

MeLa

ISSUE
#07

news

→ DON'T MISS IN THIS ISSUE

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An excerpt from the dissemination of "Impressions d'Afrique", the MK performance organised by Routes Agency in cooperation with the MeLa Project at Museo "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome.

→ FOCUS ON

One of the tasks of the MeLa Project is based on the individuation and the analysis of effective and innovative museological and museographical practices, which could foster the evolution of contemporary museums in offering a multi-vocal presentation of the contents, encouraging inter-cultural dialogue and becoming more inclusive social agents. The related outcomes of the first desk and field research phase, developed with a multi-disciplinary approach and organised through the work of the different Research Fields, are reported on the series of MeLa Books, offering a wide perspective on the state of the art and illustrating a long list of paradigmatic case studies. These open-access digital publications are available on the Project's website; you can find the link to the page specifically dedicated to the MeLa Book Series in the homepage, as well as in the "Documents" section. The number of the books and documents available for download is constantly growing: eight publications are already online, and new books will be uploaded in September. Among the latest publications,

the proceedings of the MeLa RF01 International Conference, promoted by Newcastle University, and the results of the Open Call for the requalification of the lobby of the MACBA Study Center, which was launched within the framework of the MeLa "Research by Design" Actions. These curatorial and design activities are aimed at supporting and fostering the experimentation of original practices and tools, which could stimulate different readings of the narrations, open up new points of view on the collections and foster the active participation of a multi-cultural audience. Within this framework, the MeLa Project has already sustained and promoted the realisation of different experimental events. This Newsletter issue presents a performance at the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome, organised by Routes Agency and intended as an instrument to offer a post-colonial perspective on the ethnographic heritage of the museum, and the display of the travelling exhibition "The Memory of the Sea" at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea

in Bergamo, which the curator Anna Chiara Cimoli complemented with a stimulating public workshop, offering to all the visitors the possibility to experience inter-cultural dialogue based on the memory of travel and catalysed by personal "migrating objects". The outcomes of all the experimental practices promoted within the MeLa Project in the last months will be reported in a new MeLa Book, due in late Winter. An important overview on the research activities carried out by the MeLa Project in the last two years will be offered by the Midterm Seminar, a public conference promoted in cooperation with the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, which will take place in Paris on September 24th. This important event will gather the MeLa researchers together with the directors and curators from a selection of European museums, and will provide the opportunity to debate about the most innovative practices that are being experimented or planned in order to potentiate the role of contemporary museums for the multi-cultural audiences of this "age of migrations".

Experiencing MeLa Actions at GAMEc - Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo. An Exhibition and a Speed-Dating Session to Foster the Inter-Cultural Dialogue About the Memory of the Travel



The travelling exhibition "The Memory of the Sea. Objects Migrating within the Mediterranean" started its journey on December 2012 at the Museo Nazionale Preistorico

sea, belonging to the natural world as well as traces of migration towards Europe; for many years he has gathered, assembled and organised them into artistic compositions,

by the short film "Il postino del Mediterraneo" by Kami Fares and Giulia Ardizzone.

In its presentation at the GAMEc, the exhibition was complemented by a public workshop, "Migrating Objects. Dialogues on the memory of the journey". The format of the event was borrowed from speed-dating: each participant was asked to bring along a personal object evoking an important journey (in space, in time or through a personal, affective or professional experience), and to share it with the other visitors through brief but intense face-to-face meetings. The protagonists of the event were the migrants cooperating with the Gallery as cultural mediators, who shared personal travel stories connected to their own objects; yet, all the participants were asked to speak and listen, in turn – everyone, in fact, has got a story to tell, as well as material or immaterial objects linked to a particular journey. Neither about exoticism nor folklore, this experience was intended to create a space to meet and let

