninth century, when the Anglo-Saxons faced major opposition from Viking settlers in the east and north of England. By the 950s, one unified kingdom emerged.

The Anglo-Saxon collection of the British Museum reflects all the different influences and developments in the make-up of Anglo-Saxon England. It starts with the first settlers and illustrates with later pieces how England became one of the major artistic and intellectual forces in early medieval Europe.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/cultures/europe/anglo-saxon_england.aspx
accessed 10 June 2011.



Figure 9: One of the Sutton Hoo exhibition cases in the British Museum, which contains the helmet from the burial with the following caption: 'Helmet from the ship-burial at Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon, early 7th century AD. From Mound 1, Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England' (©The author).

The helmet is an iconic object. It was excavated from a burial mound in Suffolk in 1939 and the story of its discovery, along with the date (just before the outbreak of war), along with its relative uniqueness (there are only four other such helmets in England), as well as the mystery of the identification of the owner have all helped to make this one of the best known archaeological objects in England and one which defines the nation. For example it appears on the cover of the Penguin History of England series *The Anglo-Saxons* by James Campbell, 1991.

This written text on the web is a traditional ethnic story of a nation which adopts both a racial ethnic interpretation of past inhabitants of the British Isles and, at the same time can be understood within the framework of Smith's ethnic – people with common myths of origin. It follows an established historiographical tradition of waves of invaders overpowering indigenous peoples and replacing their culture with something completely different. The native Britons are acknowledged but then ignored. The destruction or exile of many of them is implicit rather than explicit. They do not contribute anything to the new England which is being founded around this time. To a certain extent one wonders to what extent this view of post Roman Britain was influenced by the fates of indigenous groups in the new worlds of North America and Australia. Such a view of the Saxon invasion is still commonly held today but it is challenged on several fronts. The Germanic peoples are now understood to have inhabited the British Isles before the Romans. We might thus begin to see the traditional narrative of origin of England, the arrival of the Anglo Saxons, a new wave of immigrants who drove out, killed or enslaved the indigenous ancient British and Roman inhabitants, as part of a pattern of migration that had been taking place for centuries before the Roman invasion, and probably continued during the Roman occupation itself. Russell and Laycock (2010: 207) suggest that the Britons survived in far greater numbers than hitherto assumed, and point out that the Saxon kingdoms appear to have been built on the basis of British tribal states, which suggests a degree of interaction between Saxons

and Roman Britons not usually acknowledged in traditional stories of Saxon migrations. Pryor's thesis that an indigenous culture flourished before, during and after the Roman period (Pryor 2005) and that many of our traditional legends such as that of King Arthur had their roots in prehistory, comes to a similar conclusion about the continuity of culture and peoples. Carver, Hills, and Scheschkewitz (2009)'s study of the Anglo Saxon cemetery at Wasperton suggests that the inhabitants of this post Roman settlement exhibited characteristics from Roman, Pre Roman British, Anglo-Saxon, pagan and Christian traditions, indicating a community of Britons adopting other practices as time went on. Moreover some of these ideas have now been aired in popular archaeology and history texts (Harper 2007).

Both the Museum of Scotland and Historiska Museet Sweden attempt to deconstruct ethnic stories of nations. Yet despite their best efforts they only partly succeed for a variety of reasons, one of which is dealt with here. Both museums accompany their objects with maps illustrating where they were found. Inevitably given that these are both national museums the maps outline the nation and, in both cases, the collections displayed are only those found within the current national boundaries. Thus inadvertently both museums present the nation as a construct whose origins can be found back before recorded time in the objects and peoples who once inhabited the landscape. In this they have unwittingly adopted one of Smith's key identifiers of the ethnic group, a group of people attached to a landscape. Moreover the use of maps is a very political act. Batuman, drawing on Harley (1988, 1989, 1990) and referring to the work of Foucault suggests that maps are products of 'socio-political power relations' (Batuman 2010: 222). For, as he points out, maps are understood to be scientific and therefore accurate, appearing objective. However, what appears to be objective is, in fact, a 'representation' and 'the gap between the real and the representation is filled with power relations consumed within socially constructed meanings' (Batuman 2010: 222, with reference to Monmonier 1996 and Wood 1992). Maps are tools by which groups of people claim territories and Anderson (1991) refers to the process of mapping as a means of imagining the nation. Moreover, as we have seen, Smith considers land associated with forebears as a key marker of ethnies. Maps therefore become tools by which a group of people, implicitly linked by ties of history and ethnicity, assert their nationhood by depicting the land to which they are currently emotionally bonded. We can assume that neither Historiska Museet nor the national Museum of Scotland intended to imply this ethnic link, indeed both go out of their way to explain in text how the current national territory was not a nation during the past in the modern sense of the word. However, the map is a powerful tool that visually asserts the contrary.

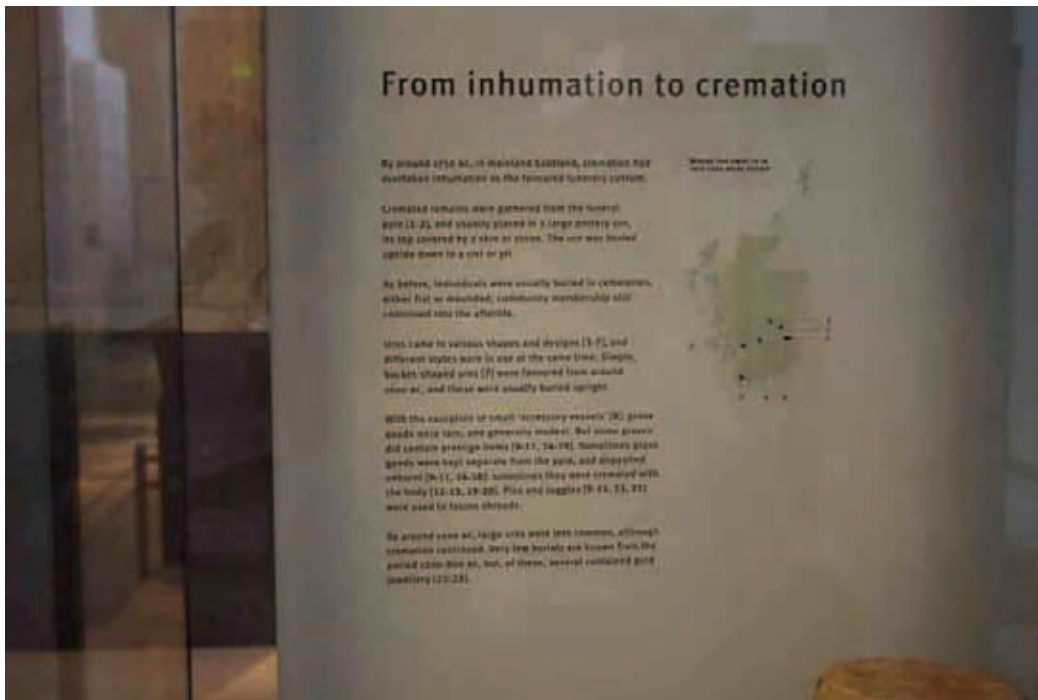


Figure 10: Text panel from the Prehistories Galleries in the national Museum of Scotland with a map of modern Scotland (©The author).

Nations re-invented over time

The physical space of the museum lends itself to periodisation. Rarely are museums located in one large space, though there are some new-built museums such as the Imperial War Museum, North Manchester, where the main gallery is one huge area. Many national museums are located in older buildings that have been adapted. They therefore use what they have and each room provides a narrative that often can stand alone. Sometimes narratives are extended through several rooms and the nation changes only when the room layout does so. For example, the Armemuseum, Stockholm, redisplayed in 2000, exhibits the military history of the nation, a nation which reinvented itself several times in the course of the last few centuries. It is housed in an 1867 artillery arsenal converted in 1877 into an Artillery Museum. The spaces are used to emphasise the periodisation of Sweden's history. For example, a defining moment in Sweden's history, The Great Northern War is illustrated by a moving scene shows the deaths in the snow of Swedes attempting to retreat to Sweden. Two men lie dead in the snow. Another soldier with his back to them tries to light a fire. The audio guide explains that this is Arnfeld's death march 1718-19, during which time the leader travelled to Sweden by sleigh in furs. The kingdom was bankrupt, 200,000 Finnish and Swedish farm boys were lost. The audio guide tells visitors that this episode ended the 'so called age of greatness. Sweden retreated to its position as third rate power on the remote fringe of Europe.' The scene occurs at the end of a long series of galleries through which visitors have progressed starting with the exhibition 'The Power and the Glory 1649 – 1679', and moving through rooms displaying 'The Era of Absolutism (1680 – 1700)' and 'Triumphal March towards Catastrophe (1700- 1709)' and then 'Carolinian Catastrophe (1709 – 1721),' of which this is the last life size diorama, before visitors turn right and enter another room where the decline of the Great Power is narrated. They then follow the story back to the entrance of this floor of the museum, walking through rooms illustrating the new non-aggressive Sweden.

The representation of the rise of Sweden to a great power is physically located on one side of this floor of the museum, and its decline and re-invention as a peaceful, smaller nation with no colonial ambitions, is demonstrated on the other. Space thus re-enforces the idea that the nation becomes something different –visitors physically move through space and imaginary time in a different direction when they view the decline of Sweden from that experienced previously when they were engaged with the narrative of Sweden’s rise to power. The Army Museum like others provides examples of what Wallerstein (1998) describes as ‘TimeSpace’; ways in which human beings conceptualise space and time through different types of historical thinking.



Figure 11: Deaths in the snow, Armemuseum, Stockholm (©The author).

Conclusion

All case study museums place a great deal of emphasis on religion, in particular the role of Christianity or Islam in the Middle Ages as part of the nation’s identity. Nations look to ethnic origins to demonstrate longevity but the narrative they tell is often fragmented, though implicitly and explicitly links are made between prehistoric or early medieval peoples and current populations. The nature of the museum, a space through which people progress, often divided into sections or small rooms, means that the nation tends to be remade across time with new ideas, people and events appearing immediately after earlier ones with no story linking them. Sometimes connections are made between these narratives but often they are nonexistent and, such is the museum convention, this appears to be accepted by visitors, normalised within the framework of the museum experience. Research into visitor responses to national stories which is part of this project may provide some interesting insights into the ways in which people read these changing narratives. Conflict is a recurring theme which will be the subject of another set of

reports within this project, and is difficult to disentangle from the main themes selected for study here: ethnic origins of the nation and the re-invention or re-discovery of the nation over time.

While research is ongoing for this project and findings are still in their early stages we can begin to see some new themes amongst the museums studied so far. National stories in museums rely on material culture that, on the whole, represents the elite. However, most case studies also include material culture that is used to demonstrate the lives of ordinary people so that the nation is, implicitly, more than, and older than, a modern construction of the wealthy and educated. Peasants are ubiquitous and deserve study in their own right. Interestingly the relatively recent Medieval Galleries in the British Museum, one of the few that does attempt a comprehensive study of European culture as a whole, focuses almost entirely on elite culture and this is one example of a national museum not attempting an overt national story but displaying world cultures. In this particular gallery, cultures are aestheticised and understood to be illustrated only by the 'best' objects, thus excluding the majority of European populations during this period. Other topics emerging in various national museums include the idea of a certain type of national character that reappears over time and is integral to the narratives the nation tells about itself. Within all museums the origins of the nation reflect not so much what they once were nor, necessarily, what they are now, but how they aspire to be seen today and in the future.

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Reconciling the Past?



Great Narratives of the Past. Traditions and Revisions in National Museums Conference proceedings from *EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, Paris 29 June – 1 July & 25-26 November 2011. Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein & José María Lantarote Guiral (eds) EuNaMus Report No 4. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=078 © The Author.

Master Narratives of Contemporary History in Eastern European National Museums

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Abstract

The paper addresses the ways contemporary history (the “short 20th century”, 1914–1989) is represented in the national museums of post-communist East-Central Europe. It focuses particularly on the Hungarian House of Terror, and draws on examples from Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Serbia and the Baltic Republics. The representations of communism regularly reflect two interrelated problems: how to contain Fascism and how to maintain the idea of an eternal set of continuous national qualities, a mystical concept of the nation.

Introduction

On 25 February 2002 the Prime Minister of the Hungarian government, at the time led by the originally radical anti-communist liberal party, later turned into radical anti-communist conservative Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt; Fidesz,-MPP (Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party), inaugurated the House of Terror. It was claimed that this museum was built to commemorate the victims of dictatorial rule in the country. The spectacular opening ceremony for the museum preceded the general elections by just two months and was part of the electoral campaign of the ruling conservative party. The personal presence and inauguration speech of the Prime Minister, the appointment of his personal consultant in 'historical matters', and the establishment of a public foundation from huge state subsidies to manage the museum clearly indicated that the event was considered a highly important political step. In his address, the Prime Minister stressed the eventual realization of a true representation of the history of the twentieth century in Hungary, which would teach future generations the meaning of the fight for freedom (The speech of the Prime Minister is available at <http://www.orbanviktor.hu>). The House of Terror immediately became the subject of fierce criticism. Public intellectuals, including many respected historians, pointed out the ambiguity of historical interpretation in the museum, the controversial nature of the comparison of Fascism and Communism, the unclear distinction of victims and perpetrators and the ignorance of the longer-term historical roots of political terror and violence in Hungary.¹

Albeit the Hungarian debate was very animated and the House of Terror benefited from an exceptional amount of tax-payers' money, the significance attributed to a historical museum devoted to the representation of the communist past was far from being a uniquely Hungarian phenomenon. The President of Romania, Traian Bănescu, who initiated a presidential commission to investigate the crimes of the communist regimes in Romania, proposed to set up an official, state-sponsored Museum of Communism in the capital in December 2006². Likewise in Poland, the cultural program of the conservative-nationalist government of the Law and Justice Party (*PiS*) emphasized the necessity of establishing a Museum of Freedom culminating in the display of the break up of the communist regime. Similar to the controversial reception of the central initiatives, the foundation of private museums in the Baltic republics, Poland and Romania devoted to the history of the communist dictatorships triggered passionate debates and exchanges (Knigge – Mählert 2005), which are going to be analyzed in this paper.

In many regards, these new museums devoted to recent history provide more powerful visions of the past than their more conventional counterparts in historical exhibitions of various traditional national museums. Contrary to national museums' historical exhibition that typically are reluctant to address controversial issues of the past, these new museums are not afraid of formulating strong and, in many cases, provoking ideas on the interpretation of national history and national identity. Arguably, the situation of historical exhibitions in traditional national museums reflects an uncertainty or the incapacity of representing the traumatic recent past. In a few cases like in Romania or Hungary, the exhibitions on national history lacks a profound rearrangement or revision of the master narrative. In Serbia, the National Museum, which used to display the parallel narrative of Serbian and Yugoslav identity, has been closed, while in Latvia there is no comprehensive historical exhibition. In Poland and Bulgaria national historical

exhibitions are only at the project stage: a fact to be addressed later on in the paper. In contrast, the emerging new post-Communist master narrative of national history is spectacularly shaped by the new or re-established museums of communism or of broader recent history. As a consequence, despite that many of them have resulted from private initiatives and funded by non-governmental agencies, these truly function as national museums. The current report explores crucial aspects of how these museums create master narratives of the history of the 20th century in post-Communist Eastern Europe. There are five components that are crucial in shaping these narratives: 1, the display of violence and atrocities; 2, the comparison of Fascism and Communism; 3, a “nostalgic exoticism” of everyday objects; 4, a mystical concept of the nation; 5, a transnational or pan-European implication. Finally, the report considers the recent challenge to these master narrative introduced by a few critical initiatives in some of the countries in the region.

Violence

The exhibition in the Budapest House of Terror capitalizes on a shocking and depressing atmosphere of violence. The dark, gothic-style design immediately weighs heavily on the visitor upon entering the main hall. The inner courtyard of the building is dominated by a Soviet-made tank and a huge board displaying a vast selection of photographs of the victims of soviet terror. For the average visitor a crucial part of the experience is the depressing impression that one gets during the elevator descent into the cellars of the museum in the company of an elderly man – formerly a cleaning attendant present at executions. As the elevator reaches its destination, a reconstructed torture chamber of the communist secret police, he provides a detailed description of a routine hanging.

The exhibition of communist prison cells plays a central role in post-communist museums. The reconstructed communist execution chamber in the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius is the dominant feature of the displays situated in the building of the former KGB and Gestapo prisons. In spite of the little evidence for its alleged previous uses, the curators opted for the conspicuous demonstration of the marks of violence of the Soviet political police. The bullet holes in the walls were carefully covered with glass, a chute claimed to have been used to drain out the blood of the executed victims was also left in place. Two other Baltic Museums of Occupation in Riga and Tartu emphasize horrible aspects of the Soviet era such as deportations, national subjugation and mass executions. Both built their historical representations on the remnants and reconstructions of former communist prisons, and particularly, underground cells (Mark 2007).

Similarly, another major site of encounter with the history of communism in Romania is the impressive building of a former political prison in the small provincial town of Sighetul Marmatiei. The building was constructed as a barracks during the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and later became a border town next to the USSR. In the 1950s it began to house important prisoners, major figures of the inter-war Romanian political and cultural elite, many of whom died in captivity. The museum opened in the early 1990s, first with one room, claimed to be a torture chamber and called the Black Room. Subsequently, other cells of former captives were reconstructed. Today the museum continues to preserve the original prison structure and atmosphere through its renovated iron stairs and walks and tiny exhibition spaces transformed

directly from the previous small cells. The aim is to provide a comprehensive display of the history of Romanian communism in the context of the Cold War. In fact, it represents only the terrorist aspects of the regime such as forced collectivization, labour camps, political police, persecution and the tyranny of Ceausescu. Other significant topics are the anti-communist resistance and revolutions throughout in East Central Europe. Although the prison ceased to accept political convicts in 1955 and was closed in the 1970s, the museum claims to symbolize the entire communist regime, thus forging the latter into an abstract, ahistorical period of violent clashes between oppression and resistance (Radu-Bucurenci – Cristea 2007). In a similar manner, the National History Museum, which in general is reluctant to install a comprehensive exhibition on contemporary history, focuses on surveillance and police persecution in its temporary exhibitions. In Prague, the exhibitions in the recently founded Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes highlight the history of the secret police and its victims.

