UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Issue 26, 2022

Museological Review

Museums and Healing

The Peer-Reviewed Journal edited by the PhD Students
of the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

Museological Review, Issue 26
Museums and Healing

Cover image: Candace Beisel

Layout Design: Camila Plaza, Holly Bee, Gemma Cantlow

Contributors: Catalina Delgado-Rojas, Abbey L R Ellis, Niki Ferraro, Daniela Fifi, Lucrezia Gigante, Julia Golachowska, Tamsin Greaves, Hannah Heller, Jenni Hunt, Tanja Johnston, Jan Gresil S. Kahambing, Geneva Lavern Beckford, Emily Levick, Ashley Mask, Ashley Maum, Kai Monet, Paul Edward Montgomery Ramírez, Jandy Paramanathan, Ailsa Peate, Valeria Posada-Villada, Sundus Saleh Alrashid, Dominic Seamer, Chrysi Vomvogianni, Kathryn Snyder, Amanda Tobin Ripley, Alice Woodhouse

Our special thanks to all anonymous peer-reviewers, Priyanka Ferreira, Gurpreet Ahluwalia, Dr Isobel Whitelegg, Lucrezia Gigante, Mingshi Cui, Dr Nuala Morse, Gordon Fyfe

Contact: School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 19 University Road, Leicester LE1 7RF
museologicalreview@leicester.ac.uk

Caption to front cover image:

"This photo was taken at Leith Hill Place. I have periods of massive anxiety, and I find that walking in gardens and fields helps ease those feelings more than almost anything else. Leith Hill Place is part of the National Trust, which makes such an effort to maintain their gardens and woodlands and tried to keep areas open during the pandemic to give people a nice place to walk."

Candace Beisel

 ISSN 1354-5825
Issue 26, 2021 – 2022

Contents

Contributors

Geneva Lavern Beckford
g.l.beckford@2021.LJMU.ac.uk
Postgraduate Researcher
Liverpool John Moores University

Catalina Delgado-Rojas
catalina.delgadorojas@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
Postgraduate
University of Manchester

Dr. Abbey L R Ellis
Research Associate
Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ

Niki Ferraro
nkf5@leicester.ac.uk
PhD Candidate
School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

Dr. Daniela Fifi Ed.D
Cultural Researcher and Community Liaison Consultant at The Brooklyn Arts Council
Website: drdanielafifi.com

Lucrezia Gigante
lg273@leicester.ac.uk
PhD Researcher, School of Museum Studies
Twitter: @LuluGigante

Julia Golachowska
Doctoral School of the Humanities
Jagiellonian University

Tamsin Greaves
tamsingreaves@hotmail.com
Community Project Assistant, Mansfield Museum & PhD candidate at Nottingham Trent University

Hannah Heller, Ed.D
Researcher at Kera Collective
Twitter: @museum_matters
linkedin.com/in/hannah-heller-ed-d-0b557155

Dr. Jenni Hunt
Community Engagement Officer at The Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret
Twitter: @Our_Objects

Tanja Johnston AthR
Head of Arts Programs
Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM)
anvam.org.au

Jan Gresil S. Kahambing
vince_jb7@hotmail.com
PhD student
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Macau

Emily Levick
eal17@leicester.ac.uk
PhD candidate
School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

Ashley Mask, Ed.D
Assistant Professor, Art and Museum Education at Western Washington University
Website: ashleymask.com
linkedin.com/in/ashley-mask

Ashley Maum
Researcher & Exhibition Coordinator
Amsterdam

Kai Monet
Transformational Educator & Consultant
www.kaimonet.la

Paul Edward Montgomery Ramírez, PhD
pemontgomeryramirez@gmail.com
PhD Department of Archaeology, University of York
Adjunct Professor & Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Compliance Officer, Cleveland State University

Jandy Paramanathan AthR
Lead Arts Facilitator
Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM)
anvam.org.au

Ailsa Peate
Lecturer Hispanic and Museum Studies
University of Westminster

Valeria Posada-Villada
larolitaesa@gmail.com
Historian and Curator
Foam Fotografiemuseum

Sundus Saleh Alrashid
sundus.alrashid@gmail.com
PhD Museum Sociology
Independent researcher, President of ICOM Kuwait

Dominic Seamer
dseamer@wildslodgeschool.co.uk
Head of Education
Wilds Lodge School

Kathryn Snyder, ATR-BC, LPC
PhD Candidate, Drexel University

Amanda Tobin Ripley
tobinripley.1@osu.edu
Ph.D. Student, Arts Administration, Education, & Policy
The Ohio State University

Chrysi Vomvogianni
chvomv@gmail.com
Music educator, museologist-conservator of antiquities
Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports

Alice Woodhouse
alice.woodhouse@nhs.net
Art Collection Manager
Vital Arts | Barts Health NHS Trust

Editorial: Museums and Healing

Welcome to Issue 26 of *Museological Review*, which has been produced around the theme of 'Museums and Healing'. As we continue to face the COVID-19 pandemic, what public health means and how museums can contribute to it intensifies as a conversation in the heritage sector. Not only the pandemic, people across the world are struggling with the traumas of war, upheaval, oppression, and poverty. At this moment of global crisis and political and emotional reckoning, the museum sector, like all forces of social power, must examine its place in our collective journey towards a world that is healing through compassion, understanding, and restorative justice. This issue reflects on the idea of healing as performed, and made necessary, by museum work. How can we think about healing in the museological framework? How do these inquiries impact museum practices? What values underlie our assumptions around what healing is, and means, in relation to museum practices and ideas? What role can, and should, we play in processes of social recovery? When do communities turn to us? When are we useful? When do we create harm? And what can we do in redress? While these questions can't be answered in one journal, we are excited to share over 20 contributions to this discussion that we hope will provide insight, expertise, and stimulation for reflection, as well as coming together to highlight the urgency and productiveness of this conversation.

As we approached the theme of this issue, we wanted to consider healing as both a problematic and generative concept that could prompt reflection on a range of museum practices and issues, including curatorial intervention, processes of restitution, participatory and community engagement, pedagogical approaches, collection care, memorialisation of traumatic events and conflict, labour and working rights, environmental interventions, and more.

We began from the understanding that the notion of healing is significant across many disciplines - applying to individuals, families, communities and societies, and operating physically, mentally, emotionally and environmentally. When museums take on the work of healing, they interact with this wide and complex web of impact and meaning. Museums make efforts to be healing forces, through work to tackle societal issues and address the traumas of conflict and inequality and the harms of colonialism and its legacies. They also support the welfare of individuals, through the implementation of wellbeing programming, arts and educational interventions, and peaceful and sociable spaces. However, museum practices have also been and often continue to be harmful, through perpetuating oppressive narratives and structures, housing looted objects, silencing histories of trauma, and creating precarious and exploitative working conditions. *Museological Review 26* invited critical reflection on these nuances to both encourage and trouble the concept of healing, but most of all, to acknowledge that at this time, we need it and must make room for it.

This issue features academic articles, reviews, interviews, short submissions and images. Authors of short submissions responded to the prompt 'Is the museum an agent of healing or harm in society?' to bring together concise, personal statements to challenge us to self-reflect. The visual submissions are on the theme of 'empathy' to place emphasis on kindness and emotion within the question of healing, especially in an institutional context. The front cover image, submitted by Candace Beisel, depicts a National Trust garden and is accompanied by a caption which illustrates a personal connection between the landscape and wellbeing.

The first section of this issue, entitled 'Memory', focuses on how memories and personal histories are experienced and portrayed in the context of museums, heritage, galleries and contemporary art spaces. **Ailsa Peate**, **Catalina Delgado-Rojas** and **Valeria Posada-Villada** provide an exhibition review

of the *Fragmentos* 'counter-monument' and art space, created by Doris Salcedo in collaboration with women who experienced sexual violence during the Colombian conflict (1964-present). Next, **Julia Golachowska**'s article reflects on the Sybir Memorial Museum's representations of deportation and transgenerational memory, using an autoethnographic approach. Following this, **Sundus Saleh Alrashid** explores how government and private museums in Kuwait have represented the subject of war; the author considers how museum practices and activities could provide avenues for healing from post-war trauma, and their potential as spaces for discussion and the exchange of perspectives. **Valeria Posada-Villada** examines how artistic projects are expanding historical narratives of conflict in Colombia, involving the participation of former combatants in the process; the author focuses on two projects at Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá and Museo Nacional de Colombia and reflects on the role of museums in peacebuilding. **Jan Gresil S. Kahambing** mobilises the term 'survivor-curator' to explore the potential role of a future Haiyan Museum commemorating Super Typhoon Yolanda (International Name: Haiyan) and to critically reflect on how museums may become spaces for healing after natural disasters. In this research, museum professionals from Region VIII, Philippines, who experienced the Haiyan typhoon tragedy, offered their perspectives on the proposed museum in surveys and interviews. The article highlights that the exhibition of objects is entangled with many diverse viewpoints from museum staff and visitors, calling for approaches that are sensitive to these multiple perspectives. This section concludes with a visual submission from arts facilitators **Jandy Paramanathan** and **Tanja Johnston**, entitled 'Confluent'. This image was made through a collaborative process of collage and photography within the maker space at the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum.

The second section, entitled 'Decolonisation', begins with a conversation between **Niki Ferraro and Alice Proctor**, an author, historian, tour guide and researcher who has produced and led 'Uncomfortable Art Tours' addressing the colonial nature of museum collections. The interview includes discussion on what decolonisation might entail for museums and who has control in these processes, prompting us to think more about what it means to continue this work and resist narratives that museums' work in this regard is complete. Next, **Paul Edward Montgomery Ramírez** details research undertaken at Archaeological Open-Air Museums (AOAM) which specialise in narrating 'Viking' and 'Anglo-Saxon' histories; the author suggests ways in which museums could recreate and retell these pasts as part of a decolonial approach. **Geneva Lavern Beckford**'s short submission argues for intersectionality as an essential approach for addressing exclusionary practices in the museum and repairing relationships with excluded individuals and communities. Following this, **Ashley Maum** presents an exhibition review of Noel W. Anderson's 'Blak Origin Moment', with a focus on how viewing art may involve an experience of witnessing wounds and how ways of seeing relate to forms of power.

In between this section and the next, **Alice Woodhouse** describes a collaboration to bring artwork to Barts Health NHS Trust's spaces for staff, with artwork from **Haroon Mirza** which was placed in an NHS staffroom as part of this project.

The third section is centered around the theme of 'Inclusion/Exclusion'. **Emily Levick**'s article draws attention to the importance of considering the needs of chronically ill and disabled individuals in museum practices. Levick discusses barriers to access and how these might be overcome, focusing on the example of ME to illustrate how museums might impact positively on the lives of chronically ill and disabled visitors (both at the museum site and via online programming). In the following short submission, **Kai Monet** shares reflections on working in museums in relation to personal experiences and understandings of decolonisation. Next, **Jenni Hunt**'s article explores how museums may discover and present hidden histories relating to disability in their collections, with reference to Compton Verney's Inclusive Histories fellowships. This is followed by a short submission by **Tamsin Greaves**

which discusses the importance of the school trip to the inclusive practice of museums. Turning to pedagogical strategies, **Ashley Mask, Daniela Fifi** and **Hannah Heller** critically reflect on Visual Thinking Strategies and consider the future potential of the method in relation to anti-racist pedagogical approaches.

The fourth section looks at 'Healing Activities', with contributions discussing museum programmes designed to enhance wellbeing. **Kathryn Snyder** interviews **Chloe Hayward**, Associate Director of Education at the Studio Museum of Harlem; they discuss Hayward's art therapy practice and the ways in which an 'ethic of care' may be practiced in the museum context. **Dominic Seamer**, who works in a therapeutic school for pupils aged 5-19, presents a short submission which reflects on the opportunities that museum school trips offer to students. Following this is an article from **Chrysi Vomvogianni** exploring the application of 'positive education' as a framework for developing museum educational activities which centre children's wellbeing. In the final part of this section, **Lucrezia Gigante** provides a book review of The Care Collective's *The Care Manifesto – The politics of interdependence.*

Abbey L. R. Ellis' visual submission, entitled 'Empathy in the Shadows', features before the next section. The author reflects on the value of museum reproductions and casts; we are introduced to a figure of a plaster cast of a *diadoumenos ('*an ancient Greek statue representing a victorious athlete') and Ellis prompts us to consider how this may provoke an empathetic response in the viewer.

This issue concludes with a section entitled 'Healing Museums Within'. **Amanda Tobin Ripley**'s article explores the increase in organised labour activity in the United States and how museum workers can use liberatory unionism to fight for healthier employment practices and broader intersectional social justice. This article addresses the important issue of a workforce focused on improving the wellbeing of visitors and communities, while their own institutions negatively impact their wellbeing through exhausting workplace attitudes and practices. How can an unhealthy organisation and staff deliver healing work?

When we posted the Call for Papers, we were overwhelmed with how creative, critical, and truly caring the responses were. We hope that this issue will prompt reflection, conversation, action, and understanding around the museum's potential and culpability in experiences of healing and harm. We hope that it helps us move forward as a sector towards kind, brave, just, and conscious practice.
We would like to thank our hardworking and committed team of editors - Louis Macul, Blaire Moskowitz, Betsy Inlow, Candace Beisel, Niki Ferraro, and Sandra Samolik - and our anonymous peer reviewers for their thoughtful feedback and engagement with the submissions. We would also like to thank Priyanka Ferreira, Gurpreet Ahluwalia, Dr Isobel Whitelegg, Lucrezia Gigante, Mingshi Cui, Dr Nuala Morse, Gordon Fyfe, and the staff and PhD community at the School of Museum Studies for their advice and support. Finally, we extend heartfelt thanks to our fantastic contributors. We are so excited to share their work and ideas with you. We hope that *Museological Review 26* is enjoyable, interesting and useful as the sector faces this challenging time, and that it helps you to reflect on your own healing journey within your museum work. We hope that you embrace that journey as a whole person who has lived through crisis, not merely as a worker in its context, with care and self-compassion.

In the fullest meaning this can have, we wish you good health.

Holly Bee, Gemma Cantlow and Camila Plaza

Co-Editors-in-Chief

Section I – MEMORY

Exhibition Review – *Fragmentos* (2018): The Counter-Monument Addressing Colombia's Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence Against Women

Ailsa Peate, Catalina Delgado-Rojas and Valeria Posada-Villada[1]

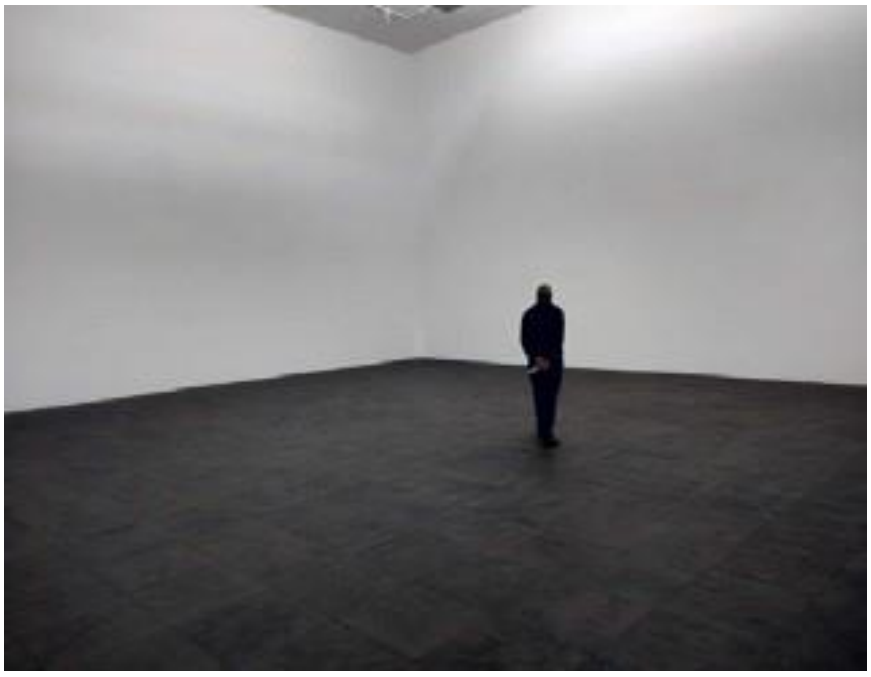

Fig. 1. Valeria Posada-Villada (2019). View of the third gallery space. Bogotá: Fragmentos

Fragmentos (2018) is a counter-monument and art space which addresses the experience of women victims of sexual violence during the Colombian conflict (1964 - present). This review focuses on the work's conception, production, and reception, highlighting how the participation of multiple actors, discourses and tensions operating in the counter-monument have generated new discussions around the memorialisation of the Colombian armed conflict. Indeed, previous research has established the importance of understanding the museum's processes and practices (Macdonald, 2002; Macdonald et al., 2018). Along the same lines, recent Colombian academic writing has been reflecting upon the participation of different actors in historical memory and symbolic reparation cultural works (for more on this context, see Angarita, 2019;

González-Ayala, 2019; Lleras et al., 2019; Sierra-León, 2021).

The signing of the Peace Agreement in November 2016 ended more than 52 years of conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo [FARC-EP]). According to Colombia's National Historical Memory Commission's reports, the confrontation between state and non-state actors in the Colombian conflict left more than 260,000 dead (82% of them civilians) and seven million internally displaced.[2] An outcome of the treaty was the construction of three monuments using the 8,900 weapons surrendered by the armed groups. One of Colombia's foremost artists to represent violence and its repercussions, Doris Salcedo was selected to create the first of the monuments in Bogotá. The result is *Fragmentos*, a memory and art space built to represent the ruin, silence, and emptiness left by the war, as seen by women victims of sexual violence of different armed actors.

Fragmentos sits within a wider context of recognising and telling difficult stories in the museum and gallery space, both increasingly aimed at social participation and debate in the twenty-first century (Sandell and Nightingale, 2012; Janes and Sandell, 2019; and Gonzales, 2019, all demonstrate how the engaged cultural space has become de rigueur). Colombia itself has been living through a so-called highly engaged 'memory boom' (Rios Oyola, 2015: 11; Posada, 2020), which has seen a flood of activity in memory initiatives since 2011 when Law 1448 was enacted, which delineates, amongst other actions, the foundations for symbolic reparations in the country. As a result, museums and galleries have become sites for discussion of traumatic memory, and historical memory institutions have demonstrated a clear preoccupation with social justice programming (see the work of Cali's Centro de Memoria Histórica [Historical Memory Centre] or Bogotá's Centro Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación [Centre for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation]).

In designating *Fragmentos* a counter-monument, Salcedo implicitly locates her work not only as part of Colombia's 'memory boom' but also within that of a group of artists who, since the 1980s, have questioned the formal and symbolic significance of traditional monuments to reactivate collective interests and memorialise 'difficult pasts' (see Milton et al., 2011).[3] Challenging artistic and historical narratives or ideological conventions, including the monuments embodying those conventions, allows a renewal of the public expression of memory (Plazas, 2019). To avoid the traditionally authoritarian and vertical presence of monuments, Salcedo coordinated with the commander of the Police Unit for Peace Building (Unidad Policial para la Edificación de la Paz [UNIPEP]) and the Colombian Military Industry (Industria Militar [INDUMIL]) a large-scale operation to scrap and melt the weaponry.