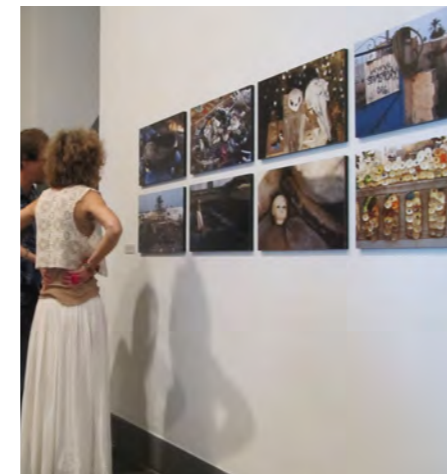
the dynamics of face-to-face meetings can catalyse inter-cultural conversations among diverse people, mediated by their objects and the memories they bear

Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome, where it was inaugurated within the frame of the [S]oggetti Migrati Project; in February 2013 it proceeded at the Galata Museo del Mare in Genoa, and in July 2013 it finally reached the GAMEc - Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo.

The initiative, curated by Anna Chiara Cimoli and promoted within the MeLa Research Field 05, is meant to present the *Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer*, a private museum located in Zarzis, a coastal town in southeastern Tunisia. In this place, where many currents meet, the "eco-artist" Mohsen Lihidheb has been collecting the objects brought by the

claiming the right to take care of them and to transform them through time. Exhibited in the inner garden of Mohsen's house, these objects represent an innovative form of resistance to oblivion and an expression of compassion towards the migrants who leave their things behind during their travels towards new lands (and, hopefully, chances and possibilities).

The experience of the *Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer* in Zarzis is narrated through the pictures taken by the photographers Alessandro Brasile (<http://www.alessandrobrasile.com>) and Mattia Insolera (<http://www.mattiainsolera.net>), accompanied



oneself be met in an informal way around something that is shared by everybody (this is, travelling, in its different forms). These private talks allowed everyone to meet people behind their roles, exchange stories, impressions and reflections, and finally debate about migrations, memory and identity.

Furthermore, the objects bearing these memories have been displayed in the museum's room throughout the entire afternoon. This sort of pop-up collection, together with the talks triggered by the "migrating objects", expanded the contents of the exhibition and allowed the participants to personally experience inter-cultural dialogue.

Anna Chiara Cimoli, Politecnico di Milano



Furthering MeLa Actions at Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome. A Performance and a Talk to Rethink the Museum Space with a Different Approach to Vision

In the last months, the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" in Rome has been the setting of several important experimental practices aimed at redefining the role of ethnographic museums. In the sequel of the events promoted after the [S]oggetti Migranti Project, on May 24th and 25th Routes Agency organised a performance, "Impressions d'Afrique", and a discussion panel, "Performing the ethnographic museum", supported by the MeLa Project and aimed at triggering the rethinking of the museum space with a different approach to vision.

characters moved in a precise sequence: a woman destined to sacrifice, a marines squad, and finally a group of warrior with an expertise in hypnosis techniques. The MK performance was aimed at offering a different interpretation of the space of the ethnographic museum, thus stimulating its re-activation through a new critical approach.

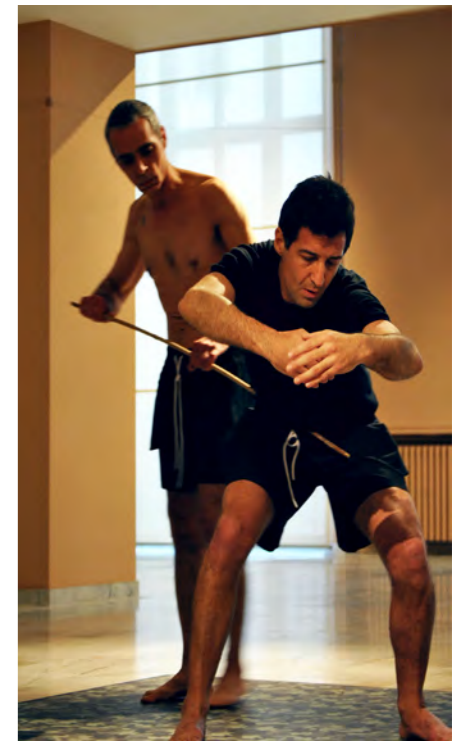
A further illustration of the meaning of this initiative can be found in the article recently published by the online journal Visual Ethnography ("What dust will rise? Il museo sotto assedio, o in esodo", avail-

the re-vision and the re-activation of ethnographic museums can be stimulated through new forms of interactions with the collections

The performance was promoted by the dance company MK, which already cooperates with the Routes Agency within the Idee Migranti initiative.