The most well-known museum of communism in Poland, the SocLand Foundation, which is paradoxically still in project stage, also emphasizes the violent nature of the regime in its representation of the communist dictatorship. The Foundation behind this very ambitious initiative focuses on the demonstration of the inhumanity and cruelty of the communist system and insists on depicting the history of profound brain-washing, the subsequent revolts and the final collapse of the dictatorships (Main 2007).

These museums, showcasing violence, martyrs and terror within their walls are the direct descendants of the anti-communist imagination. When anti-Stalinist insurgents occupied the party headquarters in Budapest in October 1956, they immediately began to search for the secret underground cellars that were believed to hold numerous captives of the communist secret police. When no entrance was found within the building, the freedom fighters started to dig up the square with excavators to access the hidden prison of the communist party. Despite the fact that the first twenty meters deep exploratory wells failed to reveal any underground constructions, the search continued. It was stopped only when the Soviet troops crushed the revolution. The museums that eventually succeeded in establishing these underground prisons, were thus the antitheses of Stalin's utopia realized beneath the surface in the Moscow metro system (Rév 2005: 249-65.).

The emphasis on instances of terror and violence in this interpretation is not accidental. The intention is not simply to demonstrate the brutality and barbarity of communist rule in these countries, rather the demonstration of terror represents the regimes as if they had been founded and maintained exclusively by force and profound systems of coercion. The rule of the communist parties thus appears alien to these societies, a result of outside or foreign forces for which the respective nations bear no responsibility. It follows that the dictatorships contradicted the true spirit of these nations since the regimes were imposed on them by means that were impossible to resist. Communism is presented as the result of 'fate', a tragic historical event caused by uncontrollable forces; 'the Soviets', 'the Great Powers' or 'the Communists'. The history of Communism gains mythical qualities in these museums as a catastrophe, a disaster that remains beyond the limits of human (national) capacities of understanding. Instead of providing historical explanations for the origins of the communist dictatorships, these exhibitions construct a general moralizing discourse about the significance of human suffering.³

At the meeting of the Romanian parliament on 19 December 2006, the president of the Republic of Romania, Traian Băsescu formally condemned the communist regime in the country and declared its existence illegitimate. The president's statement was based on a report of almost 700 pages, compiled by a group of 22 contemporary historians led by the internationally renowned intellectual historian, Vladimir Tismaneanu. Members of the Civic Academy Foundation, the initiator of the Sighet Museum, played a prominent role in the construction of the historical report. The document focused on the genesis of the communist dictatorship in Romania and revealed its subsequent crimes and killings. For the first time after 1989 the persons responsible were named. The president declared,

'The Commission's conclusions, which I espouse, confirm that the totalitarian communist regime in Romania was imposed by foreign dictate. Indeed, it was a case of an illegitimate regime, founded upon a fanatical ideology, an ideology that systematically cultivated hatred, an ideology for which the "class struggle" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" symbolized the essence of historical progress. Imported from the USSR, the communist ideology justified the assault against civil society, against political and economic pluralism; it justified the annihilation of the democratic parties, the destruction of the free market, extermination by assassination, deportations, forced labor, and the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of people.' (The address of the President at: <http://www.presidency.ro/? RID=det&tb=date&id=8288& PRID=ag>)

However, instead of an historically accurate analysis of the reasons and social and political context of the horrific crimes, the report simply attributed these to a vaguely defined undifferentiated conglomerate; the 'communists'. This distanced the terror, describing it as an abnormal phenomenon, which originated from outside Romanian society. This theory was grounded in extremist reasoning like that of Stelian Tănase, one of the members of the historians' commission. Tănase claimed that communism was ultimately a materialization of abstract ahistorical forces of evil. Communists in power, he wrote, 'remained hidden in a bunker, far away, alien to society, continuously conspiring against it. They failed to come to the surface, to obtain legitimacy, not even for one day during the almost half a century when they were running the Romanian world. They remained confined to their condition of eternal beings of darkness.' (Quoted in Cristea – Radu-Bucurenci 2004: 288.)

Comparison of Communism and Fascism

When exhibitions of atrocity began to be connected to the image of communism, the same concepts and understandings had been already strongly identified with Nazism. Already after the Second World War, during the Nuremberg Trials, Nazi atrocities and crimes were represented as signs of senseless, unintelligible barbarity, demonstrated by objects such as the shrunken head of Buchenwald. Atrocities committed with special ruthlessness emerged as a characteristic feature of the Nazi system. The judges in Nuremberg argued that the specificity of the newly formulated concept of the crimes against humanity was not the enormous size or industrial mode of killing, but rather its connection to atavistic practice. Nazi violence was represented as a return of primitivism in the heart of modern civilized Europe. The prosecution exhibited a shrunken head of a former prisoner of war that was found in the Buchenwald camp. The head shocked the audience, reminding them of the practice of head shrinking of the Latin-American Jivaros that had become widely known in the Western world a few years before the war. This depiction of primitive violence was accompanied by a constant description of uncontrolled instinctive anti-

Jewish atrocities that invoked a conscious reference to medieval pogroms. The spatial and temporal distancing of uncivilized barbarous violence resulted in Nazi atrocities being described as unexpected and unimaginable in modern Europe. This remarkably tangible relationship between uncivilized and unlimited atrocities and the historical understanding of the Nazi regime successfully binds the icons of violence and barbarity to the notion of Nazism (Douglas 1998).

Many of the museums that depict the history of communism identify themselves as exhibition sites dedicated to the representation of the horrors of the modern totalitarian dictatorships, Fascism (Nazism) and Communism. These institutions intend to display and demonstrate the equally horrendous nature of these regimes. The museums in Tallin and Riga, which are called the Museum of Occupations and Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, respectively, claim to represent the history of these countries from the Second World War to the dissolution of the USSR. Hence, they contain images, objects and installations depicting the Nazi occupation of these countries. Similarly, at the History Meeting House in Warsaw, the historical exhibition arranged by the Karta Center, called its recent major show the 'Faces of Totalitarianism: Twentieth Century Europe'. The exhibition was designed to introduce visitors to the history of modern dictatorships and interpreted the history of Europe in the 'short' twentieth century. Although, the presentation stopped at the beginning of the communist regime in Poland, it represented parallel the genesis and functioning of the Bolshevik system in Russia and the Nazi dictatorship in Germany. The last boards depicted the German and Soviet occupation of Poland and the defeat of Nazism vs. the triumph of Communism. The House of Terror in Budapest also claims to represent the history of two terror regimes in Hungary. It provides an overview of the rule of the Hungarian fascist party, the Arrow Cross, then a long and labyrinth-like presentation of the communist dictatorship.

These exhibitions represent a very important agenda. The depiction of communism solely as a terror regime conspicuously next to the already established icon of violence, Nazism, is an attempt to transform the Gulag into a counter-Auschwitz, to construct an understanding of the history of communism as the twin of the ultimate horrors of Nazism and as the Eastern double of the ultimate catastrophe of European civilization. This understanding represents an attempt to raise the fatally misunderstood significance of Communism for a pan-European history of the modern period, by claiming that it was equally as destructive and merciless as the Nazi regime. The promoters of this present day 'Euro-communist' interpretation falsely believe that their actions are able to establish the history of East Central European communist dictatorships as a genuine European event.

In the West, since the early 1960s – and especially in the wake of the publication of Hannah Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial - the history of the Nazi regime understood as the ultimate manifestation of barbarity and violence and evoked by the images of Auschwitz and the Holocaust has functioned as a powerful means to prevent similar crimes. In spite of the various dilemmas it embraces, the historical memory of the Second World War based on notions of moral and political responsibility, serves as the effective obstacle to the repetition of state sponsored genocide (Arendt 1963, Friedländer 1993, Young 1993, the special German case is in Lüdtke 1993.). The East Central European post and anti-communist revision of fascism offers a radically and dangerously different interpretation. The exhibitions in the House of Terror represent the history of twentieth century Hungary as the site of the violent clash of two equally

barbarous, but opposing ideologies. Germany and Russia, the manifestations of totalitarian Fascism and Communism were fighting for global dominance. By chance, Hungary became the battleground of this conflict. According to the museum, however, Hungary had nothing to do with either of these two ideologically motivated great powers. The Hungarians remained the suffering subjects and victims of the war (The way the House of Terror constructs the allegory of the offended nation is eloquently described in Frazon – K. Horváth 2002: 338-46.). Critics have already pointed to the dubious implications of these exhibitions, which appear to use the demonstration of communist crimes to build up and convey nationalist ideological messages and mitigate or even release Nazi crimes and criminals retroactively. Indeed, the House of Terror fails to raise questions concerning the role and responsibility of the nationalist authoritarian regime preceding the Arrow Cross takeover in assisting Nazi aspirations as well as the legal and social exclusion and subsequent deportation of Jewish citizens of Hungary. The museum similarly fails to address the impact of the interwar social and political system on the discrediting of non-communist alternatives in the postwar period and its contribution to the eventual communist takeover. In addition, the exhibition consciously manipulates the comparison of the short-lived and fairly insignificant episode of Arrow Cross rule isolated from its historical context and the tangibly longer communist system represented an undifferentiated terror regime.

The House of Terror is typical of attempts in contemporary East-central Europe to provide a historical understanding of the recent past. Such an approach situates the struggle between Fascism and Communism outside of the history of the nation and combines with an interpretation, which emphasizes the similar terrorist essence of these regimes whilst ignoring their contradictory ideological claims. This is clear in the example of the museums in the Baltic republics, which depict these periods of the past as the culmination of the tragedy of a nation suffering two consecutive occupations. This tragic representation of the past is the clear and definite opposition of the Western interpretation of Nazism: instead of raising a barrier between the possibility of committing similar crimes and contemporary societies, the East European offer is an ‘unbearably light’ attempt to divert this responsibility.

The Exotic of the Everyday

Many of the exhibitions devoted to the history of Communism in East-Central European National Museums represent an apparently nostalgic display of everyday objects. The history of the late socialist period, Kádár’s “goulash communism” in the Hungarian National Museum is a typical example. Although Kádár’s personal objects, mostly gifts collected from various industrial companies, occupy almost half of the exhibition space devoted to the period, the First Secretary himself seldom appears as a real person. The most spectacular and visually compelling part of this section is the reconstructed living room typical for the late socialist urban middle-class dwelling environment of the massively produced prefabricated concrete block-of-flats. The last decade of the regime, the 1980s, is depicted by an installation showcasing kitchen utensils produced by socialist industry, a pioneer uniform and posters mobilizing for various festivities like the Revolutionary Youth Days of the 1980s, designed originally to domesticate generational radicalism and activism. The exhibition tries to forget about memories of discontent, disappointment and frustration, but highlights the nostalgia for allegedly common everyday experiences of ordinary citizens. As the intention to avoid internal conflict and create a

homogenous field of experience suggests, however, this nostalgic contemplation about the past does not refer to the period of “socialism” as an imaginary Golden Age, but rather to the self-identity of the Kádárist ordinary men and women, the cunning and creative Hungarians who managed to survive Soviet dominance and the experiments of domestic communist leaders in constructing a new society and, when time ripened, got rid of the Soviets and dismantled the regime.

The nostalgia character of representations of Communism is not an association with the contemplation of the innocent “Good Old Days” of youth-hood. Nostalgia in this case rather represents the intention to create a temporal distance from the period of the socialist dictatorships, to turn that period into a different, curious, but still familiar area: into the exoticism of the strange land once visited and experienced, therefore, partly appropriated by the tourist. At the end of the 2000s two similar temporary exhibitions, the “Golden Sixties” and the “Golden Era: Between Propaganda and Reality” were respectively installed in Prague (2009-10) and Bucharest (2007). These two displays focused on consumer cultures and life styles, but also aimed to demonstrate the repercussions of the corrupt and destructive Communist rule on social mentalities. In Prague, the Museum of Communism, which is a private profit-oriented initiative, collects and displays objects, curiosities and memorabilia from the socialist period. The Museum situated next to a MacDonald’s restaurant represents the period of Communism as a weird exotic era: a representation intended to satisfy the eager expectations of tourism, but, probably also complying with the ordinary Czech citizens’ desire to forget.

The Internet Museum of People’s Poland started in 1999 as a collective website that displays objects related to the history of Communist Poland in a virtual exhibition area. The network of interested volunteers uploaded images of objects they themselves preserved, therefore, the collection was virtually made of objects associated to everyday life. The initiative reflects an awareness of Communism as history, whose memories, experiences and objects are discontinuous with the present and refer to a different and separate past. This past is definitely distant, but not frightening: it is still able to evoke comforting memories like those that might have been made during a holiday to a far-away exotic land.

Mystical Nationalism

The action of Traian Băsescu was embedded in a characteristic trajectory of post-1989 Romanian anti-communism, while, in turn, his political steps provided recognition and made official previously marginalized ways of representing the communist system, which previously mainly various civic and Church organizations had supported. This anti-communist representation builds extensively on Christian symbols and articulates a quasi-religious interpretation of the martyrdom of the nation. Various monuments to the victims of Communism or the Romanian Peasant Museum present the fallen as fighters for national dignity. The victims of Communism are regularly incorporated in a broader historical continuity of the struggle for the state of all Romanians since they are associated with the image of the interwar Greater Romania and linked to the fallen soldiers of the First and Second World Wars. The unveiling of the majority of these monuments was accompanied by a religious service and the symbol of the Cross was strongly present. Thus, the essence of the nation is defined in close connection to the (Orthodox) Church and the (all-Romanian) state. The Romanian Peasant Museum transforms these national virtues

into eternal entities: the exhibitions display an image of the peasantry as profoundly Christian, permanent and unchanged since antiquity. The Museum claims that this atemporal and ahistorical peasant life was destroyed by Communism. The communist dictatorship thus appears as a brutal rupture in the harmonious history of the nation, its state and Church (Cristea – Radu-Bucurenci 2004: 290-307.).

In 2005 historians Tomasz Merta and Robert Kostro published a collective volume titled 'Memory and Responsibility' in Poland. Merta, the ideologist behind the volume, was also the author of the cultural program of the Law and Justice Party (*PiS*), the governing force of Poland elected in October 2005. In the introduction the authors argued for the necessity of a 'memory politics' for the Polish government. They suggested that this new politics of commemoration would be a proper means to raise the self-respect of Polish citizens and the appreciation of national heroes fighting for the freedom of the country through history, including the period of the communist regime. In this understanding the communist dictatorship was nothing but another device in the history of the repression of the Polish nation (Górny 2007: 131.). The idea of a Museum of Freedom was at the core of the related measures of the Polish government in favor of this 'memory politics'. The Museum of Freedom was to represent the history of the Polish nation as constant manifestations of its essence, the love of and readiness to fight for freedom. The Minister of Culture and National Heritage of this government suggested that the exhibitions would focus on the 'unique aspirations for freedom during the period of the First Republic (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries), the struggles in the nineteenth century, and the successful fight against two totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century: the Polish victory over Communism and Nazism.' (Main 2007: 405.)

The Museum of Genocide Victims in Serbia, founded originally in 1967 to commemorate the victims of the anti-fascist struggle in Yugoslavia during WWII, has developed a narrative of these struggles in increasingly nationalist terms since its re-foundation in 1992. The ideological clash between Fascism and Communism that used to be central before 1989 has shifted to emphasize the ethnic contents of the massacre and to re-interpret the atrocities as anti-Serbian genocide. The museum, hence, played a crucial role in representing contemporary history as the history of the martyrdom and victimhood of an imaginary homogenous Serbian nation. The nation as the taken-for-granted, homogenous, continuous subject of history shapes the understanding of historical exhibitions in other countries of former Yugoslavia, as well. The National Museum in Slovenia installed an exhibition on Slovenian language in 2006 reflecting the idea of linguistic unity as the basis of national identity.

Many representations of the recent past in East-Central Europe are inclined to accept the authentic image of national history even those depictions, which isolate and tear the exhibited material off from other evidence available for interpretation. An obvious example of the post-Yugoslav nation building processes is the Modern History Museum in Sarajevo, which claims to represent the post-1945 history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organizers of the exhibition, which occupies a full storey of the building, apparently have not recognized any other events worth mentioning between the end of WWII and 1992, the beginning of the Bosnian war. Whereas the museum exhibition dedicates most of its room to display the medieval and 19th century history of the Bosniak nation, it isolates two important events of the recent past, the resurrection of the Bosnian republic in 1945 and its dissolution in 1992, from other related

historical material such as the instances of Balkan ethnic politics and Yugoslav communism. The mode, which the museum regards an authentic representation of the past, offers the visitor only an isolated narrow selection of evidence and rips them off the opportunity to create authentic versions of interpretation by engaging them with a broader set of related historical material.

Even in cases where the representation of national history occurs in a less obviously ethnic and ahistorical terms, the homogenous nation as the subject of display is clearly recognizable. The Vítkov Hill Monument in Prague was constructed as the core component of the new post-1918 Czechoslovak national identity. The memorial, which was under construction for almost ten years between 1929 and 1938, officially was called the “National Revival Memorial”. This and the fact that it was meant to commemorate the deeds of the Czechoslovak legion fighting against the Central Powers in WWI shows that 1918 was considered by the new elite as the resurrection of the long dormant, but truly existing Czechoslovak nation. Yet, as the memorial was completed with a huge equestrian statue of 15th century Czech Hussite general, Jan Žižka, who defeated Crusader anti-Hussite troops here in 1420, it soon became the symbol of a particularly distinct Czech national identity. The Germans were well aware of this fact and turned the memorial into storage of weaponry during the occupation years, 1939-1945. The postwar Communist dictatorship abused the cultural and ideological potential of the memorial and tried to establish the claim of the Communist Party as a national political force by connecting the memory of chief party leader, Klement Gottwald with the implications of the history of the Hussite wars: Gottwald’s mausoleum was situated within the memorial between 1953 and 1962 and other Communist leaders were also buried here.