Fragmentos, overseen by the National Museum of Colombia (Museo Nacional de Colombia), can be found in the Santa Bárbara neighbourhood of Bogotá, an area which has been extensively gentrified. Santa Bárbara is located next to Congress and the Presidential Palace, the brick-and-mortar representations of Colombian State officialdom. Salcedo's choice to locate the counter-monument here thus challenges Colombia's centre of power (Revista Arcadia, 2018).

The counter-monument is divided into three gallery spaces, joined together by a surface of tiles constituted of the 37 relinquished tons of molten weaponry. While the first and third galleries remain empty, a 23-minute documentary by journalist Mayte Carrasco is continuously played in the central hall, summarising the process of collection and destruction of the weapons as well as of the artwork's production. The minimalist aesthetic of *Fragmentos* aims to highlight the interaction between body and mind, the site and its history (See Fig.1).

Fig.2 Juan Fernando Castro (2018). *View towards the ruins in the second gallery space.* Bogotá: Fragmentos. *P*hoto Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Colombia.

A Space for Difficult Memories: Developing the Counter-Monument

Salcedo requested the collaboration of twenty women victims of sexual violence. They helped prepare the eleven matrix tiles by hammering the moulted metal into thin sheets, and the marks and scars of this process were captured by the tiles. The pain of these victims becomes a trace, a visual expression distant from a figurative representation. The moulds are thus converted into a material record of the physical and psychological condition of the twenty women, 'forging' a new reality (León Carrero, 2019; Rodríguez, 2018).

The ruins of a 19th-century republican house were adapted to complement the exhibition site, with large windows separating the ruins from the tiles, creating two different yet interconnected environments that associate the remnants of pain on the tiles with the traces of absence from the ruins (see Fig. 2). The garden's flora, furthermore, creates a meditative atmosphere which encourages visitors to mourn and reflect on difficult memories.

Hammering it Out: Participation, Tensions, and Use

According to Rubiano (2017: 104) and Reátegui Carrillo (2009: 36), in the Colombian post-treaty context, the image of the victim plays a fundamental role in the representation of the conflict. In the production of the monument, Salcedo collaborated with the *Red de mujeres*

víctimas y profesionales (Women's Network of Professionals and Victims), which consists of 665 members from all regions of Colombia who seek to ensure access to justice for women victims of sexual violence through work with professionals and organisations. The 20 women[4] who participated in the weapon transformation process reported that their direct involvement helped them overcome their pain, the difficult memories, and even their feelings of rage towards the perpetrators (Carrasco, 2018). Their participation also opened a discussion on the insidious effects of sexual violence: after opening the space, the Network engaged with visitors, education institutions, and international organisations to address female experiences of war. The space has been used by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz [JEP]) in alliance with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for conferences related to gender violence, for example.

Fig. 3. Sandra Vargas Jara (2018) Visitors in Fragmentos. Bogotá: Fragmentos. Photo Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Colombia.

After its opening, it became clear that the space invoked a certain emotional division: victims and their families came to mourn their loved ones, whereas visitors and public figures more detachedly expressed their opinions for and against the peace process or the construction of a counter-monument itself (see Fig. 3). The main criticisms expressed during this time were related to: the monument's location in the capital rather than in regions most affected by the conflict (Sierra León in Sánchez Villareal, 2018); the mixed sentiments of former FARC-EP guerrilla members regarding the space's construction process (Elston, 2020), and issues of victim participation (Rubiano, 2017), and the collective authorship that should be attributed to them (Galindo, 2019; Sierra León in Sánchez Villareal, 2018).

Fig. 4. Sandra Vargas Jara *(2019) "Antibalas" artwork installation by Felipe Arturo.* Bogotá: Fragmentos. Photo Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Colombia.

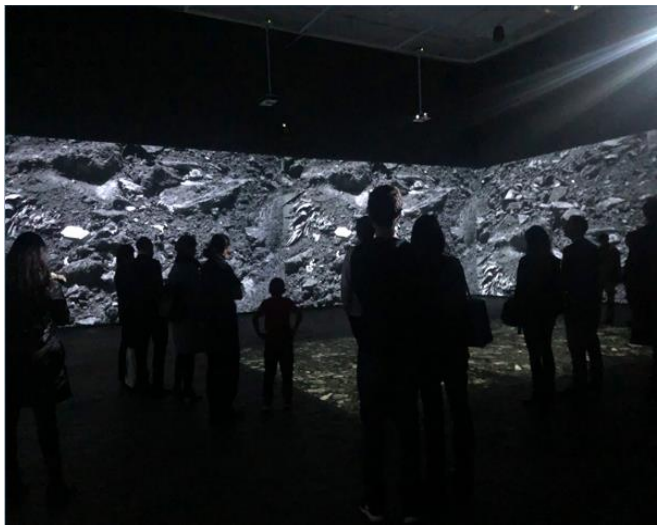

Fig. 5. Sandra Vargas Jara *(2019). "Duelos" artwork installation by Clemencia Echeverri.* Bogotá: Fragmentos. Photo Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Colombia.

Fig. 6. Sandra Vargas Jara (2021). "Mesa Verde" artwork installation by Ana María Millán, Las Andariegas y Tarsila Beita. Bogotá: Fragmentos. Photo Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Colombia.

Designated as a space for memory and art, *Fragmentos* works as an art centre that will host different artistic interventions for the next 50 years.[5] In 2019, the Ministry of Culture launched annual grants to select art projects representing different visions of the armed conflict to be housed within *Fragmentos*.[6] However, the programme has been criticised for targeting artists rather than victims, thus compromising the counter-monument's memorial function in a context of transitional justice (Peñuela, 2018. See also Sierra León, 2015, 2021 for more on tensions in creative artworks dealing with difficult histories and artistic agency, and Lleras et al., 2019 on the role of external curatorial forces in meaning making in such spaces).

Conclusion

The lack of temporal or emotional distance from the ongoing Colombian conflict has been a double-edged sword for *Fragmentos*. For the individuals and communities that have been affected by the war and those who oppose it, it has been a means through which to grieve and consider future alternatives. Nevertheless, the space remains a tangible product of the Peace Agreement, and has thus become a contested site for the current Colombian administration to present its particular agenda. In May 2021, for example, the space was used by Iván Duque's government to address the Colombian public during a period of mass protest in the country, leading to accusations of the space being 'occupied' by him (see Esfera Pública, 2021). The counter-monument is, after all, a State-led initiative. This status is central to arguments which criticise the space's very aims, which, it can be said, are coloured by a blinkered political perspective. Furthermore, it has not gone unnoticed that only FARC-EP weaponry has been used in the space. This invites questioning and debate concerning how far the 'counter'-monument can be conceived in such terms.

Fragmentos embodies the difficult memories related to sexual crimes against women through the scars on the floor and the emptiness of the space. This representation has not only stressed women's vulnerability during armed conflicts, but it also underlined the responsibility of all armed groups and government institutions. Even though these tensions between art, conflict, memory, and representation have provoked negative and positive reactions, the space has allowed visitors' reconnection with the armed conflict through an immersive and emotional experience.

Notes

[1] Dr Ailsa Peate is Lecturer Hispanic and Museum Studies at the University of Westminster. Her previous positions have included the role of Research Associate on AHRC-funded project Memory, Victims, and Representation of the Colombian Conflict at the University of Liverpool. She completed her PhD (2017) on gender, sex, and genre in Mexican and Cuban crime fiction; worked as Research Associate the Institute of Cultural Capital, and has lectured in Latin American cultures and societies and international crime narratives at Lancaster University. Her co-edited volume, Latin American Crime Scenes (2019), is available from Peter Lang.

Catalina Delgado Rojas. Colombian PhD student at the University of Manchester. I hold an MA in Social Anthropology from the University of the Andes and an MA in Museology and Heritage Management from the National University of Colombia. In the academic field, I have conducted studies on women and sports; public art heritage in Colombia; and gender approach in Latin American museums. As an independent researcher, I worked in risk prevention, human

rights education, and systematization of experiences. As a cultural manager, I developed projects related to public heritage, museum education, assortment of archives, and curating exhibitions. In 2018-2019, I was the coordinator of the education and public activities team in Fragments: space of art and memory.

Valeria Posada-Villada is a Colombian historian and independent curator currently working in Amsterdam's Photography Museum (FOAM). She obtained both her MA in Arts and Museum Studies from the University of Amsterdam and her BA in History from Andes University. From 2015 onwards, she has been researching the relationship between art, museology, memory, and politics in Latin America. She develops this interest while simultaneously carrying out historical research on art forms such as photography and performance art.

[2] See Unidad Víctimas (2022) for the most up-to-date statistics.

[3] These artists include Thomas Hirschorn (1957-), Gunter Demnig (1947-), VALIE EXPORT (1940-), Jochen Gerz (1940-), Do-ho Suh (1962-), Lotty Rosenfeld (1973-).

[4] Nancy Medina, Gladys Ruiz, Nelcy Ramos, Ahíde Prada, Jennifer Prada, Aurora Moreno, Nidia Cortés, Marisol Betancourt, Mayra Hernández, Estebana Roa, Ana Murcia, Sirley Domicó, Felicitas Valderrama, Fulvia Chungana, Blanca Muñoz, Nancy Gómez and Ángela Escobar.

[5] For a period equivalent to the duration of the armed conflict with the FARC-EP, Fragmentos will host artistic proposals which centre upon the relationship between contemporary art and memory (Duzán, 2018).

[6] Duelos from Clemencia Echeverri and Antibalas from Felipe Arturo were selected as the first proposal to intervene in the space in September 2019. Ana María Millán was selected the following year with the proposal Mesa Verde (2021) (see Figs. 4, 5 and 6).

Works Cited

Arturo, F. (2019). *Antibalas.* [Material and Kevlar]. Bogotá, Fragmentos Espacio de Arte y Memoria.

Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras (Ley 1448 del 2011) (2011) Bogotá: Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia.

Duzán, M. J. (2018). *La negociación*. Available at: especiales.revistaarcadia.com/contramonumento-fragmentos/la-vision-de-la-exguerrilla-y-los-militares.html (accessed 20th February 2022).

Echeverri, C. (2019). *Duelos* [Video installation]. Bogotá, Fragmentos Espacio de Arte y Memoria.

Elston, C. (2020). 'Nunca Invisibles: Insurgent Memory and Self-representation by Female Ex-combatants in Colombia', *Wasafiri*, 35(4), 70–78.

Esfera Pública. (2021). *El museo ocupado*. Available at: https://esferapublica.medium.com/el-museo-ocupado-62ed7c236f54 (accessed 8th April 2021).

Fragmentos. (2018). Directed by M. Carrasco [Film]. Bogotá, Photoholic & The Big Story Films.

Galindo, D. (2019). *"Fragmentos" de un acuerdo de paz: la obra de Doris Salcedo*. Available at: https://razonpublica.com/fragmentos-de-un-acuerdo-de-paz-la-obra-de-doris-salcedo/ (accessed 21st May 2020).

Gonzales, E. (2019). *Exhibitions for Social Justice*. London: Routledge.

Janes, R. R., and Sandell, R. (eds.) (2019). *Museum Activism*. London: Routledge.

León Carrero, D. (2019). *Fragmentos, más allá de su arte*. Available at: https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/cultura/fragmentos-mas-alla-de-su-arte-articulo-835434 (accessed 21st May 2020)

Lleras, C., González-Ayala, S. N., Botero-Mejía, J, and Velandia, C. M. (2019). 'Curatorship for Meaning Making: Contributions Towards Symbolic Reparation at the Museum of Memory of Colombia', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 34(6), 544-561.

Macdonald, S., Gerbich, C. and Von Oswald, M. (2018) 'No Museum is an Island: Ethnography beyond Methodological Containerism', *Museum*

and Society, 16(2), pp. 138–156. doi:10.29311/mas.v16i2.2788.

Macdonald, S. (2002) *Behind the scenes at the Science Museum*. Oxford; Berg (Materializing culture).

Millan, A. M., Las Andariegas, and Beita, T. (2021). *Mesa Verde*. [Videogame, watercolours and sound installation]. Bogotá, Fragmentos Espacio de arte y Memoria.

Milton, C. E., Lehrer, E., & Patterson, M. E. (2011). *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Peñuela, J. (2018). *Fragmentos, Doris Salcedo, Inauguración del Espacio Arte y Memoria, en Bogotá.* Available at: http://liberatorio.org/?p=8917 (accessed 19th February 2020).

Plazas, D. (2019). *Contra-monumentalidad: a propósito de la obra Fragmentos de Doris Salcedo*. Available at: https://esferapublica.org/nfblog/contra-monumentalidad-a-proposito-de-la-obra-fragmentos-de-doris-salcedo/ (accessed 19th February 2020).

Posada, V. (2020). *Otros abordajes: los acercamientos del sector cultural y deportivo al conflicto armado.* Available at: https://www.revistaciendiascinep.com/home/la-cultura-y-el-deporte-vistos-por-datapaz/ (Accessed 10th May 2022).

Reátegui Carrillo, F. (2009). 'Las víctimas recuerdan. Notas sobre la práctica social de la memoria' in Briceño-Donn, M., Reátegui Carrillo, F., Rivera, M. C., and Uprimny Salazar, C. (eds), *Recordar en Conflicto: iniciativas no oficiales de memoria en Colombia*. Bogotá, Centro Internacional para la Justicia Transicional.

Revista Arcadia. (2018). *Así es la obra que Doris Salcedo está construyendo con las armas de las Farc*. Available at: https://www.revistaarcadia.com/arte/articulo/doris-salcedo-monumento-armas-de-las-farc-acuerdos-de-paz/70319 (accessed 19th February 2022).

Rios Oyola, S. M. (2015). *Religion, Social Memory and Conflict: The Massacre of Bojayá in Colombia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rodríguez, M. (2018). *Fundir y martillar las armas de las Farc: este fue el acto de catarsis de las víctimas*. Available at: https://pacifista.tv/notas/doris-salcedo-fragmentos-victimas-violencia-sexual/ (accessed 19th February 2022)

Rubiano, E. (2017). 'Victims, Memory and Mourning: Contemporary Art in the Post-Accord Scenario', *Análisis Político,* 30(90), 103–120.

Salcedo, D. (2018). *Fragmentos*. [Molten weaponry]. Bogotá*: Fragmentos, Espacio de Arte y Memoria.*

Sánchez Villareal, F. (2018). *El monumento con las armas de las Farc: 10 criterios para su elaboración*. Available at: https://www.semana.com/agenda/articulo/criterios-para-construccion-del-monumento-de-las-armas-farc-guerrilla-acuerdo-paz/70021/ (accessed 20th May 2020)

Sandell, R., and Nightingale, E. (eds.) (2012). *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*. London: Routledge.

Sierra León, Y. (2015). 'Reparación Simbólica, Litigio Estético y Litigio Artístico. Reflexiones en torno al arte, la cultura y la justicia restaurativa en Colombia', *Serie Documentos de Trabajo*, 85, 1-23.
Unidad Víctimas (2022). *Víctimas conflicto armado.* Available at: www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394 (accessed 20th February 2022)

Sybir Memorial Museum: Transgenerational Memory Institutionalised

Julia Golachowska

Abstract:

The newly established Sybir Memorial Museum in Bialystok, Poland (Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru, opened in 2021) self-defines as a site built around the transgenerational memory of the deportations of Poles to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and other parts of the Russian Empire and the USSR. As a descendant of a Polish-Ukrainian family deported to the Arkhangelsk region and later repatriated to Poland, I aim to approach this museum from an analytical and emotional perspective, drawing on the experiences of a researcher and a granddaughter raised on the memory of deportations.

In this vein, I will offer a transgenerational trauma perspective using an autoethnographic methodology. This text will follow Judith Herman's understanding of trauma and the significance of its articulation and recognition within the community (Herman 1997). My paper examines whether the Sybir Memorial Museum successfully realises this role of social acknowledgement.

Keywords: museum, memory, Siberia, deportation, trauma, generational trauma

'A history of a single person, an entire family or of many generations? The exhibition of the Sybir Memorial Museum tells a story, to be taken differently by everyone. No one is indifferent.' (From the museum's website.)[1]

The newly established Sybir Memorial Museum in Bialystok, Poland (Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru, opened in 2021) self-defines as a site built around the transgenerational memory of the deportations of Poles to Siberia, Kazakhstan and other parts of the Russian Empire and USSR. The quotation opening the text is embodied in the museum exhibit through its focus on memory, its transmission within families and its relationship to 'indifference', or rather the emotional reaction to the story as told by the institution. Even the name of the institution in Polish, 'Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru', can be translated literally as the Museum of the Memory of Siberia, thus expressing the curatorial choice to shift the attention from the traumatic event to its memory.[2] This special attention to transgenerational memory is repeatedly emphasised by the museum's creators in their official publications and within the exhibition (Kosel, 2015; Śleszynski 2021; Dąbrowska, 2021).

Since the museum sets out to reflect the memory of the generations afflicted by deportations, this analysis will approach the exhibit through the lenses of post-memory and trauma (Herman, 1997; Kidron, 2009; Hirsch, 2012). In this article, I enact discourse analysis of the exposition and the museum's website materials, using the notion of competing memories in the case of the memory of

the Holocaust and deportations to the East (Morris, 2001; Janicka, 2011).

As a descendant of a Polish-Ukrainian family deported to the Arkhangelsk region and later repatriated to Poland, I aim to approach this museum from an analytical and emotional perspective, drawing on the experiences of a researcher and a granddaughter raised on the memory of deportations (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011).

Since I am well aware of the risks of approaching the matter from this twofold perspective (Loughran, 2021), I do not expect my family history to be fully represented at the Sybir Memorial Museum, nor do I plan to use my knowledge garnered from family gatherings to fact-check the history told in the museum's exposition. Rather, I aim to confront myself with the museum's narrative and expose myself to its way of showing the past. In this vein, I will offer a transgenerational trauma perspective, relying on an autoethnographic methodology. This text will follow Judith Herman's understanding of trauma and the significance of its articulation and acknowledgement within the community (Herman, 1997). My paper examines whether the Sybir Memorial Museum successfully realises this role of social acknowledgement.

Deportations to the Russian Empire and the USSR

The explicit mission of the museum is to commemorate Polish deportees to Siberia - sybiraks. This institution, located in Bialystok (a midsized town in Eastern Poland), combines local and national perspectives on deportations that took place between the 18th and the first half of the 20th century. Its understanding of sybiraks is not limited to those sent to the geographical Siberia but covers a much larger deportation area; as the official website states, 'Syberia' came to mean the 'huge depths stretching between the Ural Mountains and the Pacific Ocean'[3]. This text will follow the abovementioned distinction between Sybir (the Russian word for Siberia), an imaginary destination of deportation, and Siberia, the historical and geographical land. In the public discourse, the expression 'Siberian deportees' refers to everyone deported to the East from the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lands under Russian imperial rule and the lands that had been a part of the Polish Republic in the interwar period. Furthermore, the term Sybir not merely covers a porous space, but allows scholars to distance the Siberian region and its indigenous people from the historical events related specifically to the Polish memory of deportation.