"Impressions d'Afrique" is based on the interaction of five characters from the homonymous novel by Raymond Roussel. The performance took place in a marginal area of the museum, not dedicated to exhibition rather to temporary collective activities, where the stage was set through few simple elements: a carpet, defining the dance area, and a transparent curtain, delimitating the backstage – which was not meant to be hidden, rather to take part to the performance by showing the moments of the preparation and concentration. Also the large and attentive public, freely gathering around the performers, contributed to shape the dance scene, where the

able at www.vejournal.org), authored by Giulia Grechi, member of the Routes Agency and one of the curators of the event. She states that "The Museum can resist to the various death sentences which have been declared, and can explore innovative vital and dynamic spaces, provided that it accepts to be opened and to go through a renovation. It has to be "healed", in order to maintain those social functions which may be extremely useful in this historic moment, when the need for a revision of the cultural discourses about citizenship and the construction of a serious cultural mediation is crucial and urgent." Among the others, especially ethnographic museums are experimenting new approaches in relation to exhibiting and curating, in order to define new forms of interaction with the collections. Performances are one



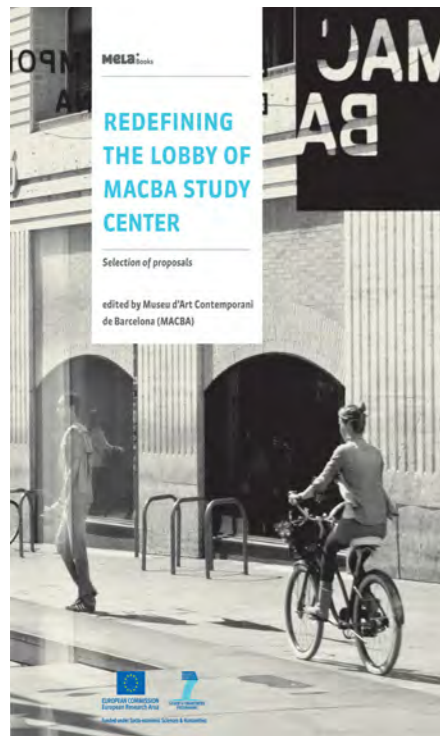
of the instruments which may be used to activate new dynamics within the museum spaces, because they offer the possibility to establish a dialogue with the displayed objects and the public.

In December 2012, MK had already presented at the Museo Pigorini the performance "Four colonial dances seen at close range", as part of the project Crossing Bodies – Immaginari postcoloniali, curated by Routes Agency within the Idee Migranti initiative. These choreographic tales put on the scene colonial gestures and postures. The performance took place in the space at the entrance of the exhibition areas, so that the dancers would interrupt and interact with the usual fluxes of the museum visitors. The characters, moving individually, tried to construct cross references between the bodies and the objects.

Giulia Grechi advances that, in this way "the objects may even be liberated from their overwhelming objectivity in the showcases, and become, as Marx would say, 'substantially supersensitive things', so that they almost start to dance." Performances thus allow to rethink the contemporary museum in a post-colonial perspective, opening up to other narrations, which can be more inclusive and able to activate the body of the visitors.