Following 1989, Communists were gone, but Žižka remained the core symbol of the post-communist Czech national identity emphasizing a long-term historical legacy of democracy and equality. Members of the Czechoslovak legion were also kept inside the memorial making the focus on Czech statehood and national independence clear. Remarkably, the refurbished memorial was turned into a space of exhibitions. The major exhibition on modern Czech and Slovak history, “Crossroads of Czech and Czechoslovak Statehood in the 20th Century” was installed here in 2009-10. The exhibition discovered five milestones of this history: 1918, year of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic; 1938-1939 as the end of the first Republic and the Munich Agreement; 1948, year of the Communist takeover (coup d’état in the terminology of the curators); 1968 and the Prague Spring reform movement and the creation of the new federal state; 1989-1992 with the Fall of Communism and the birth of the two new independent republics.

The exhibition ignores aspects of social history such as social transformations, the mentality of various classes and their relationships to political changes or opportunities of adaptation to the socialist dictatorship and also other possible milestones like 1945, the expulsion of German occupation armies and subsequently indigenous ethnic German inhabitants of Czechoslovakia. As a consequence, the exhibition simply reproduces the myth of Czech(oslovak) national history as the democratic island founded by Masaryk, fought against and oppressed by two dictatorial foreign powers and eventually liberated and re-created by the new post-Communist democratic republic(s). Accordingly, the exhibition neglects the troublesome occurrences of the Holocaust and the extermination of Czech Roma tolerated or even supported by groups of the domestic society.

The House of Terror in Budapest was inaugurated on 25 February 2002, on the Day of the Victims of the Communist Dictatorships. This commemorative day was created on June 16th, 2000, when the Parliament of the Republic of Hungary passed resolution 58/2000. There were 201 'yes' votes, 24 'no' votes and 87 abstentions. This decision expressed the conviction of the Parliament about the necessity of choosing a particular day for commemorating the victims of the communist dictatorships in Hungarian secondary schools (*Magyar Közlöny* 2000: 3360.). On February 25th, 1947 the Soviet Red Army removed (or abducted) Béla Kovács, the general secretary of the Smallholders' Party, one of the most ardent critiques of the communist's aspirations to power. In 1947, this violent action clearly established the limits of Hungarian democracy: the Hungarian communists could count on the support of the Soviet military forces to resolve crucial political conflicts. The date the national assembly passed the decision in 2000, 16 June, was the same as that of the execution of Imre Nagy in 1958. In 1989, the reburial of the Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution on the anniversary of his death constituted the core symbolic event of the demise of the communist regime. This parliamentary act depicted the continuity of communism from the takeover in 1947 through its fundamental crisis in 1956 to its fall in 1989. The communist dictatorship appeared as a state of undifferentiated repression in this depiction. The resolution showed isolated historical facts and blurred the personal fate of the communist prime minister who had remained true to his conviction, consciously accepting the death penalty, as well as that of the persecuted Small-holder oppositionist politician who had become a member of the parliament in 1958 in the post-revolution Kádár-regime. The history of communism was represented as an abstract entity identified with political terror.

The relatively recent manifestation of the Hungarian legislative assembly to establish a memorial day for the victims of communism marked the first post-1989 commitment towards a systematic politics of commemoration related to the communist past in the country. The anniversaries of the October 1956 revolution were celebrated annually with remarkable pomp and publicity, and bore the mark of the contemporary daily political context. Nonetheless, they failed to express any coherent intention to systematically interpret the history of the communist dictatorship. Although the members of the first conservative government (1990-1994) demonstrated considerable interest in historical matters and did not decline to make statements on particular historical questions, these remained individual manifestations rather than elements of a comprehensive political will to remember. Immediately after 1989, the general disorientation about the interpretation of history produced a variety of interpretations, yet the first socialist-liberal coalition (1994-1998) identified itself largely on the basis of the priority of current economic and social problems and appeared rather disinterested in and indifferent to issues of the past. The then still largely post-communist socialists found it extremely inconvenient to face their fairly dubious late-communist legacy. Liberals considered questions of historical identity a second-rate issue in comparison to the pressing need for restructuring the economy and public administration.

However, the second conservative government (1998-2002) led by the Fidesz-MPP, managed to formulate a strongly historically-orientated conservative nationalist ideology. In the struggle for votes in the post-communist elections, the Fidesz-MPP realized the importance of identity politics, embedded in an imaginary history of the nation. The party, which had already laid great emphasis on its intention to 'give back Hungarians their national self-esteem' in its campaign,

began to bomb the electorate with historical interpretation immediately after its victory in the general elections (The context of this politics of history in historiography proper is described in Trencsényi – Apor 2007: 45.). The Fidesz decided to build ‘national pride’ on a voluntaristic and mythical series of *grandeur et gloire* connected to the history of the Hungarian state and (Christian) church(es). The first element of this politics of history was the establishment of the new Ministry of National Cultural Heritage, which was commissioned to define aspects of cultural heritage considered worth integrating into the imagined historical-national identity (Erdősi 2000). This initiative culminated in two controversial events. The first of these was the centrally organized celebration of the 1000 year anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian State in 2000. Common historical understanding held that the Christmas of 1000, Stephen, the apostle of the Magyars, was crowned as the first King of Hungary. This millennium celebration was clearly modelled on a previous 1000 years anniversary in 1896, when the modernizing Hungarian state had celebrated the conquest of the Carpathian basin by Magyar tribesmen. At that time, national pride had been embedded in the achievements of civilization and modernity connected to the active involvement of the state, whereas in 2000 the millennium provided an opportunity for the government to perform the historical continuity of the Hungarian state grounded in a Christian-clerical historicization and national particularism (Gerő 2004: 181-99).⁴ The intention to set the point of departure of the history of the modern Hungarian state in the symbolic foundation of the medieval kingdom was demonstrated by the transfer of the Sacra Corona from the National Museum to the building of the Parliament. The sacred crown of Saint Stephen started to be considered as the ultimate representative of the Hungarian political body in the late middle ages and early modern times. This was closely related to the fact that the actual ruler of the country resided outside the territory of the kingdom, in Vienna. The crown had been removed by the US army at the end of the Second World War and given back to Hungary in 1978. It was kept in the National Museum until 2000 when the Fidesz led government decided to place it in the hall of the Parliament as the symbol of Hungarian statehood, and thereby declared the contemporary Hungarian state the subject of the supra-personal Sacra Corona (Radnóti 2001). Thereby, the subject of this particular Hungarian history – the Christian state – became an ahistorical and eternal abstractum, whose essence was not subject to temporal change, but remained the deepest desire of the nation.⁵

The museums of communism play a special role in these politics of commemoration of national pride. The politics of history in contemporary Eastern Europe, which also embrace the interpretation of the communist dictatorships, represent the nation as an eternal entity, a set of virtues and values, whose history is described as a success story of the realization of these qualities. Shameful periods of national history are regarded as regrettable historical accidents caused by various external forces. Representing the communist regime exclusively as a terrorist rule generated by such external forces and maintained solely by violence is a crucial means of implementing this concept rooted in an historicist understanding of nationalism. If the communist dictatorships in these countries can be successfully isolated as events of non-national history, it becomes possible to claim that a range of resilient qualities and features characterize the nation and that these remained unchanged during and in spite of communism. From such a basis it is possible to state that there is an eternal national identity despite temporal change and

that the former manifested itself in the periods of genuine national history (On the formation of historical identity of nations see: Mosse 1975: esp. 47-99.).

Historical museums established in the course of the nineteenth century played a crucial role in the formation of national consciousness throughout modern history. In the museums of classical historicism, the value of the exhibited objects was derived from the fact that they were able to represent and preserve authentically the meaning of the past. For this purpose, exhibits were normally richly contextualized and situated in accurate historical periods. In this way, historical museums could tangibly demonstrate the origins of nations in the past and the notion of unbroken historical continuity since then (Korff – Roth 1990). It is precisely, this ‘touch of the real’ that makes historical exhibitions so attractive for various politics of history and memory. Museums, which are able to re-present the past, that is to say to make the past once again present, provide the perfect means to fulfill the function of commemorations and serve as ‘connective structures’ towards history.⁶ Museums are frequently employed in contemporary Eastern Europe as means of creating historical authenticity to render communist terror tangible and the related interpretation of the recent past credible.

A Communism for Europe?

Nonetheless, one should not resort to the comfort of the notion that these issues are but another manifestation of familiar post-communist, East European nationalism and it is important to take note of the genuinely pan-European nature of this construction. The Sighet museum is affiliated to an International Centre for the Study of Communism, the executive scientific board of which reflects a truly all-European composition. The members of the board are: Thomas Blanton (National Security Archives, George Washington University), Vladimir Bukovsky (Cambridge University), Stephane Courtois (CNRS, Paris), Dennis Deletant (SSEES, London University), Helmut Muller-Engbergs (The Federal Office for the Study of STASI Archives, Berlin) and Pierre Hassner. Furthermore, in 1998 the Council of Europe granted the Sighet memorial the status of being among the most significant monuments of the continent, together with the Auschwitz Museum and the Peace Memorial in Normandy. The Twentieth Century Institute that accompanies the House of Terror in Budapest has received visits from such illustrious guests as Ernst Nolte, the controversial German historian of Fascism. The museum in Warsaw that staged the exhibition ‘Two Faces of Totalitarianism’, the History Meeting House and its background organization the Karta Centre have close links with the Institute of National Memory, members of which contributed to the Polish sections of the Black Book of Communism. The honorary members of the board of the SocLand Foundation include Zbigniew Brzezinski, former US National Security Adviser and the well-known French historian Alain Besançon.

The participation of Western scholars and policy makers in the process of shaping the historicist-nationalist memory of communism and fascism can be explained by benevolent ignorance and a sincere will to condemn the communist dictatorships as a Soviet phenomenon. Fundamentally, the reason the public tends to disregard the problematic implications of the interpretation of communism based exclusively on the comparison of totalitarian violence is general indifference. The West, which has already succeeded in containing fascism, is reluctant to give up its convenient position and to face a new challenge of once again coming to terms with a dictatorial past. It would be dis-comforting to understand communism as the consequence of

European modernity, instead of attributing it to an imagined East European anti-modernity. In general, there is no willingness to open up these issues, which allows East European politicians of history or the Black Book to shape the discussions about communism.

However, it is precisely this general indifference that might provide the chance to resist the historicist-nationalist revision of the history of the recent past. Nazism as a historical phenomenon has been clearly and powerfully associated with Auschwitz. The spectacle of the crematoria, gas chambers and mass graves unambiguously mark the historical identity of Nazism. Auschwitz, as an actual authentic site of mass extermination, successfully localizes, connects to credible evidence and, hence, renders tangible the interpretation of the genocide and war crimes. On the contrary, the image of communism as terror, as a dictatorship exclusively characterized by violence is an essentially abstract argument. The propagators of this historical view ordinarily base their reasoning on certain carefully selected historical facts that demonstrate their claims. The instances of atrocities, cruelty and terror are usually shown cautiously isolated from other sources of historical evidence, hence, in a profoundly de-contextualized environment ripped of any accurate historical reference and localization. Because of this the authenticity of the statement on the historical nature of communism as terror and violence is largely based on the comparative evocation of fascism.

Postscript

As a matter of fact, recently the fairly uncritical stress on the eternity of national values has started to slightly change thanks to some initiatives. In a few cases, most importantly in the case of the planned Polish History Museum and the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant the focus has begun to shift towards an ironical approach and modest criticism of the earlier concepts. The proposal for the Polish History Museum calls for building a critical distance from the mythical narrative of the nation based on heroes and martyrs and for coming to terms with less comfortable episodes of national history such as the Holocaust or the troublesome relationship with other national communities in the country.

In 2010, the Romanian Peasant Museum opened an exhibition connected to the 20th anniversary of the closing down of its predecessor, the Party Museum. The exhibition, which used original objects of the old Communist collections, in many ways, was not even an exhibition. The objects, which were fixed among the normal sequence of objects of the permanent exhibition, remained hidden and difficult to recognize. However, exactly this camouflage exhibition created the real, the intended exhibition in the Peasant Museum. The intention of the curators was to create abrupt, shocking moments of perception when among ordinary folk pottery the visitors recognized a plate imitating peasant style, but with a red style as the core motif or when they encountered the broadly used official portrait of communist leaders among rows of Christian icons. The way of organizing the exhibition called for reflection both on museum practices and on the period of Communism. The curators encouraged the visitors to think about how an object became a “Communist” one, how exhibitions in museums relate to the history of their collections or how the period of the socialist dictatorship related to the trajectory of national history.

These exhibitions represent a different agenda than the demonstration of the mystical idea of the nation. They invite the visitors to ask questions about their relationship to the period of

Communism or contemporary history in general and to try to understand the impacts of the past in tangible personal ways.

Notes

- ¹ The following study provides a thorough analysis of the inauguration and the reception of the House of Terror: Frazon – K. Horváth 2002. The article contains a profound bibliography of the debate, as well.
- ² 'I support the establishment in Bucharest of a Museum of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. This museum will in equal measure be a place of remembrance and one of affirmation of the values of open society. Besides the Museum, it is necessary to create a centre for documentation, with the scope of informing the public and giving unrestricted access, in which there will be gathered documents essential for an understanding of the communist phenomenon, of the labor camps, and of propaganda as a means of spiritual constraint.' The address of the President is available in English at: http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=det&tb=date&id=8288&_PRID=ag
- ³ 'In situations of extreme social devastation, mythic discourse erupts and flows into the semantic space made vacant by the incapacity of science to recognise the moral significance of human suffering. This is because science cannot address the question of the *value* of human suffering. It may very well provide an explanation of *how* the disaster occurred and identify the factors, physical and social, that caused it, but *why* it occurred at the specific time and in the specific place that it did, and *why* its effects on the human population appear to the survivors to be a kind of "cruel and unusual punishment", are questions that science, with its interest in fact rather than value, cannot even perceive, much less answer.' White 2000: 52-3.
- ⁴ As a matter of fact, the year of the millennium in 1896 was defined fairly pragmatically. The government commissioned the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to establish the exact date of the Magyar conquest, nonetheless, the accurate professional answer could identify only the period 888 and 900 as the most likely date of the event. The government, then, chose the middle of the decade and set the date of the millennium for 1895. However, when the great constructions could not be finished in time, the authorities postponed the celebrations by one year. See Gerő 1995: 204.
- ⁵ 'Ranke did not concern himself with useless speculations on the origins of churches and states or the manner in which they were constituted at the beginning. The *generally* beneficial character of these two institutions he took to be a *fact* of history, a truth established not only by historical reflection but also by quotidian experience. He was privately convinced that these institutions had been founded by God to impose order on a disorderly humanity; and he thought that a dispassionate study of history would confirm the generally beneficent role played by these two institutions in human life, which might suggest to the pious their divine origin. But it was necessary to believe in their divinity to appreciate their ordering function in the lives of peoples. They constitute the sole ordering principles in historical time; it is through them that a "people" can direct its spiritual and physical energies toward the constitution of itself as a "nation."' White 1973: 169.
- ⁶ The goal of commemorative ceremonies is to make the past present again and to eliminate the distance in time in order to create a consciousness of continuity. Connerton 1989: 41-71. Assmann 1992.

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One Common Event, Two Distinct Narratives: Commemorative Displays in National Museums in Ireland and Northern Ireland in the 1990s

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Abstract

The article explores the production of historical narratives in two national museums, the National Museum of Ireland (Dublin, Republic of Ireland) and the Ulster Museum (Belfast, Northern Ireland) in the context of political reconciliation. In 1998, the Irish and British governments associated with most of Northern Ireland's political parties, agreed to set the bases for restoring peace through the Good Friday Agreement. This was in this context that the two national museums arranged exhibitions for the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion, which had been at the heart of the opposition between nationalist and unionist conceptions of the relations between Ireland and Britain. The purpose of the article is to question how, and to what extent, the organisation of the commemorations impacted on the construction of historical narratives in the two national museums in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The two commemorative exhibitions and their organisation reveal how the 1990s politics of reconciliation contributed to building new historical narratives in Ireland and Northern Ireland's national museums. However, I argue that the two exhibitions were still representative of the opposition between cultural diversity and national unity supported respectively in Northern Ireland and in the Republic.

Introduction

Any definition of the term nation in the island of Ireland fosters vigorous debates and controversies. Politically, the island has been divided into two entities since the 1920s. Following the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, the South practically acquired political independence, whereas the North remained part of the United Kingdom. The relations between the two parts of the island and Britain have been central to the definition of national issues, especially regarding national museums. The National Museum of Ireland (hereafter NMI) was established shortly after Ireland gained its independence and the core collections came from the Dublin Museum of Science and Arts, founded in 1877 (Crook 2000). In Northern Ireland, the creation of the national Ulster Museum (hereafter UM) only took place in the early 1960s (Nesbitt 1979). The chronological gap between the establishment of the two national museums stems from the different political contexts on each side of the border. While the Irish Free State rapidly elaborated national cultural policies, the issue was much more divisive in Northern Ireland due to the opposition between nationalist and unionist communities (Bardon 2005).

Each of the two museums are divided into several departments, however only the historical collections are examined in this presentation. Furthermore, although both institutions have a long history, the article focuses merely on reinterpretations of the past in the 1990s. The reason for doing so comes from the particular political contexts in Ireland and Northern Ireland during the 1990s. Indeed, since the late 1960s, the North had been dealing with a sectarian civil war, known as the 'Troubles', in which republicans (mostly Catholics) and royalists (mostly Protestants) opposed each other over the status of Northern Ireland and the political rights of the catholic minority. The 1990s were marked by peacemaking policies. A major step in the peace process was the signature of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, in which Irish and British governments associated with most of Northern Ireland's political parties, agreed to set the bases for restoring peace (Cox, Guelke and Stephen 2006). Encouraged by the peace process, the political definitions of the Irish nation, the Ulster region and the United Kingdom as a whole were redefined in the 1990s. The purpose of this article is therefore to question the extent to which this political reappraisal contributed to building new historical narratives in Ireland and Northern Ireland's national museums (Czarniawska-Joerges 2004).