Deportation as a form of punishment and repression functioned both in the Russian Empire and the USSR (Davies, 2014: 88-92, 192; Snyder, 2011: 101-127). Throughout history, it involved various groups - anti-tsarist oppositionists, freedom fighters of different national identities and political orientations, kulaks and other civilians. Deportations of the latter are considered ethnic cleansing (Martin, 1998). It is worth mentioning that there was also a wave of voluntary economic migration of Poles to Siberia in the second half of the 19th century. The Sybir Museum focuses mostly on the deportations between 1940 and 1941 (Davies, 2014: 90; Snyder, 2011: 161-174). Many deportees did not survive the displacement, perishing due to extremely difficult transportation, living and working conditions.

After the Nazi Germany invasion of the USSR in 1941, Polish Armed Forces in the East (Armia Polska na Wschodzie) were formed under the Polish-Soviet agreement (the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement). Some sybiraks joined one of two armies - Anders' Army or Berling's Army - and fought their way back to Western and Central Europe (Davies, 2014: 112-119). After the Second World War, Poles in the USSR gained the right to repatriation. It is crucial to note that most of the repatriated Polish soldiers had been initially deported from the territories that were no longer a part of the Polish state after the war; this meant that the repatriation process allowed them to

come back not to their place of origin, but to the country within its new, post-Yalta borders. Many of them settled in the western part of Poland that formerly belonged to Germany, taking over houses and farms of displaced Germans (Snyder, 2011: 353). After 1989, another wave of repatriation (of a much smaller scale) occurred, and its legal ramifications were settled only in 2001 (Hut, 2002).

The commemoration of sybiraks plays an important role in Polish memory politics after 1989 for two primary reasons; firstly, the deportations were suppressed during Poland's communist period, and secondly, it provides an opportunity to emphasise the Russian and (later) Soviet oppression of Poles (Kurz, 2017; Dąbrowska, 2021). Due to the lack of acknowledgement of this part of history during the communist period, its memory was developed mostly through family traditions and oral testimonies. The repatriated sybiraks and their descendants are often active in the Association of Siberian Deportees (Związek Sybiraków).[4] The term 'sybiraks' denotes both deportees and their offspring born at the site of deportation. It bears mention that sybiraks - even the children born in the camps - share some privileges with war veterans in contemporary Poland.

Transition of sybirak memory

Before visiting the Sybir Memorial Museum, I wrote down what I remembered from my family history and continued this kind of journaling during and after seeing the exposition. I also made a record of how I experienced this visit. Later, I consulted my siblings and our mother. I asked about her experience of being a sybirak's daughter and we discussed our different understandings of this heritage and family trauma. This was my first time approaching the matter, both privately and as a researcher. I used to avoid the subject of sybiraks in my projects, while dealing with same other historical traumas present in my family. While my family was very vocal about it, for me, the memory of deportations seemed to be overwhelming and bearing nationalistic undertones. The trauma of starvation and the Holodomor terrified me. Until I started working on this paper, my knowledge about deportations stemmed from what my great-grandmother and grandfather told me. Later, I confronted this lore with the museum's narrative and historical research.

The transmission of history through family storytelling has consequences: the knowledge as a 'mixture of heroic stories, half-truths, and silences' (Thomson, 2021: 118). Historians dealing with family history indicate the role of emotions, sentiments, and 'authenticity' (Loughran, 2021). Personal stories might be fragmented or contain contradictions – within themselves or in comparison to the collective memory of an event (Herman, 1997). They might evolve during the lifetime of the family 'hero' and even after their death through recollections of other relatives. The interpretation of the past events will most probably vary among relatives depending on their age, worldview, and identity (Loughran, 2021). Furthermore, the way of passing these stories through generations is closely connected to trauma transmission and other trauma-driven practices. Family memory is not built merely with words – what is said and what remains untold – but with various aspects of everyday life that are difficult to grasp and that are shaped by traumatic experiences (Loughran, 2021). Historical trauma might be silently present in the rituals and habits related to various aspects of everyday life (Kidron, 2009), such as food and health (as in the case of my relatives) or in the specific ways of handling conflicts and emotions within a family. Therefore, family history can be a source for scholars interested in oral history and history of emotions and researchers of memory and trauma (Kidron, 2009, 2015).

Although the trauma of deportation and repatriation to and from Sybir is not the only one my family endured during the Second World War, it is the most frequently discussed trauma within

the family circle. My family made sure that younger generations were aware of this background, and they formed their identity around it. As far back as I remember, my Polish-Ukrainian great-grandmother told us about starvation, deportations, and midnight suns. Until today, my bilingual grandfather, born in Arkhangelsk, drops Russian words while telling nostalgic stories from his childhood spent in the USSR. Most of their stories circle around the famine experienced by our deported family and those who stayed in Ukraine, facing the Holodomor.[5] Stories about hunger and starvation to death have been told over tables full of food as a reminder to appreciate it. Trauma itself, together with those talks and many other trauma-driven practices, have led to the development of Complex Post Traumatic Syndrome (C-PTSD) and eating disorders (ED) within the family.

Most of my knowledge about Sybir came from my family traditions, usually from the first- or second-handed stories told during family gatherings. Due to their oral character, those testimonies are highly personal and idiosyncratic; they are detail-oriented and mythologised. Since the school curriculum did not cover 20th-century deportations extensively, my home knowledge felt like a secret that must be maintained. Typically for this way of history learning, family stories were more or less chaotic, repetitive and non-linear. As a child, I had a nuanced knowledge of some aspects of sybiraks' life – I was fully aware that eating onions could prevent getting scurvy – but I would also confuse the concepts of Siberia, Arkhangelsk, and Kazakhstan, since all those places have served as deportation destinations.

The Sybir Memorial Museum: creators, vision, and place

The Sybir Memorial Museum was established in 2017 and opened to the public in 2021. It is a public institution supervised by the local government (city of Bialystok) and developed with EU funding. The main idea of the museum's narrative has been created by four male historians from Bialystok: Adam Cz. Dobronski, Daniel Boćkowski, Marek Kietlinski, and Wojciech Śleszynski, the head of the institution.[6] Their project was also consulted by Jan Ołdakowski, the director of the Warsaw Rising Museum, who decided to focus on the emotional reception of the exhibition (Dąbrowska, 2021: 25-27). As Dąbrowska declares (Dąbrowska, 2021: 10), the Sybir Memorial Museum is based on the notion of a neuromuseum that engages visitors' emotions and impressions by operating on various levels: historical, visual, symbolic and sensory (Folga-Januszewska, 2015: 89-100).

The institution is built around the railway siding of the former Poleski Railway Station. The new building is added to the renovated pre-war warehouse.[7] Visitors have to cross the remains of the old tracks in order to enter the museum. Here, for the first time, one is made to experience identification with the victims through the walking path. The building is surrounded by an installation made of the metal pillars that symbolise the trees of taiga; another example of using spatial experience to achieve visitor reaction.

The museum is situated in a place of memory – from this station in 1940, 1941 and 1944, Bialystok's residents were sent to Siberia by Soviet soldiers. The Jews from the Bialystok ghetto were deported from the same site to the extermination camp in Treblinka in 1943 (this fact is mentioned on the panel by the entrance of the Museum). Although this place could be a site of memory for Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Bialystok, the museum built here focuses on Polish suffering (additionally excluding Belarusians and Ukrainians, who are merely named as other victims of deportations). The aspect of the absence of Jewish memory in the museum will be further elaborated on in my text. Visiting a place of memory can launch a self-identification process, especially for those having personal connections to the historical event that occurred there (Kidron, 2009). It certainly was my case – visiting the Sybir Memorial

Museum, together with this writing, strengthened my affinity with the subject.

The exhibition: description and initial remarks

The exhibition's space is divided into two major parts: 'The End of a Certain World...' (first floor) and 'Sybir' (second floor). The first section is supposed to introduce visitors to the life prior to the deportations, and the second one shows the atrocities of life in Siberia. In effect, the narrative is not strictly chronological. To put it shortly, it starts and ends in the 20th century, but somewhere in the middle, it suddenly goes back to the 19th century. The cabinets are organised in the following chapters with respective titles: 'Siberia-Sybir', 'Independent Poland', 'The War', 'Criminal System', 'Deportations' (the first floor) and 'In Tsarist Siberia', 'In Soviet Hell', 'The Gulag System', '(No) Ways Out' and 'Memory' (the second floor).

The exhibition begins with large, human-size letters made of brown wood that form the word 'Sybir' standing on the floor and the definitions of Siberia and Sybir are with a brief description of the deportations. In terms of chronology, the exposition starts with the reestablishment of the Polish state in 1918. After that, we are shown the multicultural and multinational Second Polish Republic. This period is represented by Bialystok, the place where the museum is located. In this section, Bialystok is portrayed as a modern, vibrant city. This image is contrasted with the outbreak of World War II. The Third Reich invasion is mentioned, but the main accent is put on the attack of the USSR and its repressions. After that, the visitor learns about four 'great deportations': in February (1), April (2) and June (3) of 1940 and May-June of 1941 (4). And then, after moving to the second floor, one accesses a room representing the 'final destination' for the deportees: Siberia.

After that, visitors will enter rooms dedicated to 18th- and 19th-century Tsarist Russia. There, one might learn about the Polish struggle for independence under Russian rule and about the great Polish scientists who conducted their research on Siberia during their time there. This part ends with the beginning of the 20th century. The exhibition takes us back to the Second World War atrocities and the hardships of life in gulags (forced labour camps). Here again, the timeline is slightly interrupted - on this occasion with the artistic installation of Martyna Pająk 'Frozen People'. The installation contains a group of white schematic human silhouettes with a video projection of documentaries on them.

The last chapter of the sybiraks' story is repatriation. Coming back to Poland was possible mostly in two ways: firstly, by the formation of the Polish Armed Forces in the East that allowed the deportees to join the war struggle and reach Central and Western Europe, and secondly, by post-Yalta agreements that facilitated the application for Polish citizenship.

The visiting direction is suggested by vertical wooden planks with photos, names, ages and destinations of deportation of separate individuals. No further context is provided. One will not learn the personal stories of those commemorated. The planks are deployed over the first floor. Some of them do not hold any pictures - they are supposed to commemorate those who remain unidentified.

Most rooms are organised in a traditional object-oriented way – as cabinets with objects displayed in glass cases, accompanied by boards, maps and touchscreens. The main chapters of the narrative are introduced by the texts presented on boards, videos, combining archival materials and maps, and the glass cases with the objects from the particular period. There is also a paid audio guide offering slightly longer descriptions.

The exhibition: critical analysis and autoethnographic observations

As Śleszynski declares, the authenticity of the objects and their stories are crucial for the visitor's emotional engagement (cited in Dąbrowska, 2021). This concept is especially present in the last room of the chapter 'Deportations' that displays deportees' belongings taken from Poland to Sybir and back: prayer books, clothes, photos, etc. The display is supplemented with a book providing background stories of the objects.

Just a few of the rooms are arranged in a theatrical way, reconstructing, for example, the inside of the freight car with its sounds or the interior of the café in the Ritz hotel in Bialystok.[8] Six rooms are arranged in a 'total' scenographic way that requires the visitor to enter and interact with the installation. The first is the Soviet freight car, the second is the town square of Bialystok, followed by the interior of the freight car, the 'final destination' of the train, the labour camp's bunk beds, and the Soviet classroom. Those scenographic parts reinforce identification with the victims – walking through the wagon (twice) or the classroom puts the visitors in the victims' position. This gesture is strengthened by engaging bodily movements, as well as various senses: sight, hearing and touch. Other scenographic installations are put in separate cabinets. There, the visitors do not have to go through it, just to observe and listen to the testimonies. Yet, in those instances, identification with the victims is suggested: for example, in the 'interrogation room', the visitors can sit on the bench behind the chair of the interrogated (facing the officer's side).

The exposition employs visitors' bodily experiences. To enter the second floor, they have to climb stairs with the steps marked with names of deportation destinations and the numbers of kilometres between them and Bialystok. On the second floor, the walls of the corridor, representing the Siberian landscape, are painted white. The walls are covered with white and grey sceneries of a snowy forest. This part of the exposition uses the sound of wind blast. Part of this floor is wrapped in a mellow carpet that seeks to remind the feeling of the first snow. While the videos and audio materials are being used all over the exposition, the part dedicated to Siberia leans more towards a multisensory experience. This choice seemingly aims to underline the physical experience of a deportee's life.

The section dedicated to the interwar period shows the Second Polish Republic as a multicultural, self-rebuilding state. The main focus is put on the Eastern Borderlands, traditionally called 'Kresy' in Polish. The Polish term itself bears colonial nostalgia towards the lands of today's Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Despite the criticism of this expression among scholars and memory activists (Bakuła, 2006), the Sybir Memorial Museum keeps using that wording without any critical approach. '(...) Kresy – the Eastern Borderlands that Poland won back in the war against the Bolsheviks – reminded of the former greatness of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (...)' the description in one of the first rooms states (quotation noted by the author at the exhibition: permanent exhibition, Sybir Memorial Museum, 2021-2022). Moreover, the museum's narrative repeats the colonial framework and portrays the Polish settlement in the Eastern Borderlands as a civilizing mission.

The exhibition uses the cuts from the recorded testimonies and staged recordings. The fragments from the testimonies are short and lack a broader context (usually, just a few sentences per person). Often, they relate directly to the shown objects. For example, the recording that complements the souvenir of the first communion,[9] says only that the owner took it to Sybir. Regarding the sound at the exposition, I have to point out the usage of the linguistic barrier. The story, told by a woman deported as a child, focuses on her inability to understand the Russian language used by Soviet soldiers. While this was probably true in her case, it is highly doubtful to be representative for a larger number of deportees. The Polish speakers from the Eastern Borderlands were probably

familiar with Russian or Ukrainian, at least to some extent, and some of them were bilingual. This language barrier is also boldly noticeable in the staged recordings, where the Polish speakers use rather a modern language instead of the historical variant of Polish typical for this part of the Eastern Borderlands ('polszczyzna kresowa'). Underlining and even exaggerating the language difference between the deportees and soldiers, the display emphasises the distinction between the Polish and Soviet people.

It is also important to mention the language of written materials (objects' descriptions, etc.). While depicting atrocities of the Second World War, the exposition authors favour terms like 'The German Reich' and, most prominently, just 'the Germans'. When describing the Soviet Union, they employ Russian-driven term for the USSR: the ZSRS ('Związek Socjalistycznych Republik Sowieckich') instead of the common the ZSRR ('Związek Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich'). In both cases, this choice of wording is typical for conservative history writing.

The room on the Soviet Union is titled 'Criminal System'. Also, further rooms' titles follow that dramatic form of expression: the one dedicated to the living conditions in Sybir is called 'In the Soviet Hell'. The parts describing the USSR as a state keep the focus on propaganda, the cult of personality, and forced labour. They also use highly stereotypical juxtapositions – Lenin's bust is put next to an empty bottle of vodka. Moreover, the Soviet Union is portrayed mostly as an inhumane system. Not much is said about the Soviet people and their contacts with the deportees. The visitor will not learn about help, friendships, relationships, or integration.

At the entrance of the Soviet Union cabinet, there is a corner arranged with Lenin's and Stalin's portraits and banners for the First of May parade. Strikingly, this is the only part where diversity and representation of various linguistic and ethnic groups are present so notably. This visually pleasing installation of various banners includes slogans in Polish, Russian, Belarussian (in Cyrillic and Latin alphabet), Ukrainian and Yiddish. Since this exhibition focuses almost exclusively on the Polish perspective, this sudden diversity seems to be rather an overrepresentation of non-Polish groups among the Soviet Union supporters. This gesture supports the vision of history in which Poles are portrayed as anti-communists and Jews, Ukrainians, and Belarussians as the USSR advocates. This way of history writing is rooted in nationalistic stereotypes, including the idea of Judeo communism (Hanebrink, 2018).

The role of the Polish Army in the USSR is featured in a peculiar way. Since joining the army was a great chance to go back to Europe (and later gain a Polish passport), it is portrayed as an important phase of sybiraks' history. The exhibition shows both the Anders' and Berling's Armies (Davies, 2014: 112-119) and the routes they have gone through. And that is the most of it. The soldiers' sacrifices and military struggle do not seem to be significant. This lack of acknowledgement of Anders' and Berling's Armies soldiers' experience is dominant in the Polish history writing after 1989. Tomasz Ławski connects this marginalisation with the unresolved trauma of postdependency (Ławski, 2014). In this part of the exhibition, I strongly felt the difference between the museum's narrative and the one I knew from home. My great-grandfather fought in the Berling's Army, and his soldier's hat is one of the very few family souvenirs. While I found the exposition devoted to the Polish Army in the USSR to be marginalising, it was not perceived as such by my fellow researchers/visitors who do not have any family connections with it. The end of war is represented by a cut from a popular TV series from the late 60s (1966-70), 'Four Tank-men and a Dog' ('Czterej pancerni i pies'), telling the story of a tank squad from the Berling's Army. The propagandistic character of the show is heavily underlined there. The Yalta agreements are depicted here as a huge disappointment for the sybiraks who came from the Eastern Borderlands that ceased to be a part of the Polish state.

Although there is a sculpture of 'Sybirak Mother' ('Matka Sybiraczka') by Ryszard and Katarzyna Piotrowski at the museum's entrance (Dąbrowska, 2021: 75), the exhibition's narrative lacks the gendered perspective. One will not learn how the deportations afflicted women, neither in more physical aspects of everyday life like periods, miscarriages, sexual violence or abortions, nor in cultural and political. If women, children or families are mentioned, it is done within a very traditional, modest and heteronormative perspective. Women are mostly portrayed as caring mothers who raise new generations in the Catholic faith and Polish patriotism. Another aspect of 'womanhood' present at the exhibition is one connected with clothing and beauty understood through the stereotypical framework. This perspective is illustrated well by the way in which a hair curler is described. The object is shown as a part of the installation made of items taken by the deportees to Sybir and then brought back. The curler is depicted as something unpractical but important as a tool for keeping the sense of vaguely described *femininity*.

Overall, the museum's narrative is built around the nation-based categories: the timeline is constructed around Polish history, and Polish martyrdom is the main subject. Despite the fact that many nations and groups suffered from deportations to Sybir, this exhibition focuses on Polish suffering. Prisoners from other nations are mentioned, but Sybir is portrayed as Polish doom and 'the second homeland of Poles' (a quote from Józef Piłsudski). Moreover, understanding of Polish identity within this narrative seems to be quite narrow: it does not include the perspective of mixed families and bi- or trilingual people.