Michela Bassanelli, Politecnico di Milano



MeLa Book 09: Redefining the Lobby of MACBA Study Center. The Report of the Main Outcomes and a Selection of Proposals

One of the main purposes of museum archives and libraries is to make the knowledge contained in their documentary collections available to the public. For this transmission to be effective, it must take place in an appropriate environment, its design going beyond sites traditionally devoted to document consultation and exhibition. Accordingly, it is important to consider the role that the architecture of such sites and their visibility from the exterior play in leading the public to them, and in users' sensory and cognitive experience of them. The call for proposals for the redefinition of the lobby of MACBA Study Center, launched in June 2011 as part of the experimental design practices promoted by the MeLa Project, was aimed at finding creative solutions and reflecting on this con-

cern. The submitted projects, based on the study of successful cases of user-friendly and multi-purpose spaces, focused on improving both access to documentary resources at the Study Center and the integration of the facility into the overall MACBA complex. This book presents a selection of the proposed projects, in particular those which best responded to the desire to promote documentary heritage and provide a flexible space that facilitates interaction with the public.

With contributions by: Bartomeu Marí, Isabel Bachs, Mela Dávila Freire and Gennaro Postiglione.

The book, which is available in English, Spanish and Catalan, can be accessed and downloaded on the MeLa website: <http://www.mela-project.eu/publications/1083>.



MeLa Book 08: "Placing" Europe in the Museum: People(s), Places, Identities. The Proceedings from the First MeLa International Conference

The book reports the proceedings of the MeLa International Conference "Placing Europe in the Museum: People(s), Places, Identities", held at Newcastle University on 3-4 September 2012. This was the first in a series of events intended to complement and inform research within the context of the MeLa Project. The papers relate to the topics investigated by the MeLa Research Field 01, which focuses on Museums and Identity in History and Contemporaneity, and is aimed at developing policy-relevant arguments concerning the cultural significance of place within museum representations for questions of contemporary European identities and notions of citizenship. The essays

outline a number of interrogative trajectories, triggering innovative considerations about the different forms and discourses of identity, and the ability of the museums in dealing with the tensions between ideas and experiences of solidarity, shared history and belonging.

With contribution by: Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, Tomasz Maslanka, Michal Luczewski, Christine Cadot, Roxana Adina Huma, Elisabeth Tietmeyer, Baris Ülker, Kylea Little, Francesca Lanz, Michelle More, Sonja Kmec.

The book is online on the MeLa website at: <http://www.mela-project.eu/publications/1065>.

→ ME LA PARTNERS: NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Newcastle University is a research-intensive institution with a global reputation for academic excellence, focusing on the creation and the dissemination of knowledge, developing research and teaching activities, as well as engagement in national and international strategic initiatives in cooperation with a wide range of partners. According to the influential professional publication Research Fortnight, it is ranked among the top 20 higher education institutions in the United Kingdom in terms of research power; in the latest Research Assessment Exercise, RAE 2008, at least half of its research was rated as world-leading or internationally excellent. University of Newcastle, which has one of the largest European Union research portfolios, is also a member of the Russell Group, comprising 20 leading research institutions in the United Kingdom.

In order to promote interdisciplinary research, the University has established a range of internationally renowned research institutes.

The International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University is a leading academic centre for research and teaching in museum, gallery and heritage studies. Internationally renowned for high quality professional training, research and consultancy, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies seeks to foster improved professional practice within the sector on regional, national and international levels, by enhancing the understanding of museums, galleries and cultural and natural heritage organisations and by developing awareness of their histories, representations and management, as well as their roles within society.

The Future of Ethnographic Museums. An Insight on the RIME Final Conference in Oxford

The conference "The Future of Ethnographic Museums", held at Keble College, University of Oxford and Pitt Rivers Museum from 19th to 21st July, was the last event organized within the framework of RIME Réseau International Musées d'Ethnographie, a EU-funded project bringing together researchers and museum professionals from ten major European museums of ethnography and world cultures, aimed at rethinking their role in an increasingly global and multicultural world. Among the speakers, Professor James Clifford analysed what he called postethnographic museums, which are dealing with two complementary issues. On the one hand, decolonization, the burden of colonial history and the political pressures related to the multicultural context; on the other, the spread of globalization, migrations and interconnectedness. Cross-disciplinarity, aesthetics, contemporary indigenous art, collaborative policies with indigenous