In order to do so, two particular exhibitions are considered. In 1998, both museums arranged exhibitions for the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion. In 1798, in the wave of revolutionary uprisings in America and Europe, Irish patriots – under the guidance of the Society of the United Irishmen – radicalised and rebelled for Ireland's independence (McBride 2009). Although the uprising was suppressed by the British troops and was followed by the 1800 Act of Union between Ireland and the United Kingdom, the 1798 Rebellion has remained a landmark in nationalist Irish history, and has been considered as the birth of Irish republicanism. On the other hand, loyalists have traditionally interpreted the 1798 Rebellion as a catholic and sectarian plot against Protestants and their property in Ireland, in other words, devoid of any political dimension (Collins 2004). The event has therefore been at the crux of the opposition between nationalist (or republican) and loyalist historical narratives in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Importantly, the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion coincided with the year of the Good Friday Agreement, giving therefore even more relevance to the study of the commemorations

The aim of this article is not to examine the entire production of historical narratives by both national museums ; this would have required considering other sections of the museums such as the Antiquities departments in this survey. My intention is rather to question how, and to what extent, commemorations impacted on the construction of historical narratives in the two national museums in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This article will not however merely describe and compare these narratives of the 1798 Rebellion. The organisation of the two commemorative exhibitions indeed revealed wider tensions in interpreting the past on both side of the border. Indeed, my research concurs with Allan Megill's argument that the master narrative 'is often partly hidden, lying in the background, to be deployed selectively' (Megill 1998 : 15). The focus on the two commemorative exhibitions reveals and compares the wider frames of interpretation of the past. The first section of the article demonstrates a wide rapprochement of the historical narratives produced by the two national museums. The research goes on to highlight that this rapprochement is limited due to disagreements over the ways to achieve political reconciliation. The Ulster Museum promoted a past driven by cultural diversity whereas the National Museum of Ireland continues to exclude protestant loyalists from the national past.

1998 exhibitions and the rapprochement of historical narratives

The 1998 commemorative exhibitions were the very first of their kind. No modern temporary historical exhibition had ever been organised in both museums about the same event. Each exhibition – entitled in Belfast *Up in Arms : the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland. A Bicentenary Exhibition* and in Dublin *Fellowship of Freedom : the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion* – dealt with the same insurrection. It was the first time the Ulster Museum entirely devoted a temporary event to the Rebellion. The absence of official commemorations in twentieth century Northern Ireland was due to both the political domination of unionists and their traditional interpretation of 1798 which was highly critical of the rebels. According to authors such as William Maxwell or Robert Gowan, the 1798 Rebellion was first of all a massacre of Protestants undertaken by Catholics and led by their priests (Maxwell 1845, Gowan 1998). The only commemorations in Northern Ireland were celebrated by republicans, notably in 1948 (Collins 2004). Generally, official commemorations supported by unionists in Northern Ireland underlined the union with Britain and focused on events such as the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, the 1800 Act of Union or the 1916 Battle of the Somme, in which Ulster protestants fought side by side with other British troops. These political narratives contrasted with those promoted in the Republic of Ireland. The 1798 Rebellion, as well as other insurrections such as the 1916 Easter Rising, was celebrated by Irish governments. In the South, the political narratives highlighted an Irish history driven by the struggle for independence. The 1798 Rebellion was therefore part of the NMI's permanent collections as early as the late 1930s.

Regarding previous commemorations, the bicentenary demonstrated a rapprochement of the historical narratives. In the two national museums, this materialised by a similar intention to debunk the myths about 1798, either the nationalist or the unionist political uses of the past. The companion volume of the Dublin exhibition argued that 'while the past cannot be restored, memory can' ; the purpose was to retrieve the memory which had been deliberately suppressed (Whelan 1998 : x). Likewise, the UM outreach officer – Jane Leonard – endeavoured to make the unionist community aware of its 1798 legacy. The bicentenary was marked by a wish to promote

inclusive and non-sectarian interpretations of the past. In doing so, the national museums provided uncommon critical approach of the past and its representations. The museums intended to correct the perverted representations of a controversial event such as the 1798 Rebellion. The distinction between the past and its representations stemmed from the new roles given to academic historians. In addition to the museums' curators, the historical adviser (Kevin Whelan) in the NMI and the outreach officer (Jane Leonard) in the UM, played crucial roles in presenting new narratives of the past (Whelan 1987, 1993, Leonard 1997). This resulted from the intention to provide new interpretations of the past during the peace process. Historians traditionally write history and produce narratives of the past ; they were better armed than curators to provide new interpretations of the 1798 Rebellion.

Another similarity between the exhibitions was their move from the insular to the international context. This enlargement of the context materialised within the first sections of the displays. Both museums began by highlighting the late eighteenth century revolutionary context. The American and French revolutions were the core of the first three sections of the exhibitions. Hence, similar views of the war in the thirteen colonies and the fall of the Bastille in France were used in the displays. The enlargement of the framework of representations was not limited to the 1998 displays; it marked the overall museums' exhibiting policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Thus the two museums produced similar new permanent history exhibitions in 2003 (Ulster Museum) and 2006 (National Museum of Ireland). Both exhibitions had very similar titles and sections. They both included sections about the various conflicts in Ireland but also about the Irish soldiers involved in international conflicts, notably through the United Nations. Thus, the 1998 exhibitions symbolized a broader rapprochement of historical narratives North and South. Nonetheless, the two institutions still diverged on the manner in which historical myths should be debunked and this revealed wider political disagreements about the interpretations of the past.

Europeanisation and reconciliation: the roles of the Ulster Museum toward communities

The UM's commemorative exhibition derived from two new modes of presenting the past : the consideration for two sorts of public and the Europeanisation of the framework of interpretation. The definition of two sorts of public was part of the definition of Northern Ireland as being a space of dialogue between two communities ; the catholic nationalists and the protestant unionists. For instance, the decision to mount the 1998 exhibition had its origin in the late 1980s when the keeper of the local history department (William Maguire) decided to arrange a display for the tercentenary of the 1690 Battle of the Boyne (1990). The decision to mount the 1990 exhibition implied, according to him, a similar commemorative exhibition for the 1798 Rebellion in 1998. The fact that the Battle of the Boyne was celebrated by unionists and the 1798 Rebellion by nationalists would avoid any criticism of museum bias. This mirrored how the peace process was conceived in Northern Ireland from the late 1980s. In order to make peace, various organisations such as the Community Relations Council promoted equal representations between the two main traditions (Frazer and Fitzduff 1986). This policy of parity of esteem allowed a rapprochement between historical narratives North and South, since it encouraged the commemoration of the 1798 Rebellion.

The focus on the two traditions materialised in the UM's display which was supposed to be visited by both the nationalist and unionist communities. Hence, much more than the exhibition in the South, the UM highlighted both the rebels and the counter-rebellion troops. The counter-rebellion forces were constituted of British troops, militia and loyalist organisations such as the Orange Order. In giving space to the Orange Order in the exhibition, the museum provided bridges between the 1790s and the present unionist community. The consideration for both sides of the conflict was particularly expressed in the centerpiece of the display: Thomas Robinson's painting *The Battle of Ballynahinch*. It depicts the battle which took place on the 12th of June 1798 between rebels under the command of Henry Munro and the army of Major-General Nugent in charge of the British and governmental troops. Robinson's counter-rebellion narrative is expressed through the presence, in the foreground, of the royal troops and officers, notably the injured captain Henry Evatt. The only visible United Irishman is Hugh McCullough, a prisoner depicted on the lower left corner of the canvas. The painting represents the victory of the royal troops' over the rebels, present in the background as disorganised troops (Cullen 2000 : 161). The use of the painting in 1998 was different. The painting was used on the cover of the catalogue and most of published materials regarding the advertising of the exhibition. In doing so, the staff reframed the image and produced new narratives. The cover of the catalogue opposed more openly the United Irishman and the British officers ; most of the background devoted to the battlefield was erased (Maguire 1998). Though a minor visual element in the composition of the original image, the United Irishman appeared with more emphasis on the catalogue. Likewise in the section about the painting, the school activity book opposed two snapshots of the United Irishman and Captain Evatt. The way Thomas Robinson's painting was used in 1998 derived from more inclusive representations of the past and the constant focus on both sides of the story, the rebellion and the counter-rebellion. This contrasted with the Dublin exhibition which hardly gave space to counter-rebellion forces. The Ulster Museum did not commemorate the rebels but the historical event as an overall opposition between the United Irishmen and the royal troops to which was associated the Orange Order. This also reflected more important shifts in representing the past in Northern Ireland in the 1990s.

The 1998 Ulster Museum exhibition was mostly mounted by the keeper of the local history collection (Trevor Parkhill) and the outreach officer (Jane Leonard). Leonard was in charge of the community relations in the Ulster Museum and endeavoured to present the 1798 Rebellion as part of both nationalist and unionist history. An historian working on the history of commemorations in Ireland and Northern Ireland, Leonard was hired in 1997 thanks to European funding. Since 1995, cultural projects dealing with community relations in Northern Ireland were helped by the European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland (EUSSPPR, commonly known as PEACE). Created in July 1995 by the European Commission, the EUSSPPR was extended twice and is still implemented today (Hughes 2010 : 17). Between 1995 and 1999, the programme provided 692 million euro and financed 15.000 projects. The funding allocated to the Ulster Museum belonged to the SSP 4.5 entitled 'Promoting pathways to Reconciliation : Building inclusive communities', from which the Museum received £87.500. As a counterpart, the UM had to implement the scheme for the SSP 4.5 which aimed to 'facilitate the development of (...) responses to sectarianism' and 'enable local

people to deal with the causes and effects of communal conflict and to contribute to peace-building in the longer-term'.

Through this programme, the UM enhanced its capacity to appear as a site of cross-community dialogue. Contrary to the NMI which was mostly funded by the Irish government, the UM was not directly under the financial supervision of the British government. Obtaining its European funding from a non-governmental agency, the UM reached a step further in the production of multicultural narratives. In order to support political reconciliation, the UM's exhibition demonstrated that both Catholics and Protestants rebelled in 1798. The Rebellion was not, as the traditional loyalist interpretation had argued, a catholic insurrection. This argument was similarly highlighted in Dublin to help reconciliation. However, unlike the Dublin exhibition, the UM's display went further and enlarged the historical narratives of the 1798 Rebellion to the counter-rebellion forces to demonstrate that both republicans and loyalists had their place in the history of Ulster. The commemorative exhibition of the 1798 Rebellion expressed a conception of Ireland defined as a multicultural entity in which Catholics and Protestants cohabited. In doing so, it contrasted with the Dublin exhibition which promoted a much more nationalist view of the past.

Museum, historians and political narratives in the Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland was part of the peace process in Northern Ireland and the Irish government signed the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. The exhibition organised by the NMI for the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion opened two days after the voters accepted the Agreement by referendum (23 May 1998). None the less, the politics of reconciliation differed North and South of the border and this impacted on how the past was reinterpreted during the commemorations. The Irish government set up a Commemoration Committee which issued a mission statement for the bicentenary. It stressed the need to emphasize the United Irishmen and their pluralist ideals instead of the military violence and sectarian dimensions of the insurrection. The unity between what happened in the North and in the South had to be highlighted. This differed with the commemoration in the North as there only the rebels were celebrated ; the counter-rebellion forces and the Protestants who had remained loyal to the crown were not part of the past to be remembered. The Rebellion alone was defined as a 'forward looking' event, model for the 1998 peace process. Indeed, the catalogue of the exhibition's preface pointed out that 'like the United Irishmen we face the task today of negotiating an agreed political structure' (Whelan 1998 : x). The catalogue was written by Kevin Whelan who played a crucial role in the bicentenary program. As an historian specialising in the eighteenth century, Whelan was both the historical adviser of the NMI's exhibition and the historical adviser of the government. He wrote several of the Prime Minister's speeches for the bicentenary and was part of the lecture tour organised by the government in the United States. More importantly, he was the bridge between the Commemoration Committee (of which he was a member) and the NMI. It was the first time an external historian was directly involved in the organisation of a commemorative exhibition at the NMI. Whelan wrote the text panels, the catalogue and was responsible for the selection of artefacts. His role was crucial to understanding the reappraisal of the historical narratives of 1798 in the national museum.

Whelan was part of the historiographical debates that the NMI had, so far, stayed outside of. Historical revisionism emerged in the late 1960s and became dominant in the 1980s and early 1990s (Brady 1994). Its aims were mostly to challenge Irish traditional nationalist history which stressed the continuous Irish nation against seven centuries of British domination. In their attempts to dissociate history from myths, revisionist historians reinterpreted Irish nationalist landmarks such as the 1798 Rebellion in more critical ways. In 1989, Roy Foster, one of the well-known figures of historical revisionism, defined the 1798 Rebellion in Wexford as ‘a localized *jacquerie* (...) leading to bloodletting and massacre on an appalling scale. The rationale was more aggressively sectarian than the United Irishmen theory had ever allowed for’ (Foster 1989 : 182). Whelan was part of the debates and strongly opposed historical revisionism and its critical approach towards the 1798 Rebellion (Whelan 2004). Supporter of anti (or post) revisionism, he sought to demonstrate that the sectarian dimension of the Rebellion was itself a myth, created for political purpose in the nineteenth century to distinguish nationalist and loyalist sides (Whelan 1996). Whelan supported a much more optimistic version of the past which supported the government’s way of celebrating the 1798 Rebellion in the context of political reconciliation. In organising the exhibition, Whelan forced the NMI to take position in the political and historiographical debates and to provide new narratives.

Following the Commemoration Committee’s suggestions, the NMI focused almost exclusively on the United Irishmen and ignored the counter-rebellion forces. The title of the exhibition revealed this focus on *the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion*. The *Fellowship of Freedom* was commemorated, not the insurrection itself. Inclusivity was not reached by promoting sections about both sides of the conflict, but by presenting the United Irishmen as examples of political and religious pluralism. Also revelatory of the links between the exhibition and the anti-revisionist arguments supported by the Irish government, was the manner 1798 sectarian violence was put on display in 1998. The insurrection in Wexford was marked by the involvement of certain catholic priests such as Father John Murphy and Father Michael Murphy. Traditionally highlighted by Loyalists as a sign of the sectarian catholic dimension of 1798, Father Michael Murphy was represented on the cover of the 1996 booklet published by the NMI and the keeper of the Arts and Industry department – Michael Kenny – devoted to the museum’s 1798 collections (Kenny 1996). The front cover was dedicated entirely to the 1898 commemorative plaque of the death of Father Michael Murphy whose death was considered in the caption as ‘a severe blow to the morale of the insurgent forces’ (Kenny 1996 : 25). Two years later, the priests disappeared from the foreground of the 1998 exhibition. Whelan explained how the catholic priests were wrongly used to define 1798 as a catholic revolt. He pointed out that, in 1898 for the centenary of the Rebellion, a Roman clerical collar was added to the painting of Father John Murphy to ‘more fully identify him iconographically with the modern catholic priesthood’ (Whelan 1998 : 126-127).

Whelan argued that the sectarian interpretations of the Rebellion were only constituted in the nineteenth century. He proposed George Cruikshank’s very critical depictions of the ‘massacres’ in Wexford in June 1798 as examples. He argued that these representations were ‘entirely fanciful’ (Whelan 1998 : 123, 137). This was also expressed through the scenography of the display. The last section was, unlike the previous ones, not composed of artefacts and images about the history of 1798 but its memory. Entitled *’98 after ’98 : the politics of memory*, the last

section grouped every depiction of historical violence against prisoners and civilians. In doing so, the display distinguished between the history of the pluralist ideals of the United Irishmen and the ‘fanciful’ memory of the sectarian violence. In line with the Commemoration Committee statement, attention was drawn to the political and pluralist ideals of the United Irishmen and scenes of violence and sectarian divisions between Catholics and Protestants were mostly challenged. The new narratives promoted in 1998 were therefore much more political and sanitised. In mounting such a display, the NMI was associated with political definition of the national past and historical anti-revisionism which proposed much more optimistic versions of the past. This resulted in the promotion of particular historical narratives and the limited rapprochement with the Ulster Museum.

Conclusions

To conclude, the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion demonstrated how the politics of reconciliation contributed to a rapprochement of historical narratives through the need to challenge exclusively sectarian interpretations of the past. The similarity between the Ulster Museum and the National Museum of Ireland in 1998 derived from an agreed vision of the need to challenge conflicting memories. This was partly achieved through the enlargement of the framework of representations, going beyond Ireland, allowing for the construction of more similar narratives of the past. However, the rapprochement for the purposes of the exhibitions did not produce completely similar interpretations of the past. The local political contexts played a major role in the museums’ reinterpretations of the past. Hence, the NMI expressed the anti-revisionist approach and the Irish government’s focus on national unity. Focusing on the United Irishmen, the 1998 exhibition in Dublin revealed how Loyalists were still the “others”, at best mentioned, but never commemorated.

The bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion was a major example of the impact of commemorations on historical narratives provided by national museums in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Commemorations of historical conflicts such as the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, the 1798 Rebellion and the 1916 Easter Rising were marked by processes of political uses of the past. In 1998, the Irish government’s involvement – especially through funding – facilitated the work of an external historical adviser and the reappraisal of historical narratives from the NMI. Much more than the UM’s exhibition, the NMI’s display was in the hands of the historical adviser. None the less, the particular context of political reconciliation in 1998 had a different afterlife in Dublin and Belfast. In the Ulster Museum, the work undertaken by Jane Leonard as outreach officer did not stop after the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion. Thanks to the funding from the European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, she worked at the Ulster Museum until 2006. The new narratives experienced in 1998 for the bicentenary were reproduced through several exhibitions such as *War and Conflict in Twentieth Century Ireland* (travelling display) in 2001 and the 2003 new permanent military history exhibition entitled *Conflict: The Irish at War*. Unlike the 1998 display, the new exhibitions were not directly connected to official commemorations. They derived from the broader process of cultural demobilisation implemented through European funding (Horne 2002). It revealed a new role for the Ulster National Museum as a site of dialogue between communities. In Dublin, the influence of Kevin Whelan was limited to the bicentenary of the 1798 Rebellion. The latest historical exhibitions, that is the 2006 permanent

exhibitions devoted to the 1916 Easter Rising (*Understanding 1916*) and the Irish military history (*Soldiers and Chiefs: The Irish at war at home and abroad*) did not directly involve external historians. Even more than within the 1998 display, the international context was present in the 2006 exhibition. Half of the *Soldiers and Chiefs* exhibition concerned those Irish who fought abroad, in the US civil war, the First and Second World Wars and the United Nations peacekeeping operations. However, the 2006 displays were much less historiographically committed than the 1998 exhibition. Instead of highlighting a positive past as model for the present peace process – as in 1998 – the 2006 displays were more driven by transnational dimensions of Irish history. More than political influence, the latest exhibitions were built in regard to the new commercial market driven by tourism and European funding for regional development. The political use of the past in Dublin and Belfast in 1998 had therefore different trajectories: it contributed to giving new roles to the Ulster Museum but it faded rapidly in the National Museum of Ireland with the normalization of the peace process after the Good Friday Agreement.

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Narratives and the Post-Colonial Era



Conventional Ethnographic Display or Subversive Aesthetics? Historical Narratives of the Sami Museum, RiddoDuottarMuseat- Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD) in Karasjok, Norway

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Abstract

The question of how and where Sámi culture is best represented is a debated issue in Norway. However, politically the problem has been “solved” through the establishment of Sámi museums, run by Sámi people and administered by the Sámi Assembly. The first Sámi museum in Norway was RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD) in Karasjok. Sámi museums have, however, been subjected to considerable criticism. They have been accused for propagating ethnic reification and presenting a stereotypical and static image of Sámi culture and identity. The exhibitions are seen as replicas of conventional ethnographic displays, tending to represent Sámi culture as belonging to a traditional, pre-modern past, due to a lack of chronological narration and historical anchoring. Based on fieldwork at the RDM-SVD, this article presents an analysis of the exhibition practices that challenges such earlier readings. We argue that far from replicating the exhibition language of dominant western ethnography, the exhibitions can be seen as an effort to undermine the conceptions of time and history of the dominant society. Based on a study of the museum display as a total experience, our alternative reading suggests that the museum, by evoking a mythical landscape through aesthetic means, inscribes itself into a Sámi conception of time and space – a Sámi understanding of reality. Thus, we also address the debate concerning museums in non-western spaces, and the question of recognizing indigenous curatorial practices. Not least the art section leaves an impression of a museum space less marked by closure than earlier readings suggest. Here the museum opens up for articulations with the wider world, as Sámi contemporary art not only speaks from a position of a particular locality; it also communicates with the international art scene and incorporates visions and perspectives from a global or multiple world¹.

In an archive at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, between exhibition sketches and old meeting minutes, we stumble over a photograph that immediately catches our attention.



Figure 1: Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty: Sámi woman in showcase, ca. 1994. © BONO

It is a photograph taken by one of the museums' staff photographers, Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, showing a small section of the arctic exhibition. Two towering museum exhibit cases in dark oak are occupying most of the pictorial plane. One of them contains an exhibition of the familiar, old fashioned kind. A Sámi costume – a man's costume with a so called star hat – is exhibited in front of a map with the core geographical locations of the Sámi people in the North. The Sámi flag and a richly decorated wooden box are also included in the exhibition. It is however the other showcase that represents the element of surprise in the photograph. Here a woman – not a mannequin – but a very much alive woman in Sámi costume, has entered the exhibition case, smilingly ready for the camera.

The photograph also makes us smile – as the woman's pose in the exhibition case may be understood as an ironic comment on the museum's objectification of people from other cultures. But at the same time this, probably spontaneous stunt, opens up for further reflections as it, in its quiet way takes us directly to the core of the museum problem of representation and the inherent questions concerning power and control. It makes us wonder whether the Sámi woman and the

photographer's ironical gesture are to be understood as a way of regaining control over, or at least question, the representation of the Sámi peoples' identity and history in the old ethnographical museum in the Norwegian capital.

It is precisely such a desire to take their own history back, which represents the very foundation of the Sámi people's museum, *RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat*, situated in the community of Karasjok in Northern Norway.



Figure 2: RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway, 2011
© The authors.

This museum was established in 1972 as the first of eleven Sámi museums in Norway, as a part of the political and cultural mobilization and struggle of the Sámi population. The museum, which is run by Sámi people, sorts administratively under the Sámi Assembly.

The exhibition space of this museum is divided in two different parts: one permanent exhibition of Sámi cultural history, and white cube galleries that present temporary exhibitions of Sámi contemporary art. The renowned Sámi artist Iver Jåks (1932-2007) designed the cultural history displays as well as some sculptural elements in the entrance area. Since its beginning, the museum has collected both cultural history objects as well as objects of contemporary Sámi art. The division between the cultural history and the art sections is however not absolute. The overall design as well as thematic connections blur the border between the different exhibition spaces and make the museum appear as open and seamless.

Sámi museums have been subjected to considerable criticism. They have been accused for propagating ethnic reification, and for presenting stereotypical images of Sámi culture and identity. Based on fieldwork at the museum, this article presents an analysis of the exhibition practices that challenges such critical readings of Sámi Museums in Norway. In our view, these readings are problematic, since they neglect to discuss the fundamental question of how meanings are produced in the museum space. Furthermore, the interplay between the narrative

elements of the different exhibitions in the Sámi museum, both the cultural history and the contemporary art sections, tends to be overlooked. On the basis of a study of the museum display as a total experience, our alternative reading suggests that the museum, by evoking a mythical landscape through aesthetic means, inscribes itself into a Sámi conception of time and space – a Sámi understanding of reality.

Critical perspectives on Sámi museums

Several scholars have raised the argument that exhibitions in Sámi museums simply are reproducing older stereotypes. The main point of reference in this discussion is an article from 2000, written by the Norwegian archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen. He describes the exhibition at the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok as a replica of conventional ethnographic displays. The Sámi culture is presented through a focus on livelihood, handicraft and religion, without any sense of sense of change, historical sequences or chronology. Olsen argues that this lack of historical anchoring of the Sámi culture provides an image of a static, pre-modern Sámi culture. In his view, the exhibition design by Jáks only contributes to accentuate this static and immobile representation of the Sámi past.



Figure 3: Exhibition case by Jáks/Andersen (1972). RidduDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway, 2011 © The authors.

Consequently, the exhibition produces a highly romanticized and idealized image of the Sámi as a people in harmony with nature. As a contrast to the design and object display, the exhibition texts, according to Olsen, focus on suffering and loss, with the Sámi population as victims of colonization and oppression by the Norwegian authorities. He also claims that the contact with the Norwegian majority population is represented in negative terms only. In the exhibition texts, change is solely explained in terms of a break with the past, resulted by the entrance of modernity

and colonialism. Tributes and taxation, government laws, exploitation and discrimination of Sámi language and occupation are also seen as elements in this process of cultural destruction. The “real” and “authentic” Sámi culture, then, existed in the past only. Therefore, in Olsen’s view, the major task of the museum then becomes to save and preserve the memory of this lost heritage. Following from this, he argues that the exhibition replicates ethnographic master narratives of fading and dying traditional cultures – instead of doing what it should have done: show the way the Sámi society always has been in continuous change. Change, he holds, is therefore not just a result of modernity. His conclusion is that, by stripping the Sámi culture of chronology and historical development, the exhibition reproduces the ethnographic stereotypes of peoples with and without history.

Other scholars have supplemented Olsen’s analysis. Sharon Webb (2006), for instance, points to the way the simple, stereotype, and essentialist image of Sáminess was instrumental in the process of ethnic mobilization. Webb’s description and analysis echoes Olsen’s in many ways, but while she too points to the way the exhibition reproduces ethnographic stereotypes, she also understands the alleged representation of Sámi culture as timeless and static as conditioned by politics. In an article that sums up the discussion, Silje Opdahl Mathisen (2010) points to what she sees as a paradox: In taking responsibility for the representation of their own culture and history, the Sámi people reproduce ethnographic stereotypes produced by the majority society. How may Sámi identity be built with the help of categories criticised for being oppressive, estranging and marginalizing, she asks.

These critical views of the Sámi museums can be seen in relation to the broader postcolonial critique of museums, ethnographic museums in particular. When a museum exhibits another culture, it necessarily situates that other in a framework of its own world. Ethnographic displays have, for instance, been criticized for the way they have represented ‘others’ as a primitive contrast to a civilized European ‘self’; as underdeveloped, essentialized and frozen in time. Rooted in western history and ideas, museums are intrinsically connected to the story of imperialism and colonial appropriation (see for instance Barringer & Flynn 1998, Coombes 1994, Karp & Lavine 1991, Henare 2005, Thomas 1994). As western inventions, museums inevitably reproduce western ideology, preoccupations and concerns. From this perspective museums developed in non-western spaces necessarily continue to be influenced by the mission, ideas and practices of western museums. Following this line of thought, the Sámi museums, despite being founded and run by the Sámi people themselves, are criticized for having inherited western museum structures and conventions of display.

However, such views of museums developed in non-western societies have also been challenged. The foundation of the Sámi museums can be seen as part of a larger international development. Since World War II there has been a worldwide growth of museums. Particularly from the 1960s onwards, there has also been a growth of museums established by ethnic minority groups, or first nation groups, aiming to preserve and share their cultural heritage and counterbalance the ways in which the mainstream institutions have represented their culture. As Moira Simpson holds, although being intrinsically tied to the history of colonialism,

[...]museums are now undergoing a radical change in the way that they function and in their relationships with the cultures represented in the collections; a change which reflects shifts in

the relationships between dominant western cultures and those of indigenous, minority, and suppressed cultures everywhere (Simpson 2001: 1).

In the course of this development there is also a growing recognition of indigenous curatorial practices and concepts of cultural heritage preservation around the world (Simpson 2001, Kreps 2003). Although museums as western cultural forms continue to influence contemporary museum practice everywhere, museums have also developed strategies in order to face this problem (Clifford 1997, Kreps 2003, McLoughlin 1999, Simpson 1996). However, such strategies may easily be ignored. As Kreps contends, to give credence to practices that have been overlooked or devalued is an important step towards the decolonization and democratization of museums and museum practice (Kreps 2003:4). In order to acknowledge these aspects of the curatorial practice of the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok, it is necessary to move beyond the immediate recognizable. This requires not only a closer reading of the exhibitions, but also a more thorough discussion of how meanings are produced in the museum.

Reading exhibitions

An important aspect of the establishment of a new museology has been the new awareness of the museum as a place, not only for housing, exhibiting and conservation, but also for the production of meaning (Pollock 2007: 1). But how do the museums produce meaning by actively framing their objects? How do we 'read' exhibitions, not just as form, but something that generates meaning? And what meanings are we thinking of? The meanings intended by the exhibition makers, those of the visitors, or the meanings extracted from the exhibitions when studying them for academic purposes?

One way of approaching such questions is to look at exhibitions in the perspective of a pragmatic theory of meaning, in other words as contextual and situated rather than inherent (Macdonald 2011). Inspired by art historical writings, one could develop this further by understanding the meaning of an exhibition in the context of the cultural practice of which it forms a part; a practice characterised by rule-regulated or institutionalised behaviour (Danbolt 2010: 15). The actions and choices made by the participants of this practice, both object and exhibition makers (as acts of expression) and exhibition visitors (as acts of understanding) are all made within this common institutionalised field. Michael Baxandall argues in a similar way for an understanding of the notion of 'exhibition' as a field in which at least three distinct terms are independently in play: makers of object, exhibitors of made objects and viewers of exhibited made objects' (Baxandall 1991). Far from static, these complex, dynamic, and sometimes fraught relations vary from one exhibition to another (Vergo 1989).

So how do we map the possibilities and resources that are culturally available for the respective agents in the cultural practice of museum display? In order to approach this problem, we have to begin with an immanent analysis of the cultural product itself: the exhibition in question. This represents a great challenge, as exhibitions are much more than performative speech acts producing meaning through the gesture of exposure or just saying 'look how it is'. Consisting of objects as well as other elements such as images, texts, sounds and smell, they are multimedial and multisensory in character (Bal 1996: 3, Kratz 2010: 15). Bal also reminds us of how narration in the museum works two ways: First, by the very fact of exposing the object; presenting it while informing about it. Second, it works through the sequential nature of the visit:

the process of walking through the exhibition area, which links together the various elements of the exposition (Bal 2006: 208).

Analyzing such narratives involves raising basic questions, not only about the aesthetics of the exhibition (the ways of telling), but also about power and representation: whose (hi)story is presented, and for whom? In short, we are looking at the poetics as well as the politics of the museum display (Karp & Lavine 1991, Lidchi 2006). This implies looking for more or less explicit ideological subtexts, but also contested meanings, ambiguities, contradictions, etc. Additionally it involves questioning the particular understanding of history, or philosophy of history, which inform the exhibition narrative: Are the objects contextualized or displayed in a way that is aesthetic, decontextualized and ahistorical? Another relevant issue is how the myriads details in the display, such as light design, exhibit texts, and choice of words, may be embedding values (Kratz 2011). Of equal importance is the question of the structure of the overall narrative: Is it non-chronological and fragmented with little or none interpretative clues? Or, are we moving through a succession of exemplary objects in a manner corresponding to what Donald Preziosi has labelled a chronologically choreographed re-enactment of history (Preziosi 2011:50).

Such theoretical and methodological considerations are not to be found in the earlier mentioned critical readings of the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok. Olsen's reading of the exhibition is for example limited to categorizing the different objects on display: as connected to practices of religion, craft, fishing etc. The question as to how these objects are presented and integrated in the artist's Jáks design, is not given any further consideration than to state that they appear to "belong to a unspecified, traditional past" (Olsen 2000: 18). His reading does however reveal a more fundamental interest in the exhibition texts, which paradoxically only represent minor elements when looking at the display as a totality. The interplay between words and objects is another issue that could have been, but is not discussed in this context. In his article, Olsen also has avoided to address the part of the museum dedicated to contemporary Sámi art. A closer study of this art section might have opened up for the kind of experiences that he and Webb (2006: 173) claim to be absent in the Sámi museums: reflections on change, the relationship between past and present, between traditional and modern Sámi life, tensions of identity, politics, problems and challenges.

We shall now return to the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok. While we are not able to go into too much detail of the many aspects listed above, our analysis maintains a focus on the interplay between the poetics and politics of display, a perspective that opens up for alternative readings of the representations of Sámi past and present in this museum. In order to discover this, it is necessary to move through the museum's exhibitions in the same way as the visitors. Only then will we be able to see clearly how the objects on display re-enact history in the museum space.

An alternative reading of the exhibitions in the Sámi Museum, RDM-SVD, in Karasjok

Let us imagine that we are there, in a landscape of hills and scattered pines in Karasjok, and that we are slowly approaching the museum building with its wood- and concrete walls and large glass windows. It is placed very low in the terrain, clearly in adaptation to the local environment. As we get closer to the solid door in dark wood, we notice a sculpturally formed door handle in

brass, a sacred material in the Sámi society, designed by Jåks. This motif is, as noted by Caroline Serck-Hansen, drawn from a shaman drum, and symbolises the sexual union of man and woman. Thus, the door handle is literally an introduction to the fertility theme expressed in the artworks that we meet in the front hall, after having entered the museum (Serck-Hanssen 2002: 43).

Jåks is also responsible for the wooden sculptures of stylized human figures that are to be seen in an airy exhibition box by the door.



Figure 4: Iver Jaaks: Sculpture in the entrance area at RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway, 2011 © The authors.

The brightness of the snowy landscape which is reflected in the large glass windows throws life and shadows over the solid, but yet dancingly light figures. They thus seem to be in full movement, and are in this way also contributing to the experience of bringing the outdoor

landscape into the museum building. This movement is continued in Jåks large relief in concrete and wood in the entrance hall.



Figure 5: Iver Jåks, *The Dance of the Gods*, Relief (1972), RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway © Iver Jåks / BONO 2012

On this complexly composed wall, the figures from the three-dimensional entrance sculpture seem to have danced their way further into the museum complex. They now form a chain of voluptuous women and ox-like strong male bodies, surrounded by warm flickering sunrays. As indicated by its title, *The Dance of the Gods*, the work carries allusions to Sámi cosmology. In Sámi cosmology the sun was an ancient cosmic being which carried the other gods on its rays. The artwork represents five cosmological figures: the god of the winds, the father of origin flanked by his wife and son, and the spring goddess. There is as strong erotic element in this: the work of creation obtains its energy and growth-potential from the cosmic life-giving forces embodied by the gods (Serck-Hanssen 2002: 42-43). Through this artwork Jåks establishes a connection between the Sámi museum and Sámi cosmological worlds. But Jåks has also, in cooperation with the duodji-artist, Jon Ole Andersen, made the design for the exhibition rooms of the museum. This design is based on a consequent use of simple natural materials: the exhibition cases, walls and ceiling in pine – and the rustic stone and sisal floors.

From *The Dance of the Gods* in the entrance area, the attention of the museum visitor is directed towards to the central element of the permanent exhibition: the drum of the shaman.



Figure 6: Shaman-drum at RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway, 2011 © The authors.

This drum, which is the great pride of the museum, is (due to conservation issues) exhibited as a replica. The original, also in possession of the museum, belonged to the shaman Anders Poulsson from Varanger. Paulsen, as the museum text informs us, was summoned before the Danish-

Norwegian court in 1692, and murdered by an allegedly mentally disturbed person, just before the sentence was to be declared. In this way, the centrally positioned drum stands as a reminder of the painful sides of the Sámi people's past: the violence and cultural and religious oppression of the Sámi by the colonial authorities and the majority population. Iconic of Sámi religious practice, as the link between people and the spiritual world, the drum connects the timelessness of the mythical space to specific references to concrete historical events.