The museum relies heavily on the symbolics of railways and freight wagons, iconic images of the Holocaust memory. To enter the exhibition, the visitors must walk through the original Soviet freight car while the audio guide claims that 'in Polish history, wagons like this one are symbols of the persecution of Poles in the communist empire of Lenin and Stalin'. While the usage of those motifs is justified by the pre-existing forms of commemorations of sybiraks (the monuments devoted to the memory of Sybir use railways as well),[10] it is also puzzling how similar it is to the established conventions of Shoah remembrance (Morris, 2001; Kurz, 2017; Kowalska-Leder, 2017). Janicka, comparing Umschlagplatz and the monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East in Warsaw, shows how using the same images (railways and wagons) suggests similarities between the two historical events (Janicka, 2011; Kurz, 2017). The Sybir Memorial Museum follows that logic, which is striking since it is standing in the place of memory important for the Jewish deportations. The institution chooses to not include the deportations of Jews in its narrative and uses wagons as a symbol of the persecution of Poles. Those two facts combined seem to build an even stronger case for suggesting similarities between the victimhoods than those described by Janicka.

At the end of the exhibition, the letters forming the word 'pamięć,' ('memory') are installed on the wall. They are partially white, partially transparent. Each letter is a box that contains white table tennis balls signed by the visitors. The visitors are encouraged to 'leave the sign of their memory' by taking one ball, writing their name on it and putting it inside one of the letters. While many people follow the call by putting their names, some decide to put other words or drawings. Alternatives vary from idealistic appeals to humanity to swastikas and 'fuck the Law and Justice Party' (jebać PiS).

This last room is filled with slideshows of images depicting those who survived, and their descendants projected on altar-shaped settings. This installation is in ongoing development, and sybiraks' families are encouraged to email their pictures to expand the collection. So far, it seems to be quite limited; the photos often reoccur.

Conclusions

When I was preparing to visit the Sybir Memorial Museum, I deemed it a good place to organise my knowledge about the deportations. I was hoping to gain a broader understanding of historical events. I cannot say it happened; I left the museum even more confused than before. From this perspective, one may claim that the exposition reflects the same non-linear pattern in which the familial memory is transmitted.

Many parts of the exposition resonated with me, since they resemble what I know from my family tradition. Some of them triggered the worst family memories and my feelings about them. I felt most vulnerable seeing the objects-souvenirs of the deportees and visiting the cabinets that reconstructed the spaces important for the experience of deportation and life in Sybir. This type of reaction was the case not only when visiting the rooms dedicated to the events I knew well from my family, but also in those representing other aspects of deportations that were not that prominently present in my family tradition. I do not remember vividly any story about travels and wagons, yet it was difficult to sit in the room reconstructing the interiors and listen to the testimonies played inside. The direct connection between the exhibition and memory did not seem prerequisite to my emotional reaction.

Another aspect that triggered my emotional response was the narrative. Its general message is different from what I know and how I perceive my heritage. In many places, reading depictions of the events, I would feel the urge to contest it. I would do so by being vocal about it and sharing my thoughts with the friends that accompanied me, as well as by calling my mother and spending hours discussing the issues that bothered me. I was furious at the omission of the Holocaust and the oversimplification of deportees' experiences. It felt like someone was using things that were very personal for me to achieve an alien goal and redirect my emotions toward certain groups and identities. I felt that my vulnerability and trauma were being used and manipulated.

At the same time, I recognise the absence of emotions I knew from my family stories, namely, nostalgia and warm sentiments towards the Soviet citizens my family encountered. For my grandfather, born while the family was deported, the memory of Sybir is also the history of his childhood. He was raised bilingual and attended a Soviet school where he met friends of various backgrounds and identities. Today, he is nostalgic about that time, about Soviet heritage and the Russian language, while remaining critical of the atrocities his family faced. My great-grandmother and later my mother made sure that family history included memory of friends and neighbours (the gendered aspect of this memory will not be addressed here). Those relationships – made difficult by political circumstances and crude living conditions – are remembered as full of tensions but also respect and tolerance. The museum's narrative focuses on Polish suffering and underlines the brutality of the system when depicting the USSR.

The museum does not refer directly to the concept of healing and trauma but dedicates itself to the suffering of thousands of people and the need to remember them. The transgenerational message also turns out to be very important – as a way to maintain Polish identity in exile and as a way to remember the past.

The Sybir Memorial Museum is designed to trigger emotional reactions and identification with the deportees. This type of forced identification has been criticised in the cases of other museums showing victims' perspectives (Young, 1993; Hamber, 2012). While it might be questionable for ethical reasons (re-traumatisation being one of the examples), it likewise does not encourage a critical approach towards the presented sources and events. This way of constructing a narrative follows features of familial memory; in the case of family history, one cannot choose how the grandmother tells them her life story. Only later one might try to

argue, contest, or transform it during their own process of healing.

Opening the exposition with the word 'Sybir' and closing it with 'memory' creates a juxtaposition which seems to confirm what the name of the institution suggests: this institution shifts its focus from deportations themselves to their memory. As the museum's team declares, the institution aims to build a community and strengthen the memory transition (Dąbrowska, 2021: 32-33). While this might have a positive impact on the deportees, it raises the ethical question: what kind of narrative do their testimonies legitimise?

Herman describes the stages of the healing process as a return to safety, a chance to re-tell the story of the traumatic experience and reconnect with the community (Herman, 1997). Does the Sybir Memorial Museum create a safe space for learning and acknowledging personal, family, and collective trauma? Considering aspects of trauma manipulation and forced identification described above, it does not seem to fulfil its healing function. Yet, the institution itself is an archive, a sizeable repository and an agent for community dialogue. One cannot diminish this potentially affirmative role, especially in the case of memory that had been silenced for decades. While one should argue about the accuracy of the representation, the mere fact of recognition and establishing this kind of public institution remains crucial.

Notes

[1] Available at: https://sybir.bialystok.pl/en/exhibitions/the-permanent-exhibition/ (Accessed: 27.03.2022).

[2] This shift can be observed in other Polish museums that deal with the historical events, the memory of which had been suppressed before 1989.

[3] Available at: https://sybir.bialystok.pl/en/timeline/ (Accessed: 27.03.2022).

[4] The Association of Siberian Deportees was first established in 1928 and re-established in 1988.

[5] The Holodomor (also ' The Great Famine' or 'The Terror-Famine') was a famine in Soviet Ukraine that occurred between 1932 and 1933 and killed millions of people. The famine was artificially created and considered a genocide.

[6] Adam Cz. Dobronski is a historian affiliated with the University of Bialystok, his research focuses on the history of Bialystok and the surrounding region.
Daniel Boćkowski is a historian affiliated with the University of Bialystok and Polish Academy of Sciences, published works on Polish citizens in the USSR.
Marek Kietlinski is the head of the National Archives in Bialystok, a historian.
Wojciech Śleszynski is the director of the Sybir Memorial Museum, a historian affiliated with the University of Bialystok, published works on the history of Eastern lands of the Polish Second Republic (1918-1945).
Jan Ołdakowski is the director of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, the former member of the Law and Justice party.

[7] In the museum's basement, the memorial of the Katyn Massacre is placed. Names of the murdered soldiers are featured on lighted pillars. In the centre of the room, the visitors will find a spatial installation forming a silhouette of a kneeling soldier made of military uniform buttons. At the end of the room, a painting of the Virgin Mary hugging a man is put.

[8] This paper will not elaborate on the nostalgia in portraying Bialystok from the interwar period.

[9] The Souvenir of the first communion is a gift from the parish (usually a framed picture) that confirms and commemorates receiving the communion for the first time.

[10] E.g., the monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East in Warsaw, the monument to the Siberian deportees in Olsztyn, and the Sybiraks' monument in Nowa Sol.

Works Cited

Bal, M Cox, G. and Lund, J. (eds.) (2020). *Exhibition-ism: Temporal Togetherness*. Berlin Sternberg Press, Berlin.

Bakuła, Bogusław. (2006). 'Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki)'. *Teksty Drugie* 6: 11-33.

Dąbrowski, Bartosz (2015). 'Postpamięć, wygnanie, diaspora. Autobiograficzne narracje Marianne Hirsch i Evy Hoffman' in: Ewa Graczyk, Monika Graban-Pomirska, Magdalena Horodecka, Monika Żółkoś (eds.) *Białe maski / szare twarze. Ciało, pamięć, performatywność w perspektywie postzależnościowej.* Cracow: Centrum Badan Dyskursów Postzależnościowych, 47-58.

Dąbrowski, Mieczyslaw (2019). 'Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej.' *Prace Filologiczne. Literaturoznawstwo*, 50 (1), 91-110.

Ellis, Carolyn, Adams, Tony E. and Bochner, Arthur P. (2011). 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (138), Conventions and Institutions from a Historical Perspective / Konventionen und Institutionen in historischer Perspektive, 273-290.

Folga-Januszewska, Dorota (2015). *Muzeum: fenomeny i problemy*. Cracow: Universitas.

Fournier, Lauren (2021), *Authotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing and Criticism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press.

Herman, Judith (1997). *Trauma and recovery*, New York: Basic Books.

Hamber, Brandon (2012). 'Conflict museums, nostalgia, and dreaming of never again' *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(3), 268–281.

Hanebrink, Paul A. (2018), *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Hirsch, Marianne (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Columbia: University Press.

Hut, Paweł (2002). *Warunki życia i proces adaptacji repatriantów w Polsce w latach 1992-2000*, Warszawa: IPS UW.

Janicka, Elżbieta (2011). *Festung Warschau*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej.

Kidron, Carol A. (2015). 'Survivor Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance: Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?', *History and Memory*, Vol. 27, No. 2, *Traveling War* (Fall/Winter 2015), 45-73.

Kidron, Carol A. (2009). 'Toward an Ethnography of Silence: The Lived Presence of the Past in the Everyday Life of Holocaust Trauma Survivors and Their Descendants in Israel', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (February 2009), 5-27.

Kosel, Bogusław (2015). 'Misja Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru–o potrzebie zachowania dystansu między martyrologią a heroizmem' in Katarzyna Kącka, Joanna Piechowiak-Lamparska, Anna Ratke-Majewska (eds.) *Narracje pamięci. Między polityką a historią.* Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikolaja Kopernika, 281-292.

Kurz, Iwona (2017). 'Wagon' in J. Kowalska-Leder, P. Dobrosielski, I. Kurz and M. Szpakowska (eds.) *Ślady Holocaustu* w *imaginarium kultury polskiej.* Warszawa, Instytut Kultury Polskiej UW, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 413-446.

Levitt, Peggy (2015). *Artefacts and Allegiances How Museums Put the Nation and the World on Display*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Loughran, Tracey. (2021) 'Distance, intimacy, and identification. Reflections on writing a history of trauma', in Joy Damousi, Deborah Tout-Smith and Bart Ziino (eds.) *Museums, History, and the Intimate Experience of the Great War. Love and Sorrow.* London & New York: Routledge, 136-150.

Ławski, Tomasz (2014). 'O marginalizacji pamięci. Narracja pułkownika Ludowego Wojska Polskiego', in Hanna Gosk and Dorota Kołodziejczyk (eds.) *Historie, społeczenstwa, przestrzenie dialogu. Studia postzależnościowe w perspektywie porównawczej.* Cracow: Centrum Badan Dyskursów Postzależnościowych, 371-386.

Macdonald, Sharon (2008). 'Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and beyond', New York and London: Routledge.

Macdonald, Sharon (2016). 'Exhibiting Contentious and Difficult Histories: Ethics, Emotions, and Reflexivity', in Bernice L. Murphy (ed.) *Museums, Ethics and Cultural Heritage*, London and New York: Routledge / ICOM, 267–277.

Macdonald, Sharon (2013), *Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*. Abingdon: Routhledge.

Manchin, Anna (2015) 'Staging Traumatic Memory: Competing Narratives of State Violence in Post-Communist Hungarian Museums', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 45:2-3, 236-251.

Martin, Terry (1998). 'The origins of Soviet ethnic cleansing'. *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4: 813-861.

Morris, Marla (2001). *Curriculum and the Holocaust: Competing Sites of Memory and Representation* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Munro, Ealasaid (2014). *Doing emotion work in museums; reconceptualising the role of community engagement practitioners*. Leicester: Museums and Society. University of Leicester.

Muzeum i zmiana. Losy muzeów narracyjnych (2019). K. Wolska-Pabian, P. Kowal (eds.), Kraków: Universitas.

Napiórkowski, Marcin (2014). *Władza wyobraźni. Kto wymyśla, co wydarzyło się wczoraj?* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Nowacki M., Kruczek Z. (2021). 'Experience marketing at Polish museums and visitor attractions: the co-creation of visitor experiences, emotions and satisfaction', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 36, 62-8.

Noys, Benjamin (2013). 'The Violence of Representation and the Representation of Violence'. in Matthews G., Goodman S. (eds.) *Violence and the Limits of Representation*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 12-27.

Pető, Andrea (2017). 'Revisionist Histories, "Future Memories": Far-Right Memorialization Practices in Hungary'. *European Politics and Society* 18 (1): 41–51.

Piekarska-Duraj Łucja and Törnquist-Plewa Barbara (2018), 'Europeanization in Regional Museums? Examples from Sweden and Poland' in *Politeja,* nr 1, vol. 52, 25-54.

Rothberg, Michael (2009). *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Różnicowanie narodowego "my" Kuratorskie marzenia. (2019). Erika Lehrer, Roma Sendyka (eds.), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego.

Snyder, Timothy (2010). *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin.* New York: Basic Books.

Sybir, Pamięć Muzeum (2021). Dąbrowska, Urszula (eds.) Bialystok. Muzeum Pamięci Sybiru.

Szpocinski, Andrzej (2016). 'Sites of memory', *Teksty Drugie*, 1, 245-254.

Thomson, Alistair (2021). 'Searching for Hector Thomson. Telling difficult family war histories', in Joy Damousi, Deborah Tout-Smith and Bart Ziino (eds.) *Museums, History, and the Intimate Experience of the Great War. Love and Sorrow.* London & New York: Routledge, 99-122.

Young, James E. (1993). *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kuwait's Post-War Trauma: Can Museums Support the Healing Process?

Sundus Saleh Alrashid

Abstract:

The invasion of Kuwait in 1990 by its northern neighbour, Iraq, was traumatic as the attack came suddenly, after a day of diplomatic negotiations between the two countries. The war affected all aspects of social, economic, and political life, and every passing anniversary reminds Kuwaitis of the painful memories and wounds that are still not healed. Yet, the State desires to maintain security and peace with its neighbour through minimising inflammatory discourse.

Based on an understanding of the social roles that museums can play in supporting national identity and contributing to discussions about social issues, this article discusses how Kuwait's government museum and private museums represent the subject of the invasion, and how they decide what kind of information can be shared with the public. The article concludes by arguing that, despite the sensitivity of the subject of war, museums are spaces able to hold discussions about the traumas of war, precisely because they are bearers of history and they have the ability to represent information from different perspectives.

Keywords: museum, post-war trauma, healing

On the 2nd August 1990, Kuwait woke up to trauma, as it was invaded by its northern neighbour, Iraq. Iraq proffered many allegations against Kuwait, including claiming that Kuwait had taken over their oil wells (Middle East Newspaper, 2015). Kuwait and Iraq had a long-struggling relationship since the 1930s when the borders between the two countries were demarcated (Almutairi *et al.,* 2003). The early signs of oil wealth in Kuwaiti lands induced Iraq to practice trickery acts against the demarcation of borders and to attempt to take in the northern parts of Kuwait (ibid). Although Kuwait endeavoured to end the crisis, the invasion was shocking for Kuwaitis as there had been diplomatic negotiations between the two countries in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, just a day before the invasion (Middle East Newspaper, 2015). It was a war against the land, the people, and the sovereignty of Kuwait, and the occupation lasted for seven months, during which buildings were destroyed, oil wells were burnt, and people were killed, tortured and captured. After the liberation on 26th February 1991, the effects of the invasion continued to impact all aspects of social, economic, and political life. It was a shocking time that affected the security of the country and

impacted citizens' identities and feelings of belonging (Mahgoub, 2013). In response to these societal effects, in 1992, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah initiated the establishment of the Social Development Office to provide assistance and rehabilitation for Kuwaiti citizens psychologically, socially, and educationally (SDO website, 2016).

Even today, the consequences of the war are still felt, and with every passing anniversary Kuwaitis are reminded of painful memories and wounds that are still not healed. The relationship between Kuwait and Iraq remains unstable. For example, Iraq appealed to the Kuwait government to change the name of the war from the 'Iraqi invasion' to the 'Saddamic invasion' and attempted to negotiate the removal of references to the war from the school curriculum in Kuwait (Albajlati, 2018). In addition, Iraq has continued to make requests for financial support from Kuwait, at the same time as it negotiates with Saudi Arabia and Iran about Kuwait's maritime borders (Ayesh, 2020). As a result, talking about the invasion remains a sensitive topic in Kuwait, and the Kuwait government must be very careful about how it deals with the subject of war. Nevertheless, citizens still need to express their feelings and share their experiences as part of their healing process.

Museums have become platforms to support social issues by creating content and spaces that allow audiences to communicate, express, and share their experiences. Museums are social institutions that, as Sandell (2002) discusses, can cope with social change and have the potential to impact and influence society. Museums also have a social responsibility towards their host societies, to represent their nations, to achieve social inclusion, and to create forums to debate social issues and questions of justice (ibid; Sandell and Nightingale, 2012). As social institutions, museums have the power and ability to represent information using a diverse range of communication methods, to narrate histories and to evidence these narratives with real objects (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Also, as Dean states, 'one reason why the public feels that museums should handle controversial topics is that the public also trusts museums' (2009: 8).

This article discusses how museums, as social institutions, can support the process of healing from trauma. Using Kuwait's government-funded museum and other private museums as case studies, the article examines how the Kuwait National Museum (KNM), The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum, and the Not to Forget Museum represent the subject of the invasion, and how they decide what kind of information can be shared with the public. The article seeks to answer two key questions: Are museums afraid of discussing the topic of war? What activities could a museum hold to heal post-war trauma? The article concludes that the chosen institutions are lacking a proper representation of the invasion, but that they are the museums which could address this subject with high potentials for healing. The article also argues that, despite the sensitivity of the subject of war, museums are spaces able to hold discussions about the traumas of war, precisely because they are bearers of history and they have the ability to represent information from different perspectives. Therefore, museums provide opportunities for education, engagement and healing by supporting public understandings, providing forums for discussion, and allowing the exchange of opinions and emotions in ways that serve to shape the complex histories and national identities of a society.

Societal Healing

By the beginning of the 21st century, museums worldwide were transforming and adopting new roles in order to become public institutions that serve their communities (Turner, 2001). They now act as platforms for discussions about social issues and places that produce experiences by embracing new means of communication and engagement with their audiences (ibid; Kim Lian Chan, 2009). Gradually, over the past two decades, new subjects in Museum Studies have emerged and

developed to address the role of museums in supporting social inclusion (Sandell, 2002), such as their role as peaceful places for healing (Cowan *et al.,* 2019), as places that evoke memories and emotions, and their ability to evoke powerful symbolism (Tzortzi, 2015).

In this regard, museums have begun to take on a therapeutic role (Ioannides, 2018) where their environments can be effective places to help resolve grief (Lonetree, 2012; Melton, 2013), pain (Thomas, 2021), well-being (Falk, 2021), and trauma (Ruehrwein, 2013; Friedler, 2021). For example, Van Noy (2007) and Friedler (2021) discuss how museums can promote community healing from racial and indigenous discrimination, while Ruehrwein (2013) and Melton (2013) discuss how museums can act as trauma clinics that help with the repercussions of war or tragic events. Moreover, Ioannides (2018) expands on the possibility of art therapy in museums as a mechanism to support the healing of mental health issues and the effects of crises or the pandemic. In general, museums, as Falk (2021) argues, are places that enhance personal, social, intellectual, and physical well-being.