wing parties, as well as the cosmopolitanist ideal aimed at attracting international minded audiences worldwide. Consequently, ethnography museums now have to tackle urgent problems such as islamophobia and the fear of multiculturalism. Nicolas Thomas discussed about the discrepancy between collections and current local communities, highlighting the cross-disciplinarity of museums and the link between ethnography and world cultures. Ruth Phillips talked about the process of decolonizing collections of the last two decades and the current danger of recolonization, underlining the importance of multivocality in historical narrations. Annie Coombs interpreted some collaborative projects within different community peace museums in Kenya as a tool to promote peace and reconciliation, and focused on how ethnographic collections can be at the same time the "reinvention of local ethnicities" and "part of a shared cross-cultural heritage". Corinne Kratz highlighted the cross-disciplinarity of ethnography museums and presented different examples of ethnographic exhibitions in history or art museums, whereas Kavita Singh, through a worldwide analysis of current new museums in China, Arabic Gulf, India, stated that the future of museums is ethnographic. Claire Harris discussed about the possibilities of digitalization of museums collections, from virtual repatriation to virtual museum, which reshape geographical boundaries and create transnational audiences.

re-shaping traditional ethnographic approaches through the fostering of cross-disciplinarity, multi-vocality and cross-cultural translation

communities, distant source communities and migrants, have been reshaping traditional ethnographic approaches. He highlighted the role of ethnographic museums as "predicament of cross-cultural translation" and mentioned the Museum of Anthropology of British Columbia and the Humboldt project in Berlin as noteworthy case studies. Sharon Macdonald and Wayne Modest sketched the contemporary political scenario, characterized by the return of nationalisms in Europe and the rise of right-

The last panel engaged a lively debate with the public about the future of ethnographic museums, from their entanglement in power relations and political agendas, to their link to colonial history, to their ethical aim of realizing policies of inclusion, to their commitment to be cross-cultural translation, and to their "task of conviviality", as Clifford called for.

Camilla Pagani, Université Paris Est Creteil

The Inauguration of the MuCEM in Marseille

This year is being a very important moment for the city of Marseille, which is the current European Capital of Culture. One of the recent pivotal events is the opening of MuCEM Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, the national museum dedicated to the cultures of the Mediterranean. The institution, inaugurated on June 4th, is the relocation of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, previously situated in Paris. The collections have been transferred into a new building – a 30,000 m² site designed by architect Rudi Ricciotti – in the Old Port of Marseille, and re-

organized in order to offer a comparative and multidisciplinary perspective on the civilizations living and meeting in the Mediterranean. The mission of the museum focuses on the narration of their history, societies and heritage, as well as on the exploration of their connections and frictions. On 5th - 7th December 2013, MuCEM will host an International Conference investigating the theme "Exhibition or inhibition: The museum in the modern world", to debate about risks, responsibilities and inquiries of museums in the creation and transmission of knowledge about present societies.

Jones, Ian, Eric Sandweiss, Marlen Mouliou, and Chet Orloff, eds. 2012. *Our Greatest Artefact: The City Essays on cities and museums about them*. Istanbul: CAMOC.

The publication consists of a selection of papers presented during the latest conferences promoted by CAMOC – the ICOM's International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities – which took place in Istanbul ("Collecting urban history in the electronic age", 2009), Shanghai ("Better City, Better Life", 2010) and Berlin ("Participative Strategies in Capturing the Changing Urban World", 2011).

The book includes 13 essays by scholars and practitioners from various countries across the world, offering different perspectives on the changes of cities and on the way city museums react to them. The contributions encompass reflections about recent urban transformations, affecting the social system as well as urbanistic and architectural structures, the use of new information and communication technologies, the development of contemporary art practices, the city museums' role, evolution and possibilities in such a changing scenario. One of the most common matter of reflection, that seems to run through all the contributions, is the implementation of new practices toward the representation, inclusion and engagement with new and settled citizens, urban communities, migrants and new publics, in a context where city's identity(s) are shifting, changing and multiplying.