The drum therefore seems to represent a kind of prologue in relation to the story which is told by the other elements of the permanent exhibition: the objects in the solid pine cases on the walls and the mannequins and larger objects which are placed more freely in the exhibition area. Not linked to any specific historic event, these are thematically organised in relation to different aspects of Sámi livelihood and culture; hunting, fishing, reindeer herding and agriculture, boat building, forestry, housing and craft production (*duodji*). However, decorative panels with motifs from the shaman drums rhetorically frame this part of the exhibition, which mainly comprises objects of a relatively new date, i.e. from the eighteenth and the nineteenth century.



Figure 7: The cultural history exhibition with Ják's wall panels at RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD), Karasjok, Northern Norway, 2011 © The authors.

To sum up our reading of the cultural history part of the museum exhibition at the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok: Far from replication the exhibition language of dominant western ethnography, the exhibition can be seen as an effort to undermine the conceptions of time and history of the dominant majority.

But as earlier mentioned, the Sámi museum in Karasjok is not only a cultural history museum. It is also a museum that has built up a considerable collection of contemporary art by Sámi artists. Much of the material cultural heritage in the northern regions of Norway was destroyed during the last phases of World War II, due to the German occupational forces' scorched earth

tactics. Therefore the museum has deliberately chosen to focus in particular on the collection and exhibition of Sámi contemporary artworks. The visitors' experience of the museum thus also includes an experience of contemporary Sámi art in the gallery rooms that are closely connected to the cultural history exhibition.

Walking through this art exhibition, one cannot help noticing that photography appears to have gained something near to a dominant position. Let us therefore briefly take a closer look at three chosen examples of such photography-based contemporary Sámi art: In a work titled *Margit Ellinor*, the artist Bente Geving, born 1952, presents a series of small kitsch still-lives from a coffee table – many of them with prominent Sámi imagery.



Figure 8: Bente Geving, *Margit Ellinor II*. Photograph, 30X40 cm. 2002. RiddoDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD) © Bente Geving

It is tempting to read these close ups of decorative objects as an intimate portrait of the person who arranged them, the artist's mother, Margit Ellinor, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2001 and died in 2007. This understanding also seems to be in line with by the artist's own statement about the work:

I started to photograph my mother's room in 2002. At that time she had begun to rearrange images and decorative objects, bringing forth things that had been stuffed away in drawers and cupboards, while removing others. She decorated and combined different objects on tables, on shelves and in cabinets. She did small changes – and moved things around. Every time I visited her there were new constellations and arrangements. I became fascinated by the colors and her compositions – and also interested in going into her world to make my pictures out of her pictures. It became important. She said it was her work. (Geving 2005: 1)

The photographs of Margit Ellinor's kitsch installations may thus be seen as an arena for articulating a sense of memory loss, not only on a personal, but also on a broader, collective level.

This also seems to be the case in the work of the younger artist Gjert Rognli. His artistic production is to a larger extent multimedial and comprises film, photography and performances. *Behind the Silverwiths*, a still photograph from a film with the same title from 2005, is a striking image of a river, red like blood, which calmly passes through a landscape of birches and green forest floor.



Figure 9: Gjert Rognli, *Behind the Silverwiths*, Photograph, 80x80 cm. 2005. RidduDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD) © Gjert Rognli

According to the art historian Kjellaug Isaksen, this work must be understood in relation to the artist's personal background in a Sámi coastal area which in the past has been subjected to a brutal politics of assimilation by the Norwegian government. Rognli and other younger artists' way of responding to this painful past, has been to invigorate and make use of suppressed Sami cultural elements. Isaksen reads *Silverwiths* as an invitation to enter a universe in which echoes from the past again reaches the surface (Isaksen 2010: 21). On the one hand, the red river carries

allusions to past Sámi ritual practices of sacrifice, and how the river carried the blood from these sacrifices away through the landscape. On the other hand, the work may be understood as an articulation of post-colonial experiences; the loss of history and the loss of traditions.

The last work we would like to point to, is *Transteinen* by the photographer and poet, Hege Siri (b. 1973).



Figure 10: Hege Siri, *Transteinen*. Photograph 2005. RidduDuottarMuseat-Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat (RDM-SVD) © Hege Siri.

Her photographs serve as yet another example of the tendency of expressing issues of memory and loss. In 2009 Siri exhibited a series of photographs of places that were considered sacred in the Sámi tradition. But her work also seems to talk about how these sacred places of the past are experienced in the presence. As remarked by the photography historian Mette Sandbye, photography is well suited to the task of representing a traumatic past. Strictly speaking, photography cannot tell us more than that something once took place in the past. But if this is transferred into what Sandbye, inspired by Jean-Francois Lyotard, calls an anamnetic micro-story in artistic form, the photograph can unfold a much larger story. The anamnesis, which is a term for a patient's own story of her disease, may help to bring the world into speaking terms again.

This is based on the recognition that it is the human being or the artist herself who must put her mark on it – or code it – in order to re-imagine the past and make the world exist (Sandbye 2001: 167-171). Such anamnestic stories seem to represent an underlying theme in Sami contemporary art.

Concluding remarks

History told tends to belong to the dominant forces within a society, while the history of the minor forces tends to be defined in relation to the dominant forces. The critique voiced against Sámi museums maintains that in order to avoid reproduction of ethnic stereotypes, the exhibitions should avoid the timelessness of conventional ethnographic displays, which freezes and essentializes the Sámi, by adding chronological history to the exhibition narrative. However, one could argue that history structured by chronological time is just another imposition of an order pertaining to the dominant society. In our view, the aesthetic framing of the cultural history display at the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok indicates a very different notion of the past. In this light, the display may be seen as an effort to break also with dominant ways of structuring the past. The lack of chronological time as a prime organizing principle of historical narration may be seen as alternative way of configuring the past; a way that distances itself from dominant historiography, like an anti-history if you like – or a transhistory.

Thus, the cultural history display can be seen as an effort to overcome, surpass or transcend time and the constraints imposed by time. The timelessness invoked by the display does not make it ahistorical, but signals another mode of historicity (Castoriadis 1997: 185), as a response to a world where history may as much be a burden as a source of power. Typical to non-centralized societies like the Sámi and in contrast to centralized societies, memories of the past that are inscribed in practices, places, material objects and bodies, may be just as important as those articulated in verbal narratives. Traces of, and references to, the past are not woven into a totality, and encompassed into one authoritative story of the past. Instead, this is a mode of historicity that can be described as both fragmented and dispersed (Nielsen 2011). As we see it, this is the mode of historicity that the museum draws upon and seeks to recreate in the exhibitions, both the cultural history and the art sections. By evoking a mythical landscape through aesthetic means, the museum inscribes itself into a Sámi conception of time and space – a Sámi understanding of reality. As a result, an image of Sáminess emerges as something that transgresses the limits of time and space.

Writing about museum representations of Native Canadians, Moira McLaughlin (1999) make similar observations of the exhibitions in what she terms tribal museums. She describes how the exhibitions in some ways look surprisingly familiar to the exhibitions in the larger, government run museums. However, also here the framing is different. While the museums reject an isolation of First Nations into a mythic ahistoric past, this past is not rejected. Instead, “[t]his past, which freezes and essentializes native Canadians at the larger museums, here works to enrich and guide a present and future” (McLaughlin 1999: 250). The past becomes the foundation of contemporary life. This is very similar to what goes on in the Sámi Museum, *RDM-SVD*, in Karasjok. The image of Sáminess produced in the cultural history display may serve as a pool, or a platform of coherence, to be drawn upon in a world of dispersion and fragmentation, in the process of self-definition and self-determination. Somehow this is part of what happens in the

contemporary art section. The past moves into a present that is both personal and political. As McLaughlin notes, stereotypes are not easy to do away with (McLaughlin 1999: 238). Images of buffalo hunters, shaman or tipi dwellers, or as in the Sámi context of the reindeer herders and the *lavvu* (tent), are today easily read as stereotypes. But stereotypes may also be re-appropriated, turned into irony or incorporated into experimental artistic journeys.

While the aesthetic framing of the cultural history exhibition establishes a connection to the contemporary art section, and as such also establishes a link between the past and the present, the latter additionally suggests an orientation towards the future. While the artworks may draw on the past and address issues of remembrance and loss, they also point to identity conflicts, tensions within the Sámi community in addition to on-going difficulties in the relation to the majority community, which for many among the Sámi population still is seen as a colonial force. Not least does the contemporary art section leave an impression of a museum space that is less marked by closure than earlier readings suggest. Here the museum opens up for articulations with the outer world, as Sámi contemporary art speaks not only from the position of a particular locality; it also communicates with the international art scene and incorporates visions and perspectives from a global or multiple world.

Notes

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An Unattainable Consensus? National Museums and Great Narratives in French-speaking Africa

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Introduction

In the middle of November 2011, the French and Senegalese press relayed the polemics surrounding the president Wade's intentions for the future of the recently acquired house of Léopold Sedar Senghor. Conserved in its original state with books and art works dear to the late Senegalese statesman and French academic, comprising, we are told, a painting signed by Marc Chagall - the villa was initially destined to become a presidential museum, housing gifts offered to the Senegalese Heads of State. The project was however reconsidered and the villa set to become a 'Senghor museum', was instead dedicated to the "safeguard of objects of national interest for Senegal and for Africans". The Counsel of Ministers did however ratify the presidential wishes to include the works of an important Senegalese collector in the museum.¹

This example serves to illustrate the general way in which the interactions between museums and cultural heritage on both national and continental levels are redefined, as well as certain transformations in museum politics, known to oscillate between continuity and radical renewal. As chance would have it, at the same time in Paris, Nobel literary prizewinner Jean-Marie Le Clezio, was the invited guest of the Louvre museum, with an exhibition entitled: 'The Museum World'. Mixing art and "craft", Europe, Africa and Oceania, it was offered as a " 'sidestep' (...) out of the confines of the cultural heritage represented in the Musée du Louvre's collections" (*un pas de côté (...) par rapport au périmètre patrimonial du Musée du Louvre*), expressing the experience of its organiser and inviting the visitor to experience this calm confrontation.² This dialogical attitude to world-objects is not novel,³ and is abundantly expressed by the Quai Branly Museum (Loumpet-Galitzine 2011: 151-154). That being said, it provides works of art with the capacity to transform history, thus reinforcing the ideal of the universal museum embodied by the Louvre, that of a museum-world, joint invention of Nation and tradition, creating at once a prestigious display window, a didactic institution and *lieu de mémoire*.

In the last two centuries of Western history, the relationships between cultural heritage and the institutionalisation of memory, between politics and museums, and museums and great narrative have acquired such self-evidence as to seem natural (Poulot 2008: 197). The relevance of these pairings is as true in the case of the analysis carried out on the museums of African countries; even when no 'native past' has been recognised, once independence is achieved it is often considered as the "detonator of a sentiment of national pride" (Joubert 1999: 845- 846). Subsequently, it becomes difficult to distinguish the *a posteriori* discourse of heritage (see Gaugue 1997: 7-10, 1999b: 337), from the after affects of the colonial situation ("situation coloniale"),

that long survive the strict chronological limitations of political events such as independence (Balandier 2001 [1951]: 9-10).

On the one hand, whilst the processes of construction of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1996) are subject to the certain particularities that can be said to be common to young African States in the process of achieving independence – cultural heterogeneity, transnational cultures, tensions between State apparatus and “ethnics”, single party rule. However, they are also seen to vary according to the specific contexts of the countries concerned. Additionally, the great narratives of the sixties were created in opposition to the metropolitan models and in a larger pan-African context. The virulent denunciations of the “frustration of cultural heritage” (Anta Diop 1993 [1954]: 12), the desire to escape from a common “colonial parenthesis”, to re-appropriate a historical continuity, and an ontological unity (Diouf 2002), established regionally founded heroes and myths as continental ones. Entangled in the dialectical relationship between local references and a pre-colonial globalism, these rewritings also invested in a “retrospective imagination of the West” (Jewsiewicki & Moniot 1987: 235-236), reproducing equivalent theoretical schemes that establish the great historical narrative as the expression of dualistic and mutually exclusive forms of heritage.

Fifty years onwards from the independence movement, it is possible to go beyond the frequently discussed issues of local expertise or looting, to question the role of the museum in the construction of great narratives and to consider some of their configurations from a political, rather than a diachronic perspective. This article postulates that the links between the museum and politics has been weak for a long time, because the museum, for many decades and for different reasons, did not play an important role in the display of the Nation, as this was displaced to other sites. Made *de facto* obsolete with the independence, the colonial museum was abandoned; what was however nationalised and appropriated with great symbolic force was the sovereign prerogative concerning the past. This displacement of the stage of the Nation does not however mean that the museum is insignificant to the country’s memory, on the contrary: forgotten, relinquished, and transformed presentations shed light upon, and even provide metaphors for the tensions inherent to dealing with the recent past and the relationship to history, so in a place so largely constructed by foreign paradigms. In this perspective the nationalised museums and the new national museums modelled after colonial examples, appear more as spaces of both internal and external conflict (in terms of identity, representation, the property of cultural goods), than as an institution seeking to provide a new beginning. This is not to say that this type of violence is not present in other museums, or in the selection process of their collections, but in a post-colonial context it is a particularly important pattern of practices against which we can better comprehend the most recent changes. This difficult situation allows us furthermore to understand the temporal distances that are necessary to set in motion a process of re-appropriation that give the museum a new role in francophone Africa.

In this article I would like to suggest therefore, that current “museographies”, that offer new opportunities to renegotiate national narratives and to question the limits of museums, cannot be examined without taking into consideration a paradigm recently introduced into the continent, that separates history from memory by passing materiality: intangible cultural heritage.

The museum parenthesis (from the 1960s to the 1990s)

Aside from some rare exceptions, it would appear that during the 1960s, the nationalised colonial museum did not constitute a melting pot for the development or expression of national identity. In fact, the very terms ‘nationalised colonial’ express the singularity of a situation in which the representations of the museums, articulated by the ethnographic “*mise à distance*” in a colonial context, were to become, by means of a political transmutation, constitutive of a national ideal. “There is no need to tropicalize the museum as its tropicalization is the cause of its crisis”, continued to write Tshikala K. Biaya at the end of the 1990s (Biaya 1999). The model of the ethnographic colonial museum encounters its first epistemological limit in its semantic impossibility to incarnate the Nation-State: neither as an element of identity construction nor in the representation of universality can it claim to be anything other than a remnant of the former state of domination.

Outside of a few rare exceptions, the newly nationalized museums of French Equatorial and French West Africa were established according to the same matrix, that of the *Institut français d’Afrique noire* (IFAN). Founded in 1936 by Théodore Monod, the central office in Dakar draws on a network of local centres. The IFAN museum was created in 1941.⁴ A few years later, following the wave of establishments of IFAN centres, the museums frequently termed “Art and popular tradition” (*Arts et traditions populaires*), often created out of the centres of craft production, were opened in most capitals and large African cities: in Abidjan (1945), in Lomé (1950), the “Soudan Museum” in Bamako (1953), in Douala and Maroua (1953), in Niamey (1959) etc. By default, the *Office de la recherche scientifique d’Outre-mer* (Orstom) accomplished the same mission à Libreville (Museum of Gabon, 1960) or Bangui (1959). The urgent need to document cultural facts and products, due to the rapid rate of “metamorphosis caused by the implementation of colonial projects” (Monod cited in Gaugue 1999), meant that these museums also performed the task of displaying colonial research politics. Their presentation both reflects and consolidates that of the metropolitan museums of ethnology, such as the *Musée de l’Homme*. This dual validating function established generic, typological categories (art, technique, ritual) for a long time to come. Generally provided with a rather vague ethnic denomination as part of a large category with imprecise boundaries, or, on the contrary, arbitrarily singularised on the basis of formal properties, to quote the expression of Ernest Renan, the objects put on display failed to create an entity unified by the “common possession of a rich heritage of memories”.

However, one might ask to which “above and beyond” of the colonial period should reference be made? All ethnicities could claim, as does V.Y. Mudimbe, and before him Cheik Anta Diop in his famous *Nations Nègres et Culture* (2009 [1954]), the right to be imagined as nations (Mudimbe 1994: 66), and for the most part, they are experienced as such, whether they predate colonial conquest or became a reality during that specific period (Amselle & M’Bokolo 1985). One can see both the necessity for new States to invoke them, whether in the form of temporally undetermined concepts – « tradition », « custom », « pre-colonial » (Galitzine-Loumpet : 2011 : 18-23) – as well as the necessity to control them, in as much as they are included in a larger framework, at the risk indeed of creating a voluntarily essentialized “negro” culture (*culture Nègre*) (Senghor 1967 : 9).

Off-site: Performance against the Museum

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the temporal continuity that had been broken down by the colonial museums was recreated through demonstrations of the performative aspects of African cultures - that is to say by showcasing a certain cultural vitality outside of the confines of the museum. The cultural festivals that multiplied throughout the provinces, celebrated the diversity that constitutes the nation, and participated in the elaboration of a supra-ethnic sentiment (Andrieu 2007: 89, Sow 2010), and in the legitimization of an “authentic” Nation-State as in the case of the Zaïre of Mobutu (White 2006: 46). On a larger scale, festivals celebrating the vitality of the African culture came to support pan-African ideologies from the *Négritude* of Senghor to the *Conscientism* of Nkrumah, or to the Bantu philosophy.