As this article discusses the potential of museums to support post-war trauma healing, I will first discuss trauma healing in post-war situations. Melton states that trauma mostly 'occurs as unexpected emergency situations and has a strong impact on individuals as well as communities' (2013: 7). People suffering from the trauma of war need better understanding from others about what they are going through, and they need to join together to share stories and support each other as part of the process of healing (Ruehrwein, 2013). As Van Noy states,

> 'healing from trauma is about acknowledging and validating what happened, giving survivors the space to share their stories with others who have the same experience, and focusing on cultural and community connectedness and identity' (2007: 13).

Being in social or therapy groups that are led by a psychologist or a social worker, telling stories and sharing memories, validates the experience and provides some relief to those suffering from the trauma of war, while also allowing other people, who have not experienced war, to gain an understanding of what veterans and victims went through, so they can support them (Van Noy, 2007; Ruehrwein, 2013).

Museums are social institutions that are accessible to numerous people and considered as allies to health researchers (Ioannides, 2018). Alrashid states that

> 'museums have the power to effect audiences because they use different methods of communication in formal, informal and enjoyable ways. These are advantages that have made museums institutions for social communication; places where social issues can be framed, represented and discussed with others' (2021: 56).

Museums have different and unique resources, such as collections, extensive spaces, exhibitions, and partnerships with other organisations that can be utilised for different occasions. In addition, they have the power of storytelling which is a technique that allows for social issues to be represented, interrogated, and reflected upon.

In line with the above, Melton (2013) presents five ways that museums can use their resources to support the healing of communities facing tragedy. First, cognitively, through social and educational activities and programmes such as lectures and forums, discussions, and planning and encouraging networking. Second, physically, by providing accessible spaces to the public for rest and for allowing museum partners to utilise the museum's resources. Third, emotionally, through social support that promotes the expression of feelings and the sharing of memories and experiences. Fourth, spiritually, through memorial events and funeral ceremonies. Fifth, creatively, through art,

art therapy and object handling (ibid: 19). These methods can help museums to foster personal and social connections, evoke memories and engage communities, which are essential in the healing process. Therefore, 'museums and their programmes encourage dynamic relationships through the provision of "safe space, pleasure, and time for reflection and bonding"' (Ioannides, 2018: 103 citing Silverman, 2010: 55).

Trauma healing is a process that takes time, requires an understanding of the situation and, while it used to take place mainly in clinics, is now taking place in a wider range of situations. Nowadays, museums are developing their social role to promote social inclusion and social justice by establishing alliances with social services, healthcare and welfare providers to seek better social outcomes and enhance well-being.

In the next section, I will discuss the case of Kuwait's museums as post-war trauma healers.

Kuwait's Museums and Post-War Trauma

As aforementioned, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was a shock for Kuwaitis, and it affected the infrastructure in the country as much as it impacted on citizens' identities, security, and feelings of belonging.

Through the following three case studies of Kuwait's museums (Kuwait National Museum, The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum and Not to Forget Museum), I identify how each museum represents the subject of war and what activities they could pursue to provide healing for post-war trauma.

Kuwait National Museum (KNM)

A new building to house the Kuwait National Museum was opened in 1983; however, the museum was severely damaged during the invasion, and its collections were looted and moved to Baghdad during this period (Norman, 1997). After the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, despite the damage and the restoration work that was required, the museum was partly opened, but it was not back in full service until 2002.

To reflect the museum's social responsibility, KNM's former director curated an exhibition in the only gallery of the museum that reopened immediately after the liberation. It was called 'Destruction and Reconstruction,' and was open between 1991 and 1994 to frame the subject of invasion (Alrashid, 2021). The exhibition was like a side-walk, where people walked through the actual scene of the destruction. There were pictures on display but no objects, because of the limited resources and budget (ibid). Although the exhibition was humble in scale, it was an act to show the real outcomes of the invasion to the people. The exhibition served as a memorial and as evidence of a historic event. It can be considered as a physical way of healing (Melton, 2013) the post-war trauma, by providing a space where people could come together, commemorate and share their experiences.

However, after 1994, the exhibition was removed as the government's agenda was then to start a full new restoration programme. The subject of the invasion has never been represented in KNM since then. The former director believed that the invasion was a pivotal point in Kuwait's history and should be displayed in KNM because it revealed political, social and economic messages. Winter states that 'war belongs in a museum because they have a semi-sacred aura' (2012: 152). This aura is why people 'flocked to museums to find refuge and comfort in the aftermath of tragedy' (Melton, 2013: 6). Museums allow people who suffer silently to pose questions, express emotions, and share thoughts and experiences.

Furthermore, Lubar (2007) discusses how representing war in museums is about the relationship between memory, tradition and

history. The ways visitors participate, including engaging with their own memories and stories, can create memorable frameworks that support their healing process. Healing in museums helps people to understand the past and appreciate the present. KNM, as a state museum, is an organisation that could take on the responsibility of representing the controversial topic of war because people 'trust museums' (Dean, 2009: 8), and yet, the museum has failed to do so.

The absence of any representations of the invasion in KNM raises questions regarding issues of politics and power. My hypothesis about the absence of discussions of politics and power is that KNM does not want to act as a political instrument, especially in a time when Kuwait is working to keep a peaceful relationship with its neighbour, Iraq. Also, as a state museum managed by the government, KNM is likely to be subject to a government strategy that does not give complete freedom to KNM curators to decide on the contents of exhibitions. From my multiple field visits to KNM, it was clear that the museum was focused on the archaeology and heritage of Kuwait, with an absence of modern events. It can be argued that, in choosing to be an archaeology and heritage museum, rather than taking on a memorial and healing role, KNM has chosen to avoid taking a political stance.

The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum

On 24th February 1991, during the Iraqi invasion, a clash between nineteen Kuwaitis from the Al-Masila resistance group and Iraqi troops took place in one of the houses in the Al-Qurain residential area. Twelve Kuwaitis were killed in the battle that lasted for ten hours (NCCAL[1] 2022). Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the location after the liberation of Kuwait and instructed that the house be transformed into a museum that would provide historical evidence of Kuwaiti bravery and solidarity. The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum is now contained within the house where the battle occurred, and visitors can walk into the house and view the actual damage from gunshots, which remains just as it did after the fighting had ended (Kelly, 2020). In addition, as the two houses next door were also affected, NCCAL annexed them to house the museum's administration offices, a library, and a gallery that displays documents, firearms, gun casings, bombs, and the belongings and photos from the members of the Al-Masila resistance group.

Figure 1. Added barriers for visitor safety (Source: the author 2021)

During my visit to the museum last summer, the curator explained that the house remains almost as it was after the fight, and only minor repairs were done for visitors' safety (Figure 1). There were small signs to indicate the spots where the group members had hidden or died (Figure 2). The curator stated, 'we know these detailed informations from the survivors who came and narrate their stories' (personal communication, 3rd June 2021). Although some stories contain different information about different events, the museum has respected the survivors, and shown

empathy, by only displaying what they deem appropriate. Further, the curator highlighted that 'Martyr's families visit the museum from time to time especially in February to commemorate their lost ones and to check if we still keep the affected spots unremoved' (personal communication, 3rd June 2021).

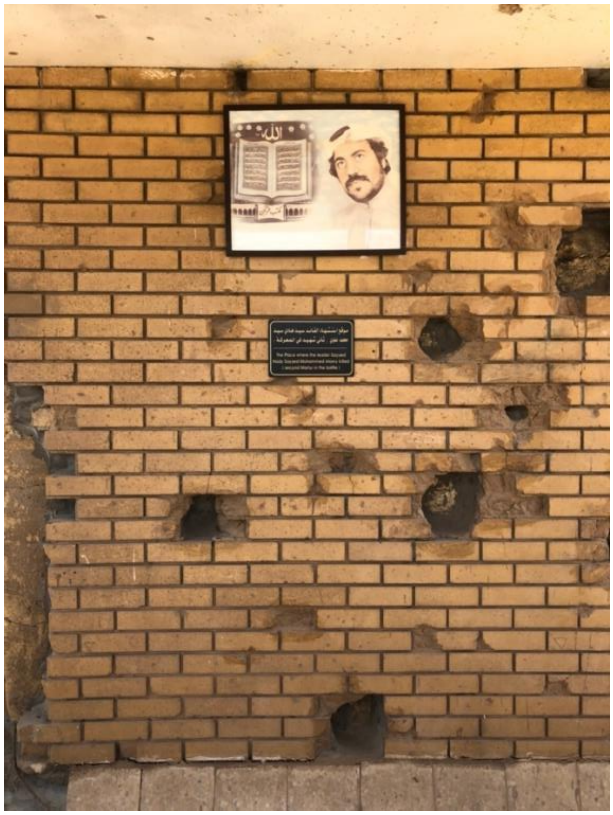

Figure 2. Small sign to indicate important spots (Source: the author 2021)

This museum demonstrates good potential in its role as a memorial that provides a variety of ways for healing. Utilising Melton's (2013) five ways of healing mentioned earlier, The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum could heal cognitively and emotionally through organising support groups, forums for narrating personal stories, and by inviting the public to express their feelings. The museum could also heal physically by providing guided tours with the survivors to help them express their grief and, through this, provide some relief from their grief, as well as to help the wider public to understand and recognise their sacrifice. Moreover, using the museum space to host an art exhibition or installation would be a way of using creativity and art for healing, as visitors are encouraged to make connections with their personal experiences, which can enhance self-esteem and help them to understand their perspectives on life (Ioannides, 2018).

Unfortunately, the museum lacks a narrative as, without a docent or guide, visitors are not provided with information to understand the story of the battle. Additionally, the museum does not hold activities or events to further help with healing from post-war trauma or commemorating the sacrifice. On the other hand, the personal actions from the survivors and martyrs' families do keep the place alive and the memory of the battle alive. This house was preserved in order to serve as a memorial to Kuwaiti bravery, resistance and dignity (Kelly, 2020); however, it appears like a ghost house in the midst of a residential neighbourhood because of the absence of activities that would further its social responsibility (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The destroyed house as it stands in the residential area (Source: the author 2021)

Not to Forget Museum (by Kuwait House of National Works)

This museum was established in 1997 by Yousof Alamiri, the president of the Kuwait House of National Works, as a museum to embody the war experience (Alajmi, 2019). The museum was permanently closed in 2017 due to the building's ownership issues. It was a grassroots activity centre run by volunteers that consisted of a panorama of the Iraqi invasion, a museum, a cinema, and a gallery (Shanan and Abu Alula, 2017). I visited the museum with school when I was a child and still remember how bold its content was. The panorama took visitors on an experiential journey of the invasion, with loud sound and bright flashes. The museum displayed Kuwait's history - the era of each *Amir* (Prince), documents, maps, weapons, and an air force plane. Also, the gallery displayed lots of photos of the destroyed city, of tortured people, of martyrs and of the prisoners of war.

Not to Forget Museum was popular as a destination to learn about the invasion because of its rich and comprehensive content. However, it was not a healing environment as the content was stark and not suitable for everyone. There were caution notices before entering the panorama and the gallery, highlighting that the content may be harmful. Nevertheless, the museum used to hold a festival on the 25th and 26th February to celebrate the national day and the liberation day respectively, which is something KNM has failed to do. The festival hosted activities from a different allied country every year, with different events, such as performances, lectures, workshops, and photography exhibitions (Shanan and Abu Alula, 2017). I argue that this event was a healing moment, where Kuwaitis gathered in a commemorative space and shared their nationality, unity, and loyalty to the country and the ruler family. Sadly, the museum was forced to close due to budget and building ownership issues, without any governmental support (ibid). The work of 20 years has been lost in its absence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Contemporary museums embrace a new social role by providing space and content for challenging and controversial social issues, such as discrimination, inclusion, trauma healing, and well-being (Ioannides, 2018). They have unique resources through their spaces, collections, exhibitions, staff, networking and partnerships that can be utilised for the good of their societies (Melton, 2013). Museum environments and their alliances with social services and healthcare providers make them effective places where trauma healing can potentially be practiced. Trauma work requires an understanding of how its repercussions extend beyond the individual to the wider society. As museums are developing their social role, their participation in providing trauma healing programmes could benefit individuals and communities by enhancing confidence, self-esteem, developing skills and creativity, and fostering intellectual simulation (Ioannides, 2018).

Drawing on three museums in Kuwait, this article has discussed the different representations of war in these museums and what they could provide to support the post-war trauma healing process. Kuwait was invaded by Iraq in 1990 and the society is still suffering from the repercussions of war. As a state museum, KNM neglects the subject of war and prefers to be an archaeology and heritage museum in order to avoid any political conflict. KNM has the resources and potential to be the voice of the nation and to support post-war trauma healing by providing space, collections and partnerships, yet it does not achieve this. The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum, which is also a governmental museum, provides a lived experience of the battle that took place in the house and has much potential to be able to support the trauma healing process. However, similarly to KNM, its social responsibility to do this is absent. It appears that governmental museums in Kuwait are trying to avoid handling the topic of the invasion, which may be part of a strategy to maintain a peaceful relationship with Iraq.

On the other hand, the Not to Forget Museum was more courageous in its representation of the invasion, even though some of its content could be considered upsetting to some people. It was a grassroots activity centre managed by volunteers who themselves curated the content to provide historical information and evidence. Regrettably, this unique content was lost with the museum's closure due to financial issues and a lack of support from the government.

I believe that the subject of war is a sensitive topic that is controversial to display, but this is something museums are able to tackle because of the power they hold through their spaces, collections and resources. They are safe places that can provide knowledge, pleasure, engagement and healing, owing to the fact that they have a mission to serve the society they operate within and to help to achieve the goal of social inclusion. Lusaka (2001) states that museums 'help the public put the tragedy in historical perspective and consider the question, 'where do we go from here?' (cited by Melton, 2013: 14). I recall a visit to Al-Salam Palace Museum[2] with a friend, who is a daughter of a prisoner of war, and so the subject of the invasion always triggers harmful memories. During the tour, we saw a short film about the invasion and she was crying. At the end of our visit, she expressed her feelings to me, saying, 'this is the first time I can handle the invasion, this is touching' (personal communication, 8th July 2021). The representations of the invasion in this museum are ambitious and could be the best in Kuwait, and I suggest that if the museum activated its social responsibility, it could provide a prominent space for healing and support. Meanwhile, Kuwait's museums need to be healed themselves in order for them to be able to practice healing for the rest of society.

Notes

[1] The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters is a governmental organisation that was established in 1973 to maintain all aspects of culture and arts in Kuwait.

[2] Newly opened to the public in February 2020 and overseen by the Amiri Diwan.

Works Cited

Alajmi, J. (2019). Kuwaiti Houses. Kuwait Magazine. November 2019 (433).

Albajlati, Al. (2018). *Angry reactions to the statements of the Ambassador of Baghdad*. Available at: http://www.alkhaleej.ae/alkhaleej/page/17571279-b840-4bef-85d7-7cebdc14db36 [Accessed 10 February 2022].

Almutairi, N., Aldehani, M., and Dashti, I. (2003). *Kuwait-Iraq relations: The political, economic and social dimensions*. Available at: http://www.kna.kw/clt-html5/run.asp?id=831 [Accessed 14 May 2022].

Alrashid, S.S. (2021). *The imagined museum: framing social, educational and spatial roles of Kuwait's National Museum*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Brunel University London.

Ayesh, M. (2020). *Cash-strapped Iraq 'blackmailed Kuwait'*. Available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/arabic-press-review-cash-strapped-iraq-blackmailed-kuwait [Accessed 10 February 2022].

Cowan, B., Laird, R., and McKeown, J. (2019). Museum objects, health and healing: the relationship between exhibitions and wellness. London and New York: Routledge.

Dean, D. (2009). 'Museums as conflict zones: the Canadian War Museum and bomber command', *Museum and Society*, 7(1): 1-15.

Falk, J.H. (2021). *The Value of Museums: Enhancing Societal Well-Being*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Friedler, M.B. (2021). *More than a museum: museums' past, current, and future involvement with racial issues*. Master thesis. The State University of New York.

Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1999). *The educational role of the museum.* 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Ioannides, E. (2016). 'Museums as therapeutic environments and the contribution of art therapy', *Museum International*, *68*(3-4): 98-109.

Kelly, M. (2020). 'Location and nation: Embodying Kuwait's national narrative', In Wakefield, S. (eds) *Museums of the Arabian Peninsula: Historical Developments and Contemporary Discourses:* 105-120. London and New York: Routledge.

Kim Lian Chan, J. (2009). 'The consumption of museum service experiences: benefits and value of museum experiences', *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(2-3): 173-196.

Lonetree, A. (2012). D*ecolonizing museums: representing native America in national and tribal museums*. University of North Carolina Press.

Lubar, S. (2007). 'Exhibiting memories', In Watson, S. (ed.) *Museums and their communities*: 397-405. London and New York: Routledge.

Mahgoub, Y. (2013). 'Tracing the evolution of urbanism in Kuwait', *Open House International*, 38(4): 80-89.

McDermott, P., Friel, B., and Doherty, R. (2021). 'Museums and Responding to Crises Post COVID-19: Places of 'Community Healing''. Available at: https://www.ulster.ac.uk/museumscovid19/blog/posts/museums-and-responding-to-crises-post-covid-19-places-of-community-healing [Accessed 10 February 2022].

Melton, A. (2013). 'Comfort and connectivity: The museum as a healer', *Museums & Social Issues*, 8(1-2): 6-21.

Middle East Newspaper. (2015). *The most prominent historical phases from before the invasion to liberation*. Available at: https://aawsat.com/home/article/420346/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%88-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1 [Accessed 7 February 2022].

NCCAL. (2022). *The Al-Qurain Martyr's Museum*. Available at: https://www.nccal.gov.kw/pages/monumentsandmuseums/%d9%85%d8%aa%d8%ad%d9%81-%d8%b4%d9%87%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%86 [Accessed 10 February 2022].

Norman, K. (1997). 'The invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent recovery of its national museum: A conservator's view', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 16(2): 180-191.

Ruehrwein, B.J. (2013). 'The art museum as trauma clinic: A veteran's story, *Museums & Social Issues*, 8(1-2): 36-46.

Sandell, R. (2002). *Museums, society, inequality*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sandell, R., and Nightingale, E. (2012). *Museums, equality and social justice.* London and New York: Routledge.

SDO website. (2016). *About SDO*. Available at: http://www.sdo.gov.kw/Pages.aspx?ID=11 [Accessed 7 February 2022].

Silverman, L. (2010). *The Social Work of Museums*. Routledge: New York.

Shanan, A., and Abu Alula, B. (2017). *Alamiri: The House of National Works is under threat of removal and power cuts off without any support or alternative provision.* Available at: https://www.alanba.com.kw/ar/kuwait-news/714412/16-01-2017-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%87/ [Accessed 12 February 2022].