Altogether, the book provides a somewhat heterogeneous food for thought on the topic. Its variety ensues from the three different calls related with the above mentioned conferences, and proves how rich, stimulating and at the same time open and in progress, is the debate on contemporary city museums in an urban context deeply influenced by the conditions posed by what the MeLa Project defines as "an age of migrations."



Our Greatest Artefact: the City
Essays on cities and museums about them

Let the Museum Speak. European Museums in an Age of Migrations.

Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, Paris: September 24th, 2013

On September 24th, the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration will host the MeLa Midterm Seminar. This event represents an important milestone for the MeLa Project: it is meant to illustrate the main findings that the MeLa Partners have explored so far, as well as to produce further stimuli to foster the next phases of the research, through the presentation of paradigmatic experiences from several European museums, which are experimenting or planning innovative practices for the engagement with the current socio-cultural context. Focusing on the transformation of the contemporary museums, the Seminar aims at stimulating considerations and exchanges about the innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of this "an age of migrations", characterized by intensive migration flows, the political, economical and cultural process of creation and consolidation of the European Union, and the consequent augment of cultural encounters and cross-fertilization opportunities.

The morning session of the Seminar will be dedicated to the dissemination of the preliminary results of the research activities developed so far within the MeLa Project, reported by the principal investigators from the MeLa Research Fields 01, 02, 03 and 04.

The afternoon programme will be articulated in two sessions, dedicated to the presentation of different European museums that have been selected for the interesting and pioneering initiatives they are promoting, which will be presented by their curators and directors. In particular, the first session will be dedicated to practices that have already been implemented, and is thus meant to report and evaluate findings and results; the second will focus on the future strategies which some new or renovated major museums are planning to actualize, and is intended to envision further questions and perspectives.

We report here the preliminary programme of the Seminar. You can find out further information on the MeLa website and blog.

→ 9.30-12.30: REFLECTING ON MUSEUMS IN AN "AGE OF MIGRATIONS"

Chris Whitehead, The International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University

Iain Chambers, Human and Social Sciences Department, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"

Perla Innocenti, History of Art, School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow

Ruth Noack, Department of Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art

→ 14.00-16.00: SHARING EXPERIENCES

Catherine Ross, Museum of London, United Kingdom

Hélène du Mazaubrun, Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, Paris, France

Alexandre Delarge, Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France

Christoph Bongert, Deutsches Auswandererhaus Bremerhaven, Germany

→ 16.00-18.30 LOOKING FORWARD

Cécile Aufaure, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France

Bambi Ceuppens, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

Peter Bjerregaard, Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, Norway

Angela Jannelli, Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Germany

Denis Chevallier, Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille, France

→ MELA RELATED FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Conference:

ICOM 23rd General Conference
10-17 August 2013
Ciudade das Artes | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Conference:

Multiculturalism, Conflict and Belonging. A Diversity and Recognition Project
1-3 September 2013
Mansfield College | Oxford, United Kingdom

Conference:

Final conference of the LEM Project
19-20 September 2013
Istituto Beni Culturali | Bologna, Italy

Conference:

Opening up Social History Repositories: New Technologies and New Methods
26-28 September 2013
IALHI | Budapest, Hungary

Conference:

Displacements. Forced Migration and the Arts
3-5 October 2013
Aarhus University | Aarhus, Denmark

Conference:

Crossroads: Europe, Migration and Culture
24-25 October 2013
Copenhagen University | Copenhagen, Denmark

→ MELA RELATED ACTIVE CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for ideas:

@Diversity Pilot Project: Innovative Ideas for the cultural and creative sector in Europe
European Commission dg for Education and Culture
DEADLINE: 19 August 2013

Call for papers:

10th Crossroads Conference in Cultural Studies
University of Tampere | Tampere FI
DEADLINE: 30 August 2013

Call for papers:

Collecting Geographies. Global Programming and Museums of Modern Art
Stedelijk Museum | Amsterdam NL
DEADLINE: 6 September 2013



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