The most emblematic of these manifestations is without contest the world festival of Negro Arts, which took place in Dakar from the 1st to the 24th of April 1966, under the auspices of President Senghor. It was then a question of transforming « Art Nègre » into a political project and ontological affirmation, so as to « become once again producers of civilisation » (Senghor 1966a cited in Ficquet and Gallimardet 2009: 142), and thus reinvent a pan-African identity to incarnate, more than a territory, the idea of a Nation (Kipré 2005: 26). Other than a symposium on the “Function and Signification of Negro-African Art in the Life of the People, and by the People”, the festival also included an important exhibition entitled “Negro art: sources, evolution, expansion”, which gathered pieces from collections the world-over in a “Dynamic Museum” (*Musée dynamique*) devoted to non-permanent exhibitions – officially for security reasons, it was not presented in the museum of IFAN. Inaugurated on the 31st of March 1966, the museum called for by President Senghor displayed almost six hundred pieces selected by prestigious commissioners⁵. Beyond that, it introduced a modern museum culture for Africa in opposition to ethnographic perspectives (Ficquet and Gallimardet 2009: 152). This attempt to place the production of discourse in an alternative space lasted until 1977, when the school of dance, directed by Maurice Béjart, replaced the museum. Meanwhile, the exhibitions of internationally recognized European artists, from Kandinsky to Picasso,⁶ had demonstrated the contribution of African art to the Avant-gardes and to the great national narrative of European modernity, and helped define an African identity via an outside recognition of its quality. Ephemeraly reopened between 1982 and 1990 before becoming the seat of the Supreme Court, the “Dynamic Museum” was an attempt to integrate the ideal of the universal museum. In so doing, however, it formulated an enduring illusion about the capacity of African art to sublimate historical tensions by appearing as the unique incarnation of national cultural heritage. It also validated a distinction between art (exhibition) and craft (for sale, beyond the confines of the museum). Moreover, “craft” underwent a transformation during the independences, due to its proximity to museum spaces that in the long term contributed to a marginalisation of the museum.

The celebration of “living culture” promotes a know-how that incarnates the values of transmission. The colonial museums often arose from craft centres; the national museums that appeared in the colonial period hosted centres for craft production, either around or inside of the space of the museum itself. The most impressive example of the interpenetration between these two worlds is probably the National Museum of Niger at Niamey. Founded in 1958 by the archaeologist Pablo Toucet in the vicinity of the pavilion of an IFAN centre with the support of Boubou Hama, director of the centre and soon to be President of the National Assembly, the

museum was mandated to represent the multicultural nation, and in so doing, offered the added value of proving the virtue of colonial sciences. The entire development of the “national museum” is of interest: detached in 1965 from the IFAN centre— seven years after Nigerian independence -, and directed by Toucet until 1974, the museum currently includes a zoo, a botanical garden and “garden of the nations” (created in 1963), a craft centre and village (1960), a school for the training of the handicapped (1971), the mausoleum of the « tree of Ténéré », as well as nine pavilions housing collections. According to a chronology that bears witness to the progressive re-appropriation of the most ancient past, as well as the dependence of the museum on its partners: the ethnography pavilion “Boubou Hama” (previous collection of IFAN, 1959), the costume and music pavilion Pablo Toucet (1963), the rock art pavilion (1969-70), the palaeontology and prehistory pavilion (1970, CNRS), the pavilion of uranium (1985), and, finally, a pavilion of temporary exhibitions and a park of dinosaurs inaugurated in 1998 in collaboration with the National Museum of Natural History of Paris. It is difficult to elaborate an *a posteriori* definition for such an ensemble, if not to consider it as a « socio-cultural and natural puzzle » (Chaibou 2001: 47), or an « open air » museum. Statistics show that public interest is characterised by a desire for the depolarization of areas dedicated to the display of objects towards external activities, such as the zoo in the case of the Nigerian visitors, or spaces dedicated to craft for others.⁷ Laid out according to different zones organized according to the seniority of their artisans and vendors, who the case being, live on-site – the village, built in the interior of the museum for the artisans, counts more than 200 inhabitants today, these zones of artisanal practice are billeted as instances of national and ethnographical cultural heritage. Distinctions have nonetheless appeared over time, imposing a hierarchy between « objects of tradition » and « objects of tourism », the former not only acting as validation for the latter. Regardless, these categories remain permeable: the 21 silver “southern crosses” (“*Croix du Sud*”) were most likely almost entirely elaborated by Pablo Toucet before becoming an emblem of national unity and a symbol of Niger. The national imagination was in this way constructed by mirroring an imaginary for tourism (Bondaz 2009 : 366 et 368).

In all of these cases, no matter how odd these museum ensembles seem, the reinventions of “traditions” occurred during a period when the nation was building itself around the process of recomposition of an autonomous pan-Africa that pre-existed the colonial era. In line with the former descriptive categories, either by its own design or the inversion of discourse, the recomposed and decentralised museum space does not construct itself in reaction to a history subsumed in the dialectical relationship between African art, considered a “spokesperson” or “direct witness” of the common history of all of Africa (Jewsiewicki 1988: 1), and the idea of geological seniority, the “cradle for humanity”, that could escape the temporalities of modern man. It constructs itself against the recent past, notably absent from the museum space⁸, or present in a form that could only contribute to the maintenance of the inadequacy of the museum to the new Nation-State (Fig.1).



Figure 1: Musée IFAN de l'hôtel de ville de Douala (Cameroon) 1990 (Thirty years after Independence) Cameroon (cliché G. Loumpet)

The monument against the museum

Parallel to the festivals and the vast field of historical rewriting that occurred in scholarly manuals, the elaboration of a national identity also included monuments, considered here as all constructions that serve to present a historical element of national importance, or express a position on this subject. After the independences and from the middle of the 1980s, commemorative monuments and vernacular or colonial architecture were reinvested to express elements of a great narrative, staging precise or secular historical events such as slavery, for example. Due to their visibility and symbolic function, they act as places for memory or *lieux de mémoire*, but also as museum objects to scale of the national territory: they either substitute museums to signify history or in the case of museum buildings, the architecture represents an historical moment, thus allowing the container to take precedent over its content. This section of our article does not intend to provide a detailed analysis of museum architecture, a study that remains to be undertaken, but rather outlines some of the functions of their buildings in the post-independence context of elaborating a cultural heritage.

Generally speaking, the national museums of the sub-Saharan African capitals tend to either reuse all kinds of former colonial edifices like the ancient buildings of the French Marine at Libreville, for example, or locales from the IFAN centre in Abidjan. They often reemploy former sites of power, like the IFAN museum created in the ancient Palace of governors in Dakar, and the National costume museum in 1981 at Grand Bassam, the former capital of the Ivory Coast. In Cameroon, it was in the dilapidated residence of the German governor (known as the 'palace Hans Dominik' used until the end of the First World War) that the first national museum displayed different pieces – essentially statues and masks exhibited without clear classification. Prior to this, the general tourism delegation of Yaoundé substituted as a national museum, exposing objects of art and hosting the national celebration of the return of the royal ancestor's statues, *Afo-a-Kom*, stolen a decade beforehand and restituted in 1973 by the United States. This is the first instance of such an event in sub-Saharan Africa, marking the awakening of a conscience about national heritage. In November of 1988, the renovated headquarters of the French governors that had served as the presidential palace for the first president of Cameroon,

Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1960 to 1984, was reattributed to become the new national museum. Since 1991, the team in charge of the creation of the museum has been able to measure the symbolic importance of this consistently vandalised site, loaded with the ambivalent charge of memories that reflect the absence of political consensus over the recent history of the country (as illustrated by the fact that the remains of the president Ahidjo have never been repatriated from their exile in Dakar). Even today, it is still considered as the “ancient presidency”, and the national museum was never really able to erase its former function⁹. In a different context, the Museum that was housed in the same buildings as the residence of Marshal Mobutu was looted at the same time as the residential part, underlining the consequences of the over personalization of Great Narratives. As we will see further on, in different cases, this personalization appears as a characteristic of post-colonial great narrative building in West and Central Africa.

Inversely, the purpose built architecture of the national museums of Niger and Mali are a result of an adaptation of vernacular architecture, as is the case with many museums in Nigeria, from Jos to Kano. Since the creation of the first pavilion in 1959, the National Museum of Niger in Niamey has attempted to create a hypothetical syncretism by integrating a “wise combination of Hausa palatial architecture, the vaulted arches and arcades of Sahelian mosques and the domes of the Fatimid mosques (...) decorated with the geometrical motifs of the Zinder region » (Chaibou 2001 : 49) with the motifs of a transnational community, the Tuaregs, who pose problems for regional politics. The architectural style and colours used elaborate a metanarrative that unifies the representation of a nation that is fragmented throughout the various locations of the National Museum (Fig.2). It thus becomes a measure for the authenticity of the traditions put on display as well as the means to express the legitimacy of a supra-ethnic order. The pavilion is the first “object” to be exposed, to the detriment of its contents. In the eyes of the tourist it has progressively come to represent a tradition of the independent Nation-State, a recognition that has been generalised by the reuse of some of its architectural characteristics in urban spaces.¹⁰



Figure 2: National Museum of Niger *Musée National du Niger* (entrée principale)

The National Museum of Mali (<http://www.mnm-mali.org/>) in Bamako followed yet another path. Initially established in the classrooms of an engineering school, nationalised in 1960, the

museum was reinstalled in a neo-Sudanese styled building in 1982 (architect Jean-Loup Pivin), invented during colonial times and given the status of cultural heritage by the Malian State (Arnoldi 2006 : 66). In 2002, new buildings were added and renovated, notably a vast garden comprising small-scale reconstitutions of remarkable national monuments (the mosque of Djenné, for example). Presented as a local initiative and a collaborative effort with France, le museum nonetheless kept the traditional categories of Art in their organisation of the exhibitions: Archaeology / Ethnography (*Mali Millénaire*), technique (*Textiles du Mali*, 200 pieces), rituals (*Chefs d'œuvre d'Arts rituels*). Over the past few years, the most important transformation has consisted in the introduction of an exposition entitled “*Contemporary Africa*” (*Afrique contemporaine*) involving 82 pieces from continental artists but also artists from France, Tahiti and Australia¹¹. Although diverse, the temporary exhibitions privilege, as does the architecture of the building itself, the demonstration of a neo-tradition, modern and ahistorical.

Beyond the architecture of the museums themselves, the often composite architectures of family heritage, (*patrimoines familiaux*, Daavo 2001 : 73) royal palaces, community museums, cultural goods or sites susceptible of being classed as historical, can also come to be considered as part of the country’s cultural heritage. The dual process of musealizing culture and recognising it as heritage is directly linked to the convention on world heritage of 1972, as, for example, in the Palace of Abomey (classified in 1985 and again in 2007), with a total of 184 buildings spread out over 47 hectares. At the crossroads of “living” culture and local history, these cultural heritage sites broaden the field of what can be considered to be a “museum” by integrating the container and the content, building and ritual sites, signs and objects. Accordingly, these places constitute a spatial and memorial “in between” that is fundamental to their integration in the national narrative, and to the superposition of affective, national or regional cultural heritage (such as the program “The Slave Route” initiated by Unesco in 1994). Such ensembles are often central to issues tying together various local and national concerns, as vassal villages or new elites look to individualise their territory along lines that have progressively become standardised (Martineau 2009: 105) or in the context of renegotiating traditions that have been re-valourised by the gaze of the Other (Gérard 1999: 942).

The conflict surrounding places of historical importance is particularly significant in Gorée, characterized as an “island of memory” (Camara 2001: 83).¹² Several museums founded at different moments, of which at least two - the historic Museum of Senegal in Fort d’Estrées, inaugurated in 1989 by IFAN as the successor of the former historical museum of the A.O.F.; and the House of Slaves, a conjoint initiative of the world Festival of Negro Arts and its curator Boubacar Joseph Ndiaye, are engaged in a direct confrontation with each other (Gaugue 1999b). A place of memory more than a museum, the House of Slaves, receives far more visitors than the historical “western-style” museum, including many Heads of State. Its existence lead to the inclusion of Gorée in the world heritage site list in 1978, and a virtual tour is also available on the Unesco website (<http://webworld.unesco.org/goree/fr/visit.shtml>). Since 1996, the island’s exact function during the slave trade has been questioned by western journalists and scholars and paradoxically this has awakened a re-evaluation of the importance that it has been accorded not only to the grand national, but also to the grand global narrative. A vast memorial is currently in the works. (http://www.culture.gouv.sn/article.php?id_article=66).

Finally, commemorative monuments of the anticolonial resistance and the struggle for independence, or for African unity, erected in the centre of large urban spaces can be considered an important expression of great historical narratives. In Bamako, notably, Mary-Jo Arnoldi has analysed the ideological spaces created by such monuments since 1992 by the president Alpha Oumar Konaré (also the former president of ICOM), underlining their contribution to the marginalisation of museum spaces (Arnoldi 2003: 58). The integration of history in the city equally reflects the correlation between changes in the regime and reinventions in the great narrative - a political transformation in which the museum ironically provides the continuity of a stabilised “tradition” with limited impact on civil society. This situation clearly depends on the cultural policies of the Nation-State, which was for many years been active in excluding citizens in favour of the elite (Kipré 2005 : 29); however, it also seems to depend on a recent division of tasks, where the enactment of “tradition” is left to the communities, and the national museum is reserved as a place for visitors from outside of the nation. The dates given here must be considered indicative; as a matter of fact, since the 1980s, different currents have contributed in parallel to redefining the function of national museums or to the creation of new spaces.

A new stage for the great narrative

The museum has made reappearance on the national stage in the context of the renewal of great narratives. Several reasons explain this: the growing time lapse since the moment of independence, the contexts of democratization (following Mitterrand’s speech of La Baule in June 1990), and the alternation of political parties in power, not to mention the impact of programs of intergovernmental organisations (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOM, The French university Senghor in Alexandria), or others (West African Museum Programme), that have financed inventories, rehabilitated buildings, and trained museum staff. These new enterprises demonstrate the rise in power of cultural heritage in sub-Saharan Africa: capable of regenerating that unstable and exhausted first generation of great narratives, placing the universal within reach, a temptation that is all the more irresistible as it is the subject of great competition between different nation-states.

Several approaches to their analysis are possible, covering distinct aspects of the question: on the one hand there are the renewals or simply the new museums being created, and on the other hand, the emergence of new actors or partners. In the French-speaking countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the new personal implications of the heads of State (Chad, Senegal, Gabon) are emphasized, rather than the implementation of a veritable heritage policy, often left to the initiative of civil servants or citizens.

Renaming, rebuilding

The requalification of cultural resources induced by international conventions has lead many museums to change their name, as in the case of the National Museum of Abidjan. Founded by Bohumil Holas on behalf of the IFAN in 1945 and subject of a restructuring proposal that was never implemented by Jean Gabus in 1967 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000081/008119fo.pdf>), the museum considered a “National Museum” since 1972, became in 1994, the *Musée des civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire*. The substitution of the adjective “national” by the substantive “civilisations” in its plural form, shortly after the disappearance of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in December of 1994, and a few months after the reintroduction of the concept of

«ivority» (August 1995) is an interesting fact in and of itself. Employed as a synonym for community and ethnicity, it signifies a “new museum language”, according to Savané Yaya, former curator of the National Museum of Abidjan. It is not surprising that the rhetoric accords privilege to dialogue and diversity, breaking with “the reductive, particularizing, isolationist and static vision of Ivorian cultural heritage” explicitly understood as colonial¹³. In 2006, a “new vision” for the museum is again proposed by the exhibition “Cultural Identity and Cultural Mixity (*Identité culturelle et brassage des cultures*). It comprises five elements: archaeology, the socio-economic organisation of the Ivory Coast, the social and political organisation of “colonial times and times of traditional power” (“cult and spiritual objects”), and, finally, contemporary life.

In other cases, this rupture has been established by the affectation, or the construction, of new buildings. In Chad, the discovery of the Toumaï (*Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, 7 million years old) in 2001 by the Franco-Chadian Palaeoanthropological Mission, allowed for a renewal of the national narrative. The former narrative was essentially founded on the Sao civilisation, which integrated the tri-national area of Chad, Cameroon (where the majority of identified archaeological sites are located) and Nigeria. The importance of the notion of anteriority, the famous «cradle of humankind» - a title previously held by Ethiopia - was also favoured by the discovery and exploitation of new petroleum reserves, that provided the necessary means for the construction of a quadrangular building costing 12 billion francs CFA - the counterpart of the new national library. On the occasion of the inauguration of the new National museum, on the 5th of August 2010, the minister of Culture expressed himself in no uncertain terms as:

Very proud to be Chadian, a descendant of Toumaï (...) and of the country that is the cradle of humankind. Thanks to this historical discovery, our National Museum will become, no one will doubt it, the centre of Central Africa, if not the centre of the world. (<http://www.journaldutchad.com/article.php?aid=2053>)

The Ivorian and Chadian examples attest to a reappropriation of the museum that assigns it a conventional function— that is, to celebrate the glory of a Nation-State inscribed within specific territorial limits, and to eventually integrate ancient cultures related to broader territorial contexts.

The initiative of president Wade in Dakar claims a more radical ideological and symbolic rupture, without necessarily changing the rules of engagement. The Senegalese Head of State defines himself as the inventor of a «modern vision of African culture». His plan, presented as part of the category of «large-scale projects» on the government’s website¹⁴ is characterised by its monumentality. The cultural park, set in 10 hectares at the heart of the city, proposes the following “seven wonders”: the Grand National Theatre (1800 places, inaugurated in April 2011), the School of Architecture, the Archives and National Library, the House of Music, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Museum of Black Civilisations. The park is crowned by the square to African memory¹⁵ (a sculpture of the African continent and two pantheons of neoclassical inspiration inaugurated in 2009, still remain empty) and by the monument to African Renaissance, an imposing and controversial statue erected by North Korea in exchange for urban and agricultural lands. Celebrated as a statue taller than the Statue of Liberty, and destined to last 1200 years, politically the statue represents a call for the creation of the United States of Africa¹⁶.

Like other cultural institutions, the future Museum of Black civilisations (<http://www.gouv.sn/spip.php?article1073>), whose foundations were laid in December of 2011, is the work of the People’s Democratic Republic of China. This shift to new cultural partners in the

context of projects traditionally carried out with the help of the former colonial ruler is symbolic of the desired change (Fig.3). The plans for the Museum, officially conceived by the architect Pierre Goudiaby Atépa for President Wade, were at first set to integrate the former plans elaborated by the Brazilian architect Javier Ramirez for Léopold Sendar Senghor. Interpreted as a potential case of plagiarism, it became a polemic that was even brought to the attention of the Director General of Unesco.