Thomas, S. (2021). 'Representing difficult histories and contested heritage in museums', in Robbins, N, Thomas, S., Tuominen, M., and Wessman, A. (eds) *Museum Studies - a Bridge between Theory and Practice*: 532-545. ICOFOM.

Turner, C. (2001). 'Tomorrow's museums', *Humanities Research*, 8(1): 1-3.

Tzortzi, K. (2015). Museum space: where architecture meets museology. London and New York: Routledge.

Van Noy, J.B. (2007). *Can museums promote community healing? A healing museum model for Indigenous communities*. Master thesis, University of Kansas.

Winter, J. (2012). 'Museums and the representation of war', *Museum and Society*, 10(3): 150-163.

Changing the Representation of War: Former Combatants and the Redrawing of Colombia's Armed Conflict Narrative

Valeria Posada-Villada[1]

Abstract:

Over the past fourteen years, Colombians witnessed the signing of two deals aimed at ending the confrontation with the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia/United Self-Defenses of Colombia) and the FARC-EP (Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo/Revolutionary Forces of Colombia-People's Army). The legal framework established in the implementation of these deals has allowed combatants' viewpoints on warfare to emerge in the public sphere and manifest themselves through cultural productions and exhibitions. Juan Manuel Echavarría's *The War We Have Not Seen* (2007-2009), an art project exhibited at the Modern Art Museum of Bogotá (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá - MAMBO), and Inty Maleywa's artwork *Unearthing Memories* (2013-2014), included in Colombia's National Museum's (Museo Nacional de Colombia - MNC) new permanent exhibition, are two noteworthy examples. These artistic projects are helping local museums expand and enrich Colombia's historical narrative of the conflict, deepening its comprehension for a wider audience while dealing with all the social and political issues this process entails.

Keywords: combatants, art, museums, political transition, conflict narrative, Colombia, Latin America

In the last two decades, the Modern Art Museum of Bogotá (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá – MAMBO) and the National Museum of Colombia (Museo Nacional de Colombia – MNC) have sought to provide visitors a more complex and nuanced account of Colombia's armed conflict. They have done so through art, exhibiting two projects in which former soldiers, guerrillas and paramilitaries have participated as artistic authors and collaborators. The first project was Juan Manuel Echavarría's and Fundación Puntos de Encuentro painting series *The War We Have Not Seen* (2007-2009), presented twice in MAMBO (2009 and 2017). The second was Inty Maleywa's *Unearthing Memories* (2013-2014), a drawing series given as a long-term loan to the MNC and included in its new permanent exhibition: *Making Society* (2019).

The interest of these institutions in presenting the stories of former combatants reflects the social shift brought about by the latest peace accords. This shift, widely discussed through the perspective of victims and grassroots organizations, has not been sufficiently analysed in the case of armed groups. Present literature on the topic within the heritage and museological field

remains scarce. So far, it has been briefly addressed by Sierra in her work on artistic modes of contestation and litigation (2015), Quishpe's research on guerrilla memory initiatives (2018), and Rubiano's analysis of art as a device to reactivate speech (2018; 2019).

This article thus wishes to deepen the knowledge around the representation and interpretation of war narratives in Colombian museums. For this reason, the article focuses not only on exhibition curation, but also on its active interpretation by museum workers and visitors (Macdonald, 2007). Although the focus is on the local, this research hopes to serve as an exemplary case for other professionals and institutions abroad grappling with contested narratives and seeking to find valuable contributions that enrich their understanding of the subject.

The analysis is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the social process that led to the combatant's voice becoming visible in the public sphere and eventually reaching the realm of arts and culture. The second examines how art has helped combatants to redraw Colombia's narrative of the conflict and enhance its understanding on an emotional and historical level, focusing on the artistic initiatives themselves. The last section analyses how MAMBO and MNC transformed each project into distinct curatorial and educational approaches, as well as how the public has reacted to them, highlighting its achievements, shortcomings, and obstacles. Research findings gathered primary and secondary sources, including artworks, exhibition photographs and catalogues, newspaper articles, interviews with artists and museum personnel, as well as reviews, journal articles, and broader legal and historical literature on museums, memory, healing, and reparation**.**

The Context

With the hope of ending its decades-long conflict, the Colombian government signed an agreement with the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia/United Self-Defenses of Colombia), the largest paramilitary group in 2005, and the FARC-EP in 2016 (Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo/Revolutionary Forces of Colombia-People's Army). The agreements established a legal framework that focused not only on the prosecution of criminal offenses and human right violations, but also on addressing the long-term social effects of the armed conflict. Acknowledging victims' rights, truth, justice, and reparation, the framework highlighted the importance of deepening the understanding of the war and its historical course (República de Colombia, 2005: 22; Presidencia de la República and Congreso Nacional, 2011:31).[2] Interestingly, it was further stimulated by the international 'memory boom' and its social imperative to confront past atrocities (Sodaro, 2017:16).

Rather unexpectedly, this framework has gone beyond the law and transformed the way Colombia's past is seen and interpreted (Archivo Virtual de los Derechos Humanos y la Memoria Histórica, n.d.:4; Orozco 2009:15; Lugo and Pablo 2015:24). The analyses of war's complex dynamics and repercussions that academics, grassroots organisations, and NGO's have produced provide alternative narratives and representations that contest polarised appreciations of the conflict (state vs. insurgency). Moreover, these analyses offer an array of multiple, and oftentimes clashing outlooks on war. This is a daring exercise that has strived to reverse wartime understandings by allowing divergent and opposing viewpoints about conflict to express themselves (Sierra León, 2015:13; Estripeaut-Bourjac et al. 2020:14).

The shift of attention, of course, has not left armed groups untouched. Though it may be true to say that the urgency to reach successive agreements did precede official initiatives to repair victims, it was victims, and not combatants, who became the outright game-changers (Tovar,2020:216).[3] Their demands have challenged the conventional outlook of combatants as warriors and heroes,

whilst also stimulating a critical reflection on their role in shaping the war (Jimeno, Myriam; Morna, 2014; Sodaro, 2017:16). In response to their pleas, combatants have begun to meditate on and publicly express their own sense of the past.

Initially, combatants' outlooks on warfare were presented via declarations, hearings, and research initiatives.[4] Soon enough, these became a source of inspiration and contributed to the cultural production of soap operas, movies, documentaries, theatre plays, books, and graphic novels.[5] This proliferation not only corroborated the role of new media as carriers and commodities of memory (Huyssen, 2003), it was also heavily driven by the demands posed by the abovementioned legal framework and its figure of *symbolic reparation*. This underlined the power of cultural and aesthetic modes of expression to redress the individual and social damage caused by the war. The focus, without a doubt, impacted and transformed the local arts scene of the last two decades (Sierra León, 2015:7; Rubiano Pinilla, 2018: 68).

It is therefore no wonder that victims, combatants, or artists have increasingly turned to museums, archives, and memorials in their quest to reexamine the conflict and infuse it with new meanings. The importance of these sites as vehicles of memorialisation, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the past has made them central platforms for discussion. Between 1998 and 2015 alone, four official memory initiatives were created, and nineteen houses, museums, centres, chapels, parks, and kiosks of memory were built by grassroots organisations (Posada, 2018:141-142).

Existing museums have also reframed their identities as a response to this shift. Distancing from the grandiose and celebratory narratives about the nation and its inheritance, museums such as the National Museum of Colombia (Museo Nacional de Colombia - MNC), the Modern Art Museum of Bogotá, the Antioquia Museum and the Miguel Urrutia Art Museum have positioned themselves as spaces to stimulate public involvement and address the political and social needs associated with the armed conflict (Museo de Antioquia, 2016; Banrepcultural, 2022). Moreover, some of the guiding principles of memorial museums - such as regretting, assuming responsibility, and coming to terms with difficult heritage - have been embraced as guidelines within these institutions (Sodaro, 2017:19). This has been done with the hope of reinforcing local cultures' respect for Human Rights, as well as transforming war's noxious othering process (Horne, 2009).

The projects

Both *The War We Have Not Seen* (TWNS) and *Unearthing Memories* (UM) aim at bringing attention to a war that has remained out of sight for many Colombians. They recall events, figures and operations that lie buried but have impacted combatants' personal lives as well as the historical development of the conflict. These projects, however, responded to very different core questions. TWNS was concerned with the lived experience of combatants, that is, 'How have you lived the conflict and how has it changed you?'. Artist Juan Manuel Echavarría approached the subject externally, whereas Inti Maleywa, a former FARC-EP combatant herself, was directly involved with the subject of her work. *UM,* in that sense, responded to a question posed by the group she belongs to: 'How do we depict our struggle?'

TWNS traces back to a series of workshops coordinated by Echavarria and his foundation Puntos de Encuentro. The foundation, opened in 2006, was actively promoting communitarian projects focused on memory and the arts. When Echavarría stumbled upon a modest exhibition organised by former AUC paramilitaries at La Ceja's Cultural Center (Antioquia) a year later, he invited three of its participants to join Puntos de Encuentro's painting workshops (Derecho, Arte, 2018). Following this early success, Echavarría

expanded the project. He then requested soldiers via the Health Batallion, as well as former FARC-EP and ELN combatants (Ejército de Liberación Nacional/National Liberation Army) via the state's Reincorporation and Normalisation Agency to also attend (Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización - ARN). It was not easy to gain the trust of all the participants but, in the end, a total of 50 former soldiers and combatants completed all the workshops: 17 male ex-paramilitaries, 44 ex-FARC-EP guerrilla members (30 men and 14 women), 18 male army soldiers and 1 ex-ELN male guerrilla member. Echavarría organised four workshops per combatant group and each one lasted a total of eight months. While he and other workshop facilitators provided technical assistance, participants elaborated on paintings of animated characters, idyllic sceneries, and childhood memories. Through the pleasure of painting, combatants gradually gained confidence and began depicting their wartime experiences as well. The painting surface expanded; participants began assembling single tablets together and creating impressive battlefield landscapes composed of up to forty-five single tablets.

At the end of this two-year process, the participants created approximately 480 introspective paintings and a poignant view of Colombia's theatre of war (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, 200938; Rosas, 2019:32).[6] The paintings were dated according to their date of production, but the events themselves spanned almost two decades of war (1990s-2007).

These paintings, however, did not offer a historical journey of the conflict. They focused on a series of loose episodes instead. Very few dealt with camp life. The majority referred to the conflict's criminal repertoire: kidnappings, tortures, disappearances, executions, massacres, amongst others. For this reason, Bourjac regarded the paintings as atonement exercises. Among these, the painting *Easy Prey*, by former soldier Carlos G is a good example:

> This is an experience I had, a combat that we had and a girl was killed. It was around 2003 – 2004, in Arauca, on the border between Fortul and Tame. (…) Even the camouflage uniform was too big for this girl; the rifle looked too big on her little hands. She had inside her kit little flowers and little roses that they make themselves with sewing and coloured threads.
>
> (…) We picked her up and managed to take her to the hamlet. We had a vigil for her there. We made her a little altar, we bought her candles (…) The one, who shot her, Buitrago, never thought she was a girl. It was when we told him, "Brother, it's a girl" (…)
>
> And the guy immediately got off the water tower. He broke in tears. That guy did cry for that girl (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, n.d.).[7]

Fig. 1. Carlos G (2009). Easy Prey [Carne de Cañón]. Vinyl Paint on MDF, 150 x 140 cm, Fundación Puntos de Encuentro Collection. Digital Image Courtesy of Juan Manuel Echavarría.

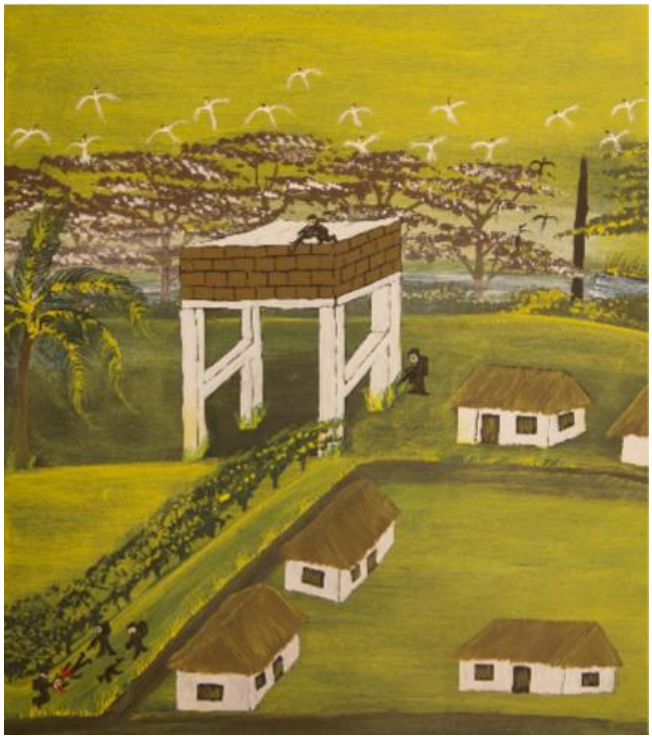

Fig. 2. Carlos G. (2009). Easy Prey [Carne de Cañón](Fragment). Vinyl Paint on MDF, 150 x 140 cm, Fundación Puntos de Encuentro Collection. Digital Image Courtesy of Juan Manuel Echavarría.

UM, on the other hand, developed as an internal proposal to commemorate the FARC-EPS's sixty years of armed struggle (1964-2014). Inty Maleywa was already known in Martín Caballero's Bloc - the coastal unit she operated in - for her artistic sensibility. As a result, she was tasked with creating a drawing that could honour the ideals and values of their armed resistance. What started out as a project that would illustrate the emergence of FARC-EP in the 1960s, quickly expanded into detailed research of 100 years (1920-2010) of Colombian history in a quest to decipher the roots of the FARC-EP and its subsequent development (Posada Villada, 2019).

In the elaboration of the series, Maleywa collected old photographs and oral and written testimonies from former commanders. She also compiled Colombian, Mexican, and Spanish pictorial references on social movements and political violence via online sources and FARC-EP's mobile libraries. Maleywa regularly shared her ideas and progress with her comrades; she did not work solo. They helped her in determining how the oral, visual, and written information she had gathered would be conveyed in each drawing. For this reason, she regards it as a collective representation of FARC-EP's outlook on the conflict (Noticiero Barrio Adentro, 2017).

The series, composed of twelve medium size drawings, individually represent a decade and bring together more than forty historical events and military operations. The result is a collage of impressive proportions that is saturated with bodies and events (See Figs 3 and 4).[8] Contrary to TWNS paintings, UM's account of the conflict is not episodic but cyclic and portrayed as a ceaseless confrontation between two concepts: power and people. The 'people', represented by indigenous and afro communities, farmers, laborers, and students, move through the decades – as well as mountains, rivers, and cities – to fight and question the 'power' vested in the silhouettes of presidents, state officials, clergy, and troops. Within the confrontation, the FARC-EP is portrayed as the voice and representative of the people's demands. The idealised figure of the guerrilla fighter and their commanders is always present, fighting against the structures of power that threaten to defeat the people and destroy the natural landscape they inhabit.

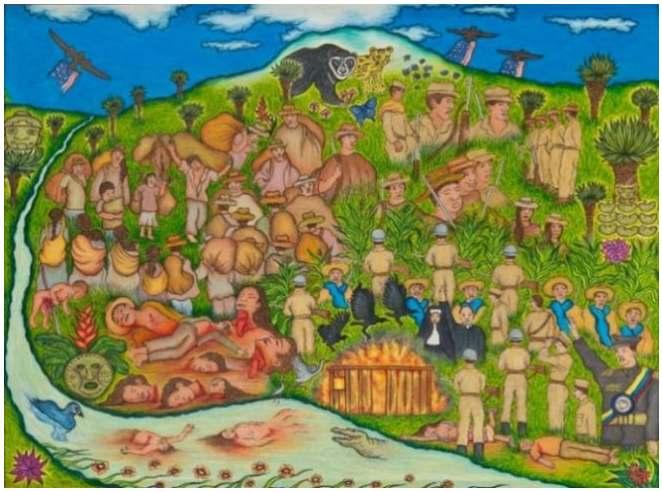

Fig. 3. Inty Maleywa (2013). *Integrated pain, 1950s. From the Series Unearthing Memories [Dolor integrado, década de los años 50. De la serie Desenterrando Memorias]*. Drawing on paper, 29, 7 x 42 cm. Digital Image Courtesy of Inty Maleywa.

Fig. 4. Inty Maleywa (2013). *Eternal presence, 1960s, From the Series Unearthing Memories [Cíclico Retorno II, década de los años 60. De la serie Desenterrando Memorias]*. Drawing on paper, 29, 7 x 42 cm. Digital Image Courtesy of Inty Maleywa.

Confronting the two projects, their different nuances and implications become clear. Bourjac has described *TWNS* as a 'collective confession', one that makes visible the burden of war all combatants' carry within them (Estripeaut-Bourjac, n.d.:58). *UM* is nothing of the sort, it does not seek vindication. On the contrary, *UM* is an overt political statement. The former provides the audience an overview of Colombia's theatres of war, whereas the latter presents a more comprehensive picture of the conflict, including all its economic, social, and ideological implications.

These projects, however coincide in three important ways. Firstly, both works act as social cartographies. They describe war's tangible impact on particular environments, mapping out the complex geography of the conflict (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, 2009:45) In this sense, war is not only seen in the abstract – as an emotional or ideological imprint – but also as a lived set of relations between communities and territories. (Derecho, Arte, 2018).

Secondly, the artworks act as social catalyzers that have altered the way combatants relate with themselves and others. On the one hand, *TWNS* assumed a therapeutic dimension not initially intended, but with important repercussions for both combatants and workshop facilitators. Retired soldier, Luis, for example, explained how the workshops helped him to deal with his distress: 'unconsciously it was like a therapy because it was like getting rid of those bitter experiences. (…) it was healing, a life experience I never imagine I could live.' (Ruíz Rodríguez, Mariana; Zuluaga Aristizabal, 2018:115).[9] Likewise, José, ex-paramilitary, stated that the painting sessions 'psychologically gave us the courage to live, it taught us that what we had lived before was another scenario, for me that was another human being' (ibid:112).[10] The story of the workshops' facilitator Noel Palacio, musician and victim of the 2002 Bojayá Massacre, is particularly powerful. Participating in the workshop transformed not only his behavior towards combatants but helped him regard his own painful memories in another light, once he realised that, like him, most of the combatants were from a rural background, had lost their families in the war, and carried with them a heavy emotional burden.

Fig. 5. Inty Maleywa (2017). *Unearthing Memories presentation and discussion.* Dabeiba, Antioquia: ETCR Jacobo Arenas. Photo courtesy of Inty Maleywa.

UM, on the other hand, has aided former FARC combatants in reinforcing their collective identity amid an unsettling political transition. Through the socialization of her own work in 25 different Transition Camps (Espacios Transicionales de Capacitación y Reincorporación/Transitional Spaces for Training and Reincorporation - ETCRs), Maleywa has been able to keep some of her fellows interested in contributing to Colombia's peacebuilding efforts (See Fig.5). Not only have many of them taken ownership over the project, creating rap songs inspired on *UM*, or displaying copies of the series within their newly built *memory houses,* but this fruitful exchange has also led to the formation of the Coomunarte arts collective. (FARC - Conejo Guajira 2017; *HAWAPI 2018, Pondores*, 2018). Through it, Maleywa and other former guerrilla fighters wish to organize concerts, exhibitions, and festivals to preserve and share their collective memory with others (COOMUNARTE, n.d.; Cantillo Barrios, 2016).

Lastly, both initiatives highlight how difficult it is to draw clear-cut divisions between victims and perpetrators in such a long-running conflict. Both efforts emphasize violence's fluid borders through its cyclical aspect and its constant record of '(…) retaliations and circular repercussions' (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, 2009:47)".[11] This portrayal, overall, acknowledges the progressive rapprochement of opposing narratives which escape the black and white to explore the truth of grays (Orozco, 2009).

Exhibitions and the Public

The inaugural display of *TWNS* at MAMBO 2009, was the first time a local museum exhibited artworks made by combatants in Colombia's armed conflict. The latest anthology presented in the museum - and, by extension, the country - on the topic, titled *Art and Violence in Colombia Since 1948* featured sixty-one different artists. None of these had taken up arms or presented works from the perspective of combatants (Medina 1999). It is therefore fair to say that this exhibition pioneered in the presentation of combatant's point of view.

In the making of the exhibition, Echavarría worked together with the Uruguayan artist and curator Ana Tiscornia. They selected 90 paintings from 35 different participants, which MAMBO presented in a sober white and grey scenario. Through this installation design, the museum spatially translated Echavarría and Tiscornia's idea of a 'silent show' (See Fig. 6). And silent it was. The exhibition's main text only presented an overview of the workshops, it did not reference the authors, or the specific events depicted in the paintings.

This decision served two purposes. On the one hand, Echavarría and Tiscornia thought it to be helpful for the audience 'to give meaning to the works with their own unsuspecting gaze, without the prejudices or even hatreds that usually preceded today's opinions' (Verdad Abierta, 2009).[12] On the other hand, the absence of information served security purposes. The museum feared retaliation if combatants' identities were disclosed. Even though four years had passed since the AUC had demobilised, the Democratic Security policy was still in place.[13] This had a real impact on how much background information MAMBO could give to the visitors on the paintings and their history.

In its need of providing more information on the project, MAMBO assembled short essays from various experts – from art historians to sociologists and lawyers – and featured them on an extensive catalogue that is now also available via the project's website. Additionally, the educational department prepared guided tours for the general audience on the topic. Its specific content, however, could not be retrieved by the present head of education, Lyda Vásquez, since she was not in charge of the department at the time and the museum did not preserve any registry for later consultation (Posada Villada, January 6, 2022).

After the opening, some critics and researchers expressed their concerns over the lack of in-depth

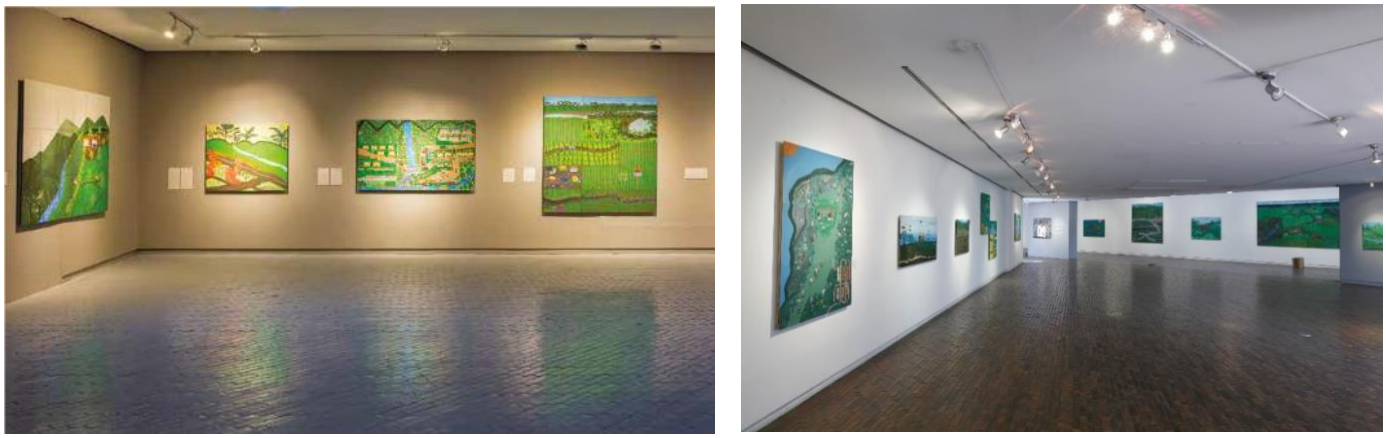

Fig. 6. Juan Manuel Echavarría (2009/2017). *The War We Have Not Seen Exhibition Views in 2009 (left) and 2017 (right)*. Bogotá: MAMBO. Photo Courtesy of Juan Manuel Echavarría.

information on the paintings. According to Gamboa, this presentation format represented:

> (…) war as an indistinguishable accumulation of victimising actions, exercised by indiscriminate armed groups and guided by indiscernible intentions. It thus re-produces a point of view according to which the meaning of war in Colombia (the truth of war) is an already-known phenomenon: war is horror, hell, and absurdity (Gamboa 2016:19).[14]

It took eight years and twelve travelling exhibitions before the names, locations, and stories behind the paintings were shared with the public. In 2018, MAMBO prepared a retrospective exhibition on Juan Manuel Echavarría's work titled *Rivers and Silences* [*Ríos y Silencios*]. Within it, a small selection of paintings of *TWNS* were included. Apparently, one could say that its display was akin to the one presented in 2009. However, the differences between the two were striking. Each artwork in *Rivers and Silences* referenced a specific author and included a written account of the events depicted. Furthermore, five of these were also accompanied with video capsules that shared extra information on the works: aerial images and audio recordings on the places and episodes depicted in the paintings Botella, 2018; Ossa, Gabriel; Echavarría, Juan Manuel; Grisalez, 2018). In Echavarría's view, both the sharing of information and the making of the videos on location had been possible thanks to the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC (2016) as well as the establishment of a Truth Commission (Derecho, Arte, 2018). These circumstances also enabled former combatants, such as John Gerardo and Henry Caliche, to share their experiences openly with the public via videos, guided tours, and discussions (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, 2018; Rubiano, 2019: 79).

The combatants' active participation in this exhibition also confronted the audience's prejudice. Such is the account offered by Jefferson, an ex-paramilitary soldier. While assisting with the installation of *Rios y Silencios*, he was surprised to learn that one of the recordings detailed the armed action of the *La Novia* (2003) painting, in which he had also participated. He was introduced to the painting's author, Henry Caliche, a few days later, sparking a movie-like encounter:

> I [Jefferson] asked him, "what was your alias?", And when he replied "Caliche", I got goosebumps…I responded "Caliche, we looked for you for almost three years to kill
>
> you. That was the order, to kill you." We then shook our hands and hugged. That was a fraternal moment. [Then] someone said "How come you are hugging a *guerrillero?!"*. [To which I replied], "No. First, he is not a *guerrillero* and second, I

am not a *paraco* (paramilitary) anymore." [emphasis added] (Rubiano, 2018).[15]

Rios y Silencios thus strengthened the empathetic approach already present in the first exhibition by establishing more direct contact with combatants and their stories. Furthermore, the guided tours and workshops given by the museum for children under the age of twelve, such as 'We are histories', underlined the need to humanise perpetrators and consider their point of view (Posada Villada, January 6th 2022). This stance received positive feedback from visitors and critics alike. Art historian Caridad Botella summarised these by stating that the exhibition 'generated an overwhelming feeling of compassion which is born outside of any ideology and religion and appeals to the Greek etymology of the word, referring to "suffering together"' (Erazo Coral, n.d.; Botella, 2018).

Maleywa's series constitutes another example of how the peace accords allowed an expanded view of the war to emerge. The inclusion of these drawings in MNC's renovation project signaled a ten-year long institutional shift. In 2010, the museum's curatorial team hosted the first travelling exhibition on the life of a guerrilla fighter titled *Making Peace in Colombia*. This display looked at the last thirty decades of conflict from the standpoint of Carlos Pizarro (1951-1990), former commander of the M-19 communist guerillas (El Tiempo 2010). This daring approach generated controversies and tensions within and outside the institution (Revista Semana 2012). Nevertheless, the curatorial team that succeeded the renovation project kept going forward with the initial plan to present an inclusive account of the armed conflict.

The permanent exhibit, *Making Society*, which opened in 2019 and features Maleywa's series, was the result of this process (Fig.7). It retells the history of the groups that have inhabited Colombian territory from pre-Hispanic times to the present through 400 objects. It does so by focusing on three key themes: social relationships and connections (*Social Fabric*), disputes and fractures (*Conflict*), and emblematic cases and models (*Voices*). The objects are displayed in cabinets, vitrines, audio, and video installations that stimulate visitors on a visual, written, and acoustic level. This compressed set-up overwhelms some of the visitors but, nonetheless, does its best to portray Colombia's rich social landscape.

Maleywa's drawing series is presented in a central cubicle within *Making Society* where these three themes - as well as the exhibit's passageways - intersect. This cell brings together several perspectives on the conflict as seen through the eyes of farmers, afro and indigenous communities, victim associations, and armed actors (M-19, paramilitaries, and Armed Forces). The objects are

Fig. 7. Valeria Posada-Villada (2021). Making Society Exhibition View [Unearthing Memories Installation- Left Corner].Bogotá: Museo Nacional.

hence loaded with contradictory, yet overlapping, experiences and meanings. For this reason, their coexistence within this singular space delivers a powerful message: history can contain many viewpoints.

Compared to MAMBO's exhibition, this display carries an additional challenge for visitors, since it implies acknowledging combatant's humanity not only in emotional, but also ideological terms. Often the hardest task, according to MNC'S accessibility program educator, Alejandro Suárez, has been to confront visitors' visions of Maleywa and the FARC-EP as the enemy:

> Maleywa's human experience has been reduced many times to being a *guerrillera*, transforming this into a stigma that invalidates her experience as, for example, a political, a historical, and sentient subject. She turns into *that guerrillera* whose artwork's presence in the museum is being questioned and depreciated (…) However, I continue to turn to her work precisely because I want to go beyond the idea that the "guerrillero is bad, we don't know why, but he kills soldiers and screws civil society". Which is the imaginary with which many children come to the museum.
>
> I instead use topics such as land dispute and restitution as points of departure in her series to show that our history is full of complex and exclusionary dynamics that have made people disagree to such an extent that they have seen taking up arms as the only option to have their claims be heard [Emphasis Added] (Posada Villada, Jan 13, 2022).[16]

Many visitors, however, still consider this critical reflection on the history of Colombia as a deliberate promotion of a political position. For example, in one workshop where Suárez elaborated on the historical uprising of the *Bogotazo* (9th of April 1948), he recalled two adults voicing their concerns over the supposedly overexposure of the guerrilla's point of view in the public sphere by stating, 'You [younger generations] are only interested about what they have to say, right? And what happens to all the poor soldiers they have killed (…) and have sacrificed their lives? You do not put yourselves in their shoes' (Posada Villada, Jan 13, 2022).[17] He, as well as other participants, have usually responded to these comments by stating their interest in gaining a wider understanding of the war. At times he has felt uneasy but despite this, Suárez considers the possibility of holding these discussions a step forward:

> Until recently these issues were not really voiced. Having an object in the museum that questions visitors' idea of the past is therefore very valuable in terms of spurring ethical transformation. That is, how we interact with others and with the world. If in many schools, kids are not taught, or even allowed to be sensitive to these issues, then here in the museum they can. And this is what I find valuable about a series such as Maleywa's, because it's a good point of departure to discuss ethics. How can we coexist with the vision of a *guerrillero*, with someone who is an *Other* without turning it into an enemy? In a few words, how can we transform otherness into alterity? (Ibid.) [Emphasis Added].[18]

Conclusion

Suárez's closing remark constitutes a valid reflection on the main challenge Colombia's museums, and its society at large, face today. Both MAMBO and MNC, through their curatorial and educational approaches, have built a more empathetic and open approach to Colombia's account of war by giving former combatants a space to publicly express their sense of the past. These institutions, as a representation of the local cultural scenario, have reaped the rewards of decades of peacebuilding efforts and have strived

to give the public a more inclusive and humane account of the conflict; a phenomenon unconceivable only three decades ago.

Peacebuilding, nonetheless, is a bilateral process. The problem is not only about who should speak but also who will listen. While the Peace Agreements have allowed these stories to surface, this does not automatically imply that they will be acknowledged by visitors. This aspect has not yet been structurally addressed by both institutions. So far, their artistic and museological efforts have mostly focused on representation and healing, but not on addressing war's noxious othering processes. As Yineth, former FARC combatant, states: "They always say *we* should reintegrate, *we* should adjust, but what happens with society?" [Emphasis added] (Castro, Daniela; Ordoñez, 2018). The backdrop of persistent violence and insecurity in which Colombia's political transition is submerged, weaponises differences that fuel conflict. This problem cannot be tackled through a separate set of loans, acquisitions, temporary exhibitions or educational workshops. It needs to be addressed consistently and transformed into a series of long-term efforts that cross all museum departments. If museums are safe spaces for unsafe ideas, following Heumann Gurian's quote, MAMBO and MNC, should actively work in developing a culture of trust where conflict's legacy can be openly discussed and revaluated.

Furthermore, this development is critical for conflict resolution. Distrust engendered by a new governmental swerve in institutions like the National Centre for Historical Memory and the National Memory Museum, has called into question the cultural sector's true commitment to reconciliation (Armario, 2019; Liévano Bermúdez, 2020). If not adequately handled, this issue may end up reducing many of these memorial efforts into anti-war flattening discourses that are felt to be bureaucratic and theatrical, rather than substantive. An example, according to Vera Lugo and Macdonald, of how difficult heritage can turn into a vehicle through which the Colombian state re-legitimises its image without having to redress the conflict's most pressing and contentious legacies (Lugo and Pablo, 2015; Macdonald, 2015).

Notes

[1] Valeria Posada-Villada is a Colombian historian and independent curator currently working in Amsterdam's Photography Museum (FOAM). She obtained both her MA in Arts and Museum Studies from the University of Amsterdam and her BA in History from Andes University. From 2015 onwards, she has been researching the relationship between art,museology, memory, and politics in Latin America. She develops this interest while simultaneously carrying out historical research on art forms such as photography and performance art.

[2] Within this legal framework, 'victims' have been defined as individuals and collectives who have experienced damage as a result of International Humanitarian Law violations in the framework of an internal armed conflict.

[3] Author's own translation. In Lleras's words: "These voices, [who] were given legitimacy and reparations became a prime objective when, in 2011, the Congress passed the Victims and Land Restitution Law, the text of which acknowledges the existence of an internal armed conflict. This was not always the case. Not only were the accusations and denunciations of those who had been victimised placed in doubt, but in recent history even the accounts of the perpetrators were given more heed as when the justice and Peace Law sought to demobilise the paramilitary groups in 2005."

[4] Some examples are 1) the hearings given to Justice and Peace Unit prosecutors by paramilitary commanders and soldiers of its different blocs, 2) the *Memoria Histórica y contexto* Research Directive of the Public Force and, 3) the research projects based on retrieving information on combatants' experience of the war such as *Memory and Trauma: Soldier Victims in the Colombian Armed Conflict* and *La palabra incómoda*.

[5] If interested consult the following: TV series (*Los tres caínes* – 2013; *La Niña* – 2016), movies (*El Páramo* – 2011; *Monos*-2019), documentaries (*Impunity* - 2010; *La mujer de los siete nombres*-2018), theatre plays

(*Victus*-2017; *Labio de libre* -2019), books (*Abraham entre bandidos* – 2010; *A lomo de mula*, 2017), and graphic novels (*En el ombligo* -2021).

[6] According to the project's catalogue, more than 480 paintings were elaborated, although Gamboa (2016) and Rosas (2019) claim they were 420.

[7] The Spanish original and its English translation can be found in *The War We Have Not Seen* Website.

[8] To see and analyse the whole series up close, consult Posada, 2018, p. 65.

[9] Author's own translation. "Inconscientemente era como una terapia, porque era como sacarse esas experiencias amargas. [...] Fue sanador, haber conocido una experiencia de vida que nunca me había imaginado de poder vivirlas."

[10] Author's own translation. "Psicológicamente nos dio un valor para vivir, nos hizo ver que lo que habíamos vivido antes era otro el escenario, para mí era otro el ser humano que había allá."

[11] Author's own translation. "(…) retaliaciones y repercusiones circulares."

[12] Author's own translation. "(…) será el público el que complete el sentido de las obras con su propia mirada desprevenida, sin los prejucios o, incluso los odios, con que suelen anteceder las opiniones de hoy (...)"

[13] During former President lvaro Uribe's administration (2003-2010), the Democratic Security policy was a long-term military strategy aimed at restoring internal order and protecting citizens from the actions of illicit organisations.

[14] Author's own translation. "*La guerra que no hemos visto* invisibiliza la complejidad de la guerra en Colombia y proyecta identidades fijas, representa la guerra como un indiferenciable cúmulo de acciones victimizantes, ejercidas por grupos armados indiscriminables, guiados por intenciones indiscernibles. Así, se re-produce un punto de vista según el cual el sentido de la guerra en Colombia (la verdad de la guerra) es un fenómeno ya-conocido: la guerra es el horror, el infierno y el absurdo."

[15] Author's own translation. Y yo le pregunto: ¿Cuál era tu alias? Y cuando él me dice "Caliche" se me erizó la piel... Y le dije: Caliche, a usted estuvimos buscándolo casi tres años para matarlo. Porque esa era la consigna, matarlo... Nos dimos la mano y nos abrazamos. Eso fue un momento súper. Alguien me dijo: "¡Cómo así que usted se abrazó con un guerrillero!". No. Primero, él ya no es guerrillero; y segundo, yo ya no soy un paraco (…).

[16] Author's own translation. "La experiencia humana de Maleywa ha sido muchas veces reducida a su experiencia como guerrillera transformándolo en un estigma que invalida su experiencia, por ejemplo, como sujeto político, histórico, sintiente. Ella se convierte en una guerrillera cuya presencia en el museo está siendo cuestionado y devaluado. Sin embargo, yo sigo recurriendo a su trabajo precisamente porque quiero ir más allá de la idea de 'los guerrilleros son malos, no sé por qué pero matan soldados y joden a la sociedad civil', que es el imaginario con el que muchos niños llegan al museo. Yo utilizo temas tales como la disputa y restitución de tierras como puntos de partida en su serie para mostrar que nuestra historia está llena de dinámicas excluyentes y complejas que han hecho que las personas estén tan en desacuerdo que consideren que tomar las armas es la única opción para hacer oír sus reclamos."

[17] Author's own translation. "Ustedes los jóvenes solo están interesados en lo que ellos tienen que decir, ¿no? ¿Y qué pasa con todos esos pobres soldados que han matado? (…) ¿Qué han tenido que sacrificar sus vidas? Ustedes si no se ponen en sus zapatos. A lo cual un grupo de adolescentes le respondió, ''No, no tiene que ver con eso. Nosotros crecimos [precisamente] con esta versión de los hechos, pero creemos que puede ser entendido de otras formas."

[18] Author's own translation: "Hasta hace muy poco, este tipo de cuestiones no se abordaban en el museo. Tener un objeto en el museo que cuestione la idea que los visitantes tienen del pasado es muy valioso para impulsar una transformación ética. Esto es, la manera en cómo interactuamos con otros y con el mundo. Si en el colegio a muchos niños no les enseñan, ni siquiera se les permite ser sensibles a estos temas, acá en el museo sí se hará. Y eso es lo valioso de obras como las de Inty porque es un buen punto de partida para discutir sobre ética. ¿Cómo podemos coexistir con la visión de un guerrillero? ¿De un Otro sin transformarlo en un

enemigo? En pocas palabras, ¿Cómo podemos transformar la otredad en alteridad?"

Works Cited:

Archivo Virtual de los Derechos Humanos y la Memoria Histórica (no date) *Informe del proyecto "versiones libres de los paramilitares acogidos al sistema de justicia y paz en Colombia."* Bogotá. Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjKlbej5MD2AhVEtKQKHXoSCIIQFnoFCMEBEAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.archivodelosddhh.gov.co%2Fsaia_release1%2Falmacenamiento%2FACTIVO%2F2016-07-19%2F166777%2Fanexos%2F1_1468934560.doc&usg=AO

Armario, C. (2019) "Colombia's conflict spills over to museum of memory," *Bussiness insider*, 24 December.

Banrepcultural (2022) *Huellas de desaparición*. Available at: *https://www.banrepcultural.org/exposiciones/huellas-de-desaparicion*

Botella, C. (2018) "Juan Manuel Echavarría," *ArtNexus*.

Cantillo Barrios, J. (2016) "Inty Maleywa, de la Universidad Bolivariana a pintora de las Farc," *El Heraldo*, 21 November.

Castro, Daniela; Ordoñez, N. (2018) "La mujer de los siete nombres." Colombia. Available at: https://www.proimagenescolombia.com/secciones/cine_colombiano/peliculas_colombianas/pelicula_plantilla.php?id_pelicula=2455

COOMUNARTE (no date) *La cooperativa*. Available at: https://coomunarte.radiolibre.cc/

Derecho, Arte, C. (2018) "La guerra que no hemos visto. Conversatorio 5.," in *Conversatorios de Arte y DDHH 2018*. Bogotá: Universidad del Externado. Available at: https://issuu.com/derechoarteycultura/docs/conversatorios_arte-ddhh_5__final/s/10736023

El Tiempo (2010) "El legado de Carlos Pizarro Leongómez," 14 September.

Erazo Coral, M.E. (no date) "'Ríos y Silencios' una obra que conmueve y se mueve por los caminos de la paz," *Periódico Udenar*.

Estripeaut-Bourjac, M. *et al.* (2020) *Hagamos las paces: Narrar la guerra desde el arte para construir la paz*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores.

Estripeaut-Bourjac, M. (no date) *La guerra que no hemos visto, catálogo de la exposición del Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (octubre 14 - noviembre 15 de 2009)*.

Fundación Puntos de Encuentro (no date) *The War We Have Not Seen: A Historical Memory Project*, Available at: *https://laguerraquenohemosvisto.com/en/easy-prey/*

Gamboa, A. (2016) "Hacer ver: representaciones de la guerra en Colombia," *Reconocimiento a la crítica y el ensayo: arte en Colombia*, (11), pp. 16–20.

Horne, J. (2009) *Demobilizing the Mind: France and the Legacy of the Great War, 1919-1939*. Sydney.

Huyssen, A. (2003) *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Standford: Stanford University Press.

Jimeno, Myriam; Morna, M. (2014) *Entrevista con Myriam Jimeno*. Available at: http://mornamacleod.net/?p=767

Liévano Bermúdez, A. (2020) *Political tussle over truth and memory in Colombia*, Available at: *JusticeInfo.net*.

Lugo, V. and Pablo, J. (2015) "Memorias emergentes: las consecuencias inesperadas de la Ley de Justicia y Paz en Colombia (2005-2011)," *Estudios socio-jurídicos*, 17(2), pp. 13–44.

Macdonald, S. (2007) "Interconnecting: museum visiting and exhibition design," *CoDesign*, 3(S1), pp. 149–162.

Macdonald, S. (2015) "Is 'difficult heritage' still 'difficult'? Why public acknowledgment of past perpetration may no longer be so unsettling to collective identities," *Museum International*, 67(1–4), pp. 6–22.

Medina, Á. (1999) *Arte y violencia en Colombia desde 1948*. Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá.

Museo de Antioquia (2016) *La vida que se teje*, *https://museodeantioquia.co/sitio/evento/la-vida-que-se-teje/*

Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (2009) *La guerra que no hemos visto. Un proyecto de memoria histórica*. Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá.

Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (2018) *Ríos y silencios - Juan Manuel Echavarría*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1KFazOaSxM

Noticiero Barrio Adentro (2017) *Hablemos De Paz - Entrevista a Inti Maleywa, Martín Batalla y Black Esteban*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON_hxYAjEVs (Accessed: November 12, 2018)

Orozco, I. (2009) *Justicia transicional en tiempos del deber de memoria*. Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Temis.

Ossa, Gabriel; Echavarría, Juan Manuel; Grisalez, F. (2018) *Rios y silencios*, *La Guerra que no hemos visto*. Available at: https://laguerraquenohemosvisto.com/en/rios-y-silencios/

Posada, V. (2018) *When memories become duty*. Universiteit van Amsterdam. Available at: https://babel.banrepcultural.org/digital/collection/p17054coll23/id/1022

Posada Villada, V. (2019) "Historia Rev(b)elada: la voz guerrillera que narra el conflicto en Desenterrando memorias," *Cuadernos de Curaduría*, (16), pp. 53–82.

Presidencia de la República and Congreso Nacional (2011) *Ley de víctimas y restitución de tierras*, *Cartilla*. Colombia.

República de Colombia (2005) *Ley 975 de 2005*. Colombia.

Revista Semana (2012) "'A los museos nacionales no les gustan los conflictos,'" March.

Rosas, R. (2019) "La guerra que no hemos visto: ver, significar y narrar más allá del terrorismo," *Discurso Visual*, (45), pp. 28–37.

Rubiano, E. (2018) "La pedagogía del arte en contextos de conflicto: lo inútil, los intercambios y la empatía," *Esfera pública*, September.

Rubiano, E. (2019) *Los rostros, las tumbas y los rastros: El dolor de la guerra en el arte colombiano (2005-2016)*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Rubiano Pinilla, E. (2018) "'"La guerra que no hemos visto"' y la activación del habla'',"
Estud.filos, (58), pp. 65–98.

Ruíz Rodríguez, Mariana; Zuluaga Aristizabal, M. (2018) "Efectos psicológicos del proyecto de memoria histórica La guerra que no hemos visto," *Revista De Psicología Universidad De Antioquia,* 9(2), pp. 101–121.

Sierra León, Y. (2015) *Reparación Simbólica, litigio estético y litigio artístico: Reflexiones en torno al arte, la cultura y la justicia restaurativa en Colombia.* 85. Bogotá. Available at: https://icrp.uexternado.edu.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/10/DOC-DE-TRABAJO-85.pdf

Sodaro, A. (2017) *Exhibiting atrocity: Memorial museums and the politics of past violence*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Tovar, L.C. (2020) *Jardín de mi padre*. Edited by R. Editorial. Paris.

Verdad Abierta (2009) "La guerra que no hemos visto (Faltando 5 días para la Exposición)," October.

Will a Haiyan Museum Heal or Traumatise? Insights from Survivor-Curators

Jan Gresil S. Kahambing

Abstract:

To commemorate the tragic event of Super Typhoon Yolanda (International Name: Haiyan) last 2013, local leaders of the province of Leyte, Philippines, are speculating on establishing a Haiyan Museum in 2023, a decade later. With connotations of 'dark tourism', one way to look at the speculative decade-inspired establishment is through Amy Sodaro's 'memorial museums' with the purpose of 'education-based memorialization.' Juxtaposing this with Paul Morrow's philosophical perception of objects in memorial museums as possible provocateurs of repulsive feelings, there is a lingering suspicion of whether exhibits in the museum can really flesh out educational, therapeutic reflections or healing. Then, the crucial question to be addressed is: will this Haiyan Museum house feelings of healing, 10 years later, or trauma? To answer this question, I take insights from survivor-curators or the museum curators of Region VIII, Philippines, who experienced the Haiyan tragedy at, or proximate to, the landfall and aftermath first-hand. The notion of a 'survivor-curator' is a vital coinage that would represent a close perception of the museum and its museum objects. The responses are then thematised into a more coherent discussion to see how museums can be spaces of healing in their communal aspect and future museum projects.

Keywords: Haiyan Museum, healing, trauma, Survivor-Curator

The Haiyan Experience and the Haiyan Museum Proposal

Last 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda (International Name: Haiyan) devasted the Philippines, particularly the Eastern Visayas Region of central Philippines. Haiyan was 'the most powerful storm in 2013 and one of the most powerful typhoons of all time' (World Vision), with the highest winds maxing 195 km/h (120 mph). To date, it is still considered the costliest typhoon in the Philippines, with damages totalling $2.2 billion. It is the concern of this paper to gather insights from curators in the region about Haiyan and establishing a museum for it. Using their preferred nicknames, they were initially asked about their experience of Haiyan. A few of the curators' experiences could be testaments to the tragedy. Lei described it as 'fearful and devastating.' After experiencing Haiyan, Nilds felt speechless and said that overall, it was 'very hard to explain' except for the fact that she considers it her 'second life.' 'From a normal sunny day and an evening of talking to friends on the 7th day of November,' which Mel associated with 'the calm before the storm, Haiyan suddenly changed everything. Around four in the morning on the 8th day of November, communication was already cut,' and there were 'heavy rains and strong winds until noon.' This was Mel's 'vivid memory.' John described it as 'horrifying' albeit coming from a place 100 kilometres away from the landfall area.

CJ, who was away in the region, was in shock at the television and media footage of familiar places. 'The next days and weeks kept me busy trying my best to establish contacts with friends whom I considered family already. I also shared my time to do some volunteer work because I knew back then that the people in devastated areas need food and other basic needs,' he said.

Since then, the city of Tacloban and some parts of the region would light up candles every 8th day of November, especially in the alleys, roads, and buildings where dead bodies were located the day of and later after the storm.

In commemorating the tragic event, there are talks and speculations about establishing an exhibit or, at best, a Haiyan Museum in 2023, a decade later. This proposes a more lasting testament of tragedy aside from, for instance, some memorial glass stand with a few names of dead persons besides the Redemptorist Church in Real, Tacloban. In this paper, I will navigate into the connotations of dark tourism, which focuses on sites of grief that evoke memorialisation. With the city commemorating and the lack of museums or sufficient memorial sites, one might ponder on memorialisation's intangible nature. Is it really necessary to have a museum? To equivocally use the words in Christopher Wren's memorial at St. Paul's Cathedral, London: '*Si monumentum requiris circumspice* - 'If you want a memorial look around' (Seaton, 2018: 21). Joy, one of the curators, says that the Haiyan experience is 'a journey from disaster to healing.' A common-sensical question might be asked from Joy: how? Or in this case, in what way can a museum provide healing from a devastating experience? Are museums that ideally promote healing from disastrous events exempt from dark tourism?

My goal in this paper is generally to offer a more coherent discussion of the Haiyan museum proposal from the insights of curators from Region VIII, Philippines. By gathering responses from what I call 'survivor-curators,' a term coined for this article to mean a museum-related professional whose work is associated to their experience of a natural disaster, I will focus on the aspects of healing and trauma and whether a more tangible museum proposal can be recommended based on those.

Healing and Trauma amid Dark Tourism

The idea that an establishment can exhibit and create value is what generates tourism (Lukáč et al., 2021). However, creating value out of death, disaster, and suffering, would be referred to as 'dark tourism', also called *thanatourism* (Lennon and Foley, 2000). Skinner (2018), for instance, takes note of a disaster location, Pompeii, as a 'Dark and Stormy Tourism', following Edward George Bulwek-Lytton's words. Dark tourism is, in one sense, about focusing on sites that confront the value created through the memory connected with death. It can either concentrate on disasters categorised as human-caused (e.g. human rights atrocities, genocides) or naturally-caused (e.g. earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or typhoons).

One way to look at the speculative decade-inspired establishment of the Haiyan museum for the disaster is through Amy Sodaro's 'memorial museums.' Sodaro (2018) seeks to explain such museums as a 'new "hybrid" cultural form of commemoration' between the past and education. The hybridity portrays the interplay of 'education-based memorialization' and commemoration or remembering with the community. Hinged on an ethic of 'never again', a memorial museum has three functions: 1) to provide evidence of the past as a form of historical truth-telling, 2) to become symbolic reparations of healing and restoration, and 3) to be a space for morally educating the mind and heart. Sodaro provides analyses of exhibiting atrocities and their past political violence to encourage empathy and engage communal dialogue. She analyses five museums, namely, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Budapest's Terrorhaza, The Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre, Chile's Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos

Humanos, and New York's National September 11 Memorial Museum. Knowing the political contexts and exhibits of violence from the five mentioned, the aim is to see the museum as a public institution that fosters public conversations from close readings of the experiential and affective characteristics of the exhibit. Hence, memorialisation is supposed to provide healing by learning valuable positive lessons from an event.

However, experiences that tarry with the memorialisation of death, and therefore of memory, seem to make us reflect and ask 'whether dark tourism and inherent memorial messages are getting through' (Stone, 2018: 152). We should, thus, have the 'the ability to locate ourselves in a "dark tourism world" where memorials are insufficiently narrating hurtful memories calls out for philosophical responses' (Stone, 2018: 152).

Comparing and contrasting this memorialisation is Paul Morrow's philosophical engagement of objects within supposed dark tourism establishments. Morrow (2016) writes in the collection *Philosophy and Museums* his piece asking through its title 'Are Holocaust Museums Unique?' and claims the negative, since we still face the same generic ethical or epistemological questions in them. Morrow alludes that objects in Holocaust museums, or in this case, memorial museums, can create feelings of revulsion and therefore act as provocateurs of repulsive feelings. Morrow (2016: 142) makes the case of boxcars in Holocaust museums and the 'the grim function performed by these.'

Both the symbolic and material qualities of museum objects have varying significance to the visitor, albeit yet again the objects might not suffice in terms of instruction. Here, there is a lingering suspicion of whether museums' exhibits can really flesh out educational, therapeutic reflections or healing. The assertion that objects can also evoke traumatic sentiments is perhaps the glaring objection to the idealistic model underpinning the establishment of a memorial museum.

The crucial question to be addressed in thinking through the proposal is: will this Haiyan Museum house feelings of healing, 10 years later, or trauma? To answer this question, I take insights from survivor-curators or museum curators from Region VIII, Philippines, who experienced the Haiyan tragedy at, or proximate to, the landfall and aftermath first-hand.

Contrary to other memorial museums of tragedy that have few living survivors or first-person witnesses of horror, like Holocaust Museums worldwide, one could imagine that most or a lot of native visitors would be survivors of the region. The experiences of seeing objects from the recent past may awaken personal or collective traumatic feelings. Such experiences might even vary because the cause of the disaster in this case is natural, which may address the inherent presuppositions of our relationship with nature, or God (in a disaster location with many Catholics and other religious denominations). Inviting the survivors who are at the same time curators can better provide initial expert and experiential opinions. Such curators would have deeper understanding of the role of heritage, conservation, and memory-making exhibits, along with the experiences of the disaster that is the object of the study.

The Participants of the Study and the Notion of a 'Survivor-Curator'

There are 9 museum practitioners or researchers who consented to respond to the study. 5 (55.6%) were females, and 4 (44.4%) were males (one identified as homosexual). As to age, 4 (44.4%) are less than 35 years old, 3 (33.3%) are between 36-45 years old, and 2 (22.2%) are more than 55 years old. Their preferred tag names are J, Dior, Lei, Nilds, Jill, Joy, Mel, John, and CJ. They represent, in no particular order, the following art/heritage institutions within Region VIII: Samar State University Museum & Archives, Leyte Normal University Museum, Calbiga Cultural and Heritage

Center, Nuestra Señora de Salvacion Historical and Ecclesiastical Museum, UP Visayas Leyte-Samar Heritage Center & Leyte-Samar Heritage Society, Inc., University of Eastern Philippines Museum, Christ the King College Museum, and The National Commission for Culture and the Arts-National Committee on Museums. Their years of work experience from affiliations with the art/heritage institution they belong to vary. 5 (55.6%) are affiliated in less than 10 years, 2 (22.2%) are affiliated between 10 and 20 years, and 2 (22.2%) are affiliated between 21 and 30 years.

The notion of a 'Survivor-Curator' is a vital coinage in this article. Andrea Witcomb has explained through the idea of testimony the 'intense' and 'personal' effects of artworks on curators who are also survivors. She mentions Saba Feniger, 'the volunteer survivor curator who collected [artworks] for the Holocaust Museum' who acquires the 'double function of memorializing by testifying' (Witcomb, 2013: 261). Aside from this modifying use of 'survivor' on the 'curator', my use of 'Survivor-Curator' is more direct as a noun and is more fluid in terms of context. The term would represent someone with a close perception of the museum and its museum objects - not just in the form of testifying but also of supervising them. While Witcomb sees in a 'survivor curator' the function of curating as a later response from the survivor's experience, in this paper, the curators became survivors of the disaster later and deals with the memory of it.

Moreover, the notion of survivor in this case is in reference more to naturally-caused disasters, rather than the oft-connoted reference to human atrocities such as the Holocaust. Hence, a 'Survivor-Curator' in this case refers to an individual 1) who experienced the typhoon or its aftermath and 2) whose professional capacity covers that of overseeing or involving oneself in the transmission of knowledge or showing expertise regarding museums and their museum objects. This coinage, then, does not merely represent the professional capacity of a Curator only but also of other museum-related professionals whose tie to the Haiyan experience lies in their link to their home, wellbeing, and relationships within the region during or after the typhoon's landfall. Among the respondents, 6 (66.7%) directly experienced Haiyan, and 3 (33.3%) did not but were there during the aftermath to check on their families or homes. Moreover, the professional capacities of the respondents are museum-related and may overlap in terms of office, expertise, or scholarly interest. Among the respondents, 5 (55.5%) identified as Curator, 2 (22.2%) as Museum Director, 3 (33.3%) as Educator, 1 (11.1%) as Conservationist, 1 (11.1%) as Historian, 5 (55.6%) as Researchers, 1 (11.1%) as a psychometrician and 1 (11.1%) as Municipal Tourism Operations Officer.

It can be noted, again, that the use of the term 'Survivor-Curator' in this context is unique apart from its application, for example, in Holocaust Museums, given that the distribution and