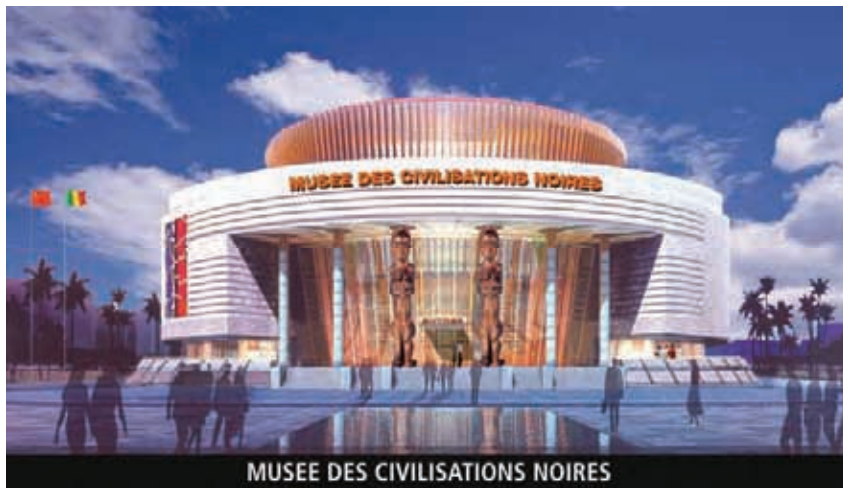


Figure 3: Previsualisation of the future Museum of Black civilisations, Dakar (http://www.culture.gouv.sn/article.php?id_article=50)

This detail underscores the dual character of this heritage construction related to national cultures but also to Senghor's push for a new pan-Africanism; indeed the latter's name and intentions are perpetually put forward to justify the project. In other words, it is a present-day monumentalisation of the achievements of the independence, a transmission of its heritage in stone, a way of catching up with the past and a means of reparation (Jewsiewicki 2004 : 8) From this perspective, the monumentality employed aims to demonstrate here within an African context, the criteria for "civilisation" that were elaborated elsewhere¹⁷. It is integrated into the great narrative through the association of the project with the political figure who initiated it, reinforced by the particular stature that is accorded to age in most African cultures. The game between the staging of national and African history, and between history and the commemoration of an emancipatory gesture is enough to give meaning to the project, and its content becomes less important than its existence. As in the case of the edification of the aforementioned pantheons, the collections of the future Museum of Black Civilisations have not yet been formed, but rather left to be defined at a later date by an international consulting commission. We will have to wait and see if this project will influence the great Senegalese narrative – and how the latter will adapt to the exhibition frame offered by China. The cultural park in itself exhibits a post-colonial situation, illustrating the strong influence of the past whose contestation here (in terms of cost, form, real functions, adequacy) paradoxically reinforces its hold.

Deplacing

The most important reconfigurations are due to the transformation of museum spaces, or to put it another way, to the renegotiation of their perimeters, brought about either by the State, or, on

the contrary, by various communities that appropriate for themselves a national narrative left, so to speak, vacant.

This is the case of so called “Community” museums, developed in West Cameroon over the past ten years, in line with traditional heritage practices, reinforced by the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Unesco 2003), and also know as treasures of chiefdoms, “*cases patrimoniales*”, or cultural centres. These museums can be micro-local, or identity-oriented, as in the example of a project initiated in 2005 by an Italian NGO, with the support of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI). Other than creating museums in collaboration with four important chiefdoms, the Italian initiative resulted in the sanctification of entire territories, proposing an “itinerary based on collective memory” to include woods and sacred springs (<http://www.museumcam.org/>). This follows the current trend to take into account and even to « monumentalize » natural resources as outlined in the 2003 convention on intangible heritage and the development of the notion of « cultural landscape » (for example « Ecosystem and cultural landscape of Lopé-Okanda » listed in 2007).

But these museums can also be the result of local and national initiatives as in the case of the Museum of Civilisation of Dschang, which was inaugurated in November of 2010 in partnership with the city of Nantes and the Pays de la Loire. The Museum of Civilisations appears as a synthesis, including a panorama that takes the visitor from the origins to present day Cameroon, and explores colonization and struggles for independence. The private community museum substitutes itself in this case to the Nation-State (“At issue here, is the reconstruction of the genesis of a State and of an independent Nation.” (*Il s’agit ici de retracer la genèse d’un Etat, puis d’une Nation à part entière*), <http://www.wobook.com/WBRM0od5m72h>). Incidentally it follows the same museological plan as the one elaborated by the National Museum of Cameroon (Loumpet & Loumpet-Galitzine 1991 et 1993). Its potential as a space for the creation of a counter-narrative remains unexploited as the cultural capital of the museum is rather used as part of the tourist agenda called *la Route des chefferies* (<http://www.routedeschefferies.com/fr/index.php>)¹⁸. This means that it is integrated into a project focused on local heritage that values the establishment of intercultural dialogue expressed through a discourse of apparent consensus. It is nonetheless the only museum to deal with the question of the recent past on a national scale and significantly it is located in a region of political opposition. Although this fact does not presuppose a particular political orientation for the museum, it does underline the displacement of the great narrative of the national museum, and, in so doing, its absence in the state museum. Additionally, the legitimisation of this undertaking does not come from the nation state and refers rather to conventions or agreements with major European museums, as shown through the programme of collaboration established between the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris) and the Museum of Civilisation.

The last example attests to yet another form of relocation. The Virtual National Museum of Gabon (<http://www.gabonart.com/visites-virtuelles/musee-virtuel-des-arts-et-traditions>)¹⁹ was inaugurated in November of 2006. Describing Gabon as the “the first country in the world to have created its one virtual museum of arts and traditions” it is presented as the wish of the deceased president Omar Bongo Odimba. The museum offers the following collections: objects digitalized in 3 D, sound and audio-visual archives taken from the Museum of Arts and Traditions of Gabon at Libreville, and from private collections. As such, the collection largely

surpasses the Museum of Arts and Traditions of Gabon, founded in 1960 by researchers of Orstom, at the insistence of the Gabonese president Léon Mba. The museum did not gain national status until 1975 (Perrois 1999: 348) and is situated in the building that houses the headquarters of Elf-Gabon.

The Virtual Museum of Arts and Traditions of Gabon merits comprehensive study, for its form – the use of a predicate of modernity – and everything from the elements chosen for the collection, the discourse that surrounds these objects and a presentation of contradictory and partial data seemingly indifferent to scientific concerns, invoke all of the presuppositions of the “Africa of the ancestors and mysteries, of authenticity and of purity” (« *l’Afrique des ancêtres et des mystères, de l’authenticité et de la pureté* »). Even the presenter, a young “metis” woman who speaks Parisian French is named *Owali*, (her real name, Christiane, appears to be less exotic). The exhibition conforms surprisingly with colonial representations and is divided into five sections: Origins, Archaeology, the Ritual Room, the Cult of the Ancestors, and Daily life, a fact that is all the more significant when considered in parallel with the development of a heritage attitude to the ecosystem of the great equatorial forest and cultural productions.



Figure 4: <http://www.gabonart.com/visites-virtuelles/musee-virtuel-des-arts-et-traditions>

As interesting as this attempt to deterritorialize the museum is, the virtual museum that Gabon is so proud of, presents some particular problems. The first is the exact status of the museum: is it a virtual museum designed to mirror the visit to a real museum or a new objet, essentially destined for external visitors? Or, more precisely, are we faced with a new “musée imaginaire”, in the sense of Malraux, transforming and adapting new forms of auto-representation and affirming modernity?

Above and beyond its evident function as a display case, the museum articulates a precise message employing the terms of Unesco. In the section that precedes the visit (but which is not obligatory), entitled “Why such a museum?”, a state official concludes that:

“Our ambition, moreover, our hope, is that thanks to cyberculture, Gabon will be able to receive in return, and in numerical form, the historic collections of the Gabonese cultural heritage that have been dispersed throughout the different collections of the world, to create the right to a cultural memory for our children and for ourselves ».

In fact, the “right to cultural memory” that is at once irrefutable and ambiguous is to be understood in the context of a long history of denial. Hence, the second comment draws on the transformation of conflicts surrounding the restitution of collections: the proposal to return the art works in numerical form is a positive initiative that aims to settle an unbalanced and often tense situation between the African States and the intergovernmental agencies concerned. Though the terms implicitly attribute guilt, they also show a good will that is difficult to ignore. But what or whose memory and what tradition are they referring to? The notion of the object and art has in itself been modified: in the different sections of the visit, the objects, constantly estheticized, are presented without information about scale or dimension, and in most cases, are vastly over-proportioned, with bracelets appear as large as tambourines, biface stone tools that are 25 times their original size etc.

In the same manner, audio-visual documentary sources that mix images of ethnographic studies from scientific fieldwork with often-problematic reconstitutions of traditional practices are always idealized and difficult to differentiate for an untrained eye. Finally, the aesthetic value of these numerically reproduced objects, largely dependent on the foreign collections to which they belong, calls once again into question the modes of selection and representation. This field of investigation is particularly interesting, providing opportunities to rethink such notions as authenticity, the function of the museum and its territories - that is to say their numeric and physical non-realities (*dé-réalité*).

On the whole, these new museographical constellations bring to light considerable re-compositions: from the great national narrative as a traditional prerogative of State run institutions to these different projects that, either through their presidential backing, or their dependence on community or individual initiatives, allow us to rethink the relationship between institutional norms and their political/ethical translations, both local and international. In this perspective, the continuity of cultural heritage policies is not necessarily guaranteed: they are on the contrary characterised by the fact that they are constantly being renegotiated, through their inclusion, undoubtedly essential, of the cultural heritage programs of international agencies, reinterpreted according to the needs of local politics.

Conclusion: A necessarily unattainable consensus?

The unattainable character of any consensus in the relationship that unites the museum and the great narrative that was offered as a question in the title of this article, can be affirmed in the case of the former French African countries as examined here. The result of an incompleteness and inadequacy on both sides, arising from distinct issues, expressed through modalities of absence, of repetition and of inversion and influenced by varying experiences of temporality in dealing with the weight of a difficult past that is still only too present. On the one hand, the great narratives that nurture the constitution of the national self still require recognition in the mirror of the West. On the other hand, the museum as an inherited institution with its rigid structures, exhibits an arbitrary and fragmentary image of national cultures in the context of incomplete ethnographic paradigms or a multiculturalism still struggling with the ambivalent power of ethnicity. Seen from this perspective, the relationship is always necessarily biased, always potentially alienating. Equally it points to the limits of an African art privileged in place of, or against, history: a situation that the African museums will find it difficult time to disengage from;

all the more so as it is exactly the situation that is valued in the West as a means of bypassing anthropological perspectives – as the value and essence of an African ethos.

However, if the process of defining cultural heritage is the result of a misunderstanding, of an “ontological trap” (Jeudy 1990 : 7), this unattainable consensus is most likely also the bearer of a certain margin of positive indefinability. Necessarily impossible, it allows for the chance to come back to certain issues at some future point, more especially perhaps due to the increasing influence of the notion of intangible heritage, problematic in moral terms, it may be able to bring together the various parties involved. Yet, and this is not as paradoxical as it might appear, especially in this particular context, it also attests to the production of a « meta-culture » of heritage that is progressively erasing the need for a consensus in the form of a great narrative of the national museum and even of the very notion of the nation.

Notes

- 1 See notably <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20111115-autorites-decident-finalement-ouvrir-musee-senghor-maison-ancien-president>, <http://www.senface.com/blogs/225/musee-senghor-de-wade-les-reactions>, <http://www.slateafrique.com/68263/senegal-le-musee-des-polemiques-senghor> which evoke “the true spirit of Senghor and its cultural goods » (A. Lamine Sall, Nov. 15, 2011)
- 2 <http://www.louvre.fr/expositions/le-louvre-invite-j-m-g-le-clezio-%E2%80%93-le-musee-monde>. See equally « Invasion ou invitation ? » : <http://videos.tf1.fr/jt-we/le-clezio-expose-l-artisanat-au-louvre-forme-a-part-entiere-d-art-6809556.html>
- 3 Notably the exposition *Magiciens de la Terre* (Grand Hall of la Villette / Centre Georges Pompidou 1989)
- 4 But opened to the public in 1966.
- 5 Including Georges-Henri Rivière, Pierre Mauzé, Alexandre Adandé or Engelberg Mveng
- 6 Kandinsky et Miro (1970), Chagall (1971), Picasso (1972), Hundertwasser (1973), Soulages (1974) ou Manessier (1976)
- 7 In 2009, a museum survey presented the hierarchy of frequentation in the following manner: the hippopotamus’ basin, the pavilion of costume, the monkey cage, the pavilion of palaeontology and prehistory (Chaïbou 2001: 54-56). Not included in the survey, craft is presented by the same curator as a response to “the principal mission of the National Museum of Niger, that consists in reaffirming national unity and erecting a cultural Nigerian identity.” (Chaïbou 2001: 52)
- 8 According to the findings of Anne Gaugue in her thesis work in geography, of the 217 museums identified in « tropical Africa » (all of Africa with the exception of South Africa, Ethiopia and the insular microstates), 30 presented exhibitions dealing with historical content and only three spoke of colonial history (Gaugue 1997, 1999 : 337).
- 9 The project of the Cameroon Museum, open to an international call for proposals, was awarded to Germain Loumpet and Alexandra Galitzine-Loumpet in 1992. A commission t worked for its realisation between 1992 and 2001. The reasons for its failure, too long to discuss here, are notably related to political tensions .
- 10 The guide of the National Museum of Niger, published by the Minister of National Education in 1975, displays one of these motifs on its cover.
- 11 http://www.mnm-mali.org/page_expositions.html
- 12 <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/26>. The island of Gorée has been classified as historic site since 1944.
- 13 <http://www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=3091>
- 14 <http://www.gouv.sn/spip.php?article1073> see also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1O1wNsfmaM>
- 15 Here again, lexical and theoretical fields are significant: http://www.culture.gouv.sn/article.php3?id_article=53
- 16 http://www.culture.gouv.sn/article.php3?id_article=57 et <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbLXplepoxw>
- 17 For an idea of its monumentality <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BriT32LdUGA&feature=related>.
- 18 President Wade reacted to the critiques of the gigantic scale of the monument of African Renaissance in the following manner: « What was I to do, erect a small statue? The Statue of Liberty, is it excessive? The Christ our Saviour that looks over Rio, is it megalomaniacal? Do we ask ourselves why the Egyptians constructed the Sphinx? ». See also Mudimbe & Jewsiewicki (1990) for the paradoxical reproduction of “a culture of imperialism”.
- 18 Pour l’inscription de musées sur les sites web, voir Fauvelle-Aymar (2002) et Cafuri (2004)

- ¹⁹ The virtual Museum of Arts and Traditions of Gabon was realized by the french enterprise Novacom Inc., on the basis of collections from the National Museum of Libreville, and from private collections (Gérard Boyer, Pierre Amrouche) or French public collections (Musée de l'Homme, d'Aquitaine..) as well as Swiss (Neuchâtel) and the expertise of Gabonese museologists and historians.

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Eunamus – the project

European National Museums: Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen

EuNaMus research project explores the creation and power of the heritage created and presented by European national museums. The focus in our project is on understanding the conditions for using the past in negotiations that recreate citizenship as well as the layers of territorial belonging beyond the actual nation-state.

This project is one of the few humanistic projects supported by the Seventh Framework Programme, run by the European Commission. It has grown out of collaboration between university partners connecting starting with a network of young and senior cultural researchers supported by the Marie Curie programme, and will for three years (2010–2013) proceed by a series of investigations beyond the stereotypical ideas of museums as either a result of outstanding heroic individuals, exponents of a materialization of pure Enlightenment ideas or outright ideological nationalistic constructs disciplining citizens into obedience.

The research is pursued through multi-disciplinary collaboration between eight leading institutions and a series of sub-projects studying institutional path dependencies, the handling of conflicts, modes of representation, cultural policy and visitors' experiences in national museums.

Understanding the cultural force of national museums will provide citizens, professionals and policy makers with reflexive tools to better communicate and create an understanding of diversity and community in developing cultural underpinning for democratic governance.

The major results will be available via Open Access, but a series of books will also come out of the efforts. The best way to keep up is to follow www.eunamus.eu.

Areas of research:

Mapping and framing institutions 1750-2010: national museums interacting with nation-making
Uses of the past: narrating the nation and negotiating conflict
The museology of Europe: the language of art, the local nation and the virtual Europe
Museum policies 1990-2010: negotiating political and professional utopia
Museum citizens: audience identities and experiences
National museums, history and a changing Europe

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This collection of conference papers examines the different narratives that museums have, since the beginning of the nineteenth century and up until the present day, developed as monuments to and of national histories. The aim has been to identify how narratives and their impact might have changed over time and more particularly how this can contribute to our understanding of how they might be changing today. The expression “great historical narratives” was chosen to avoid being tied down to the more ideologically specific defined notions “grand” and “master” narratives. Indeed, the perspective of these conferences was to consider the principles that have allowed the national museum to coherently present great histories in a literal sense – vast and spanning major chronological and geographical subjects. The collection places emphasis on the idea that narratives of the past are accounts based on the diversity of materials or factual sources used to illustrate them, constrained by conventions that bestow particular values or meaning upon them.

It is produced within the three-year research programme EuNaMus – European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, coordinated at Tema Q at Linköping University (www.eunamus.eu). EuNaMus explores the creation and power of the heritage created and presented by European national museums to the world, Europe and its states, as an unsurpassable institution in contemporary society. National museums are defined and explored as processes of institutionalized negotiations where material collections and displays make claims and are recognized as articulating and representing national values and realities. Questions asked in the project are why, by whom, when, with what material, with what result and future possibilities are these museums shaped.

The collection is based on the presentations made by researchers that came together from across Europe during two separate events organised by EuNaMus directed by Dominique Poulot at the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne: Great historical narratives in European museums (1750-2010): Building National, Looking across Borders and Remembering the Past, Paris, Institut national d’histoire de l’art, 29th of June to the 1st of July, 2011; Great historical narratives in Europe’s National Museums, CRRMF, Louvre and Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris, 25th and 26th of November 2011.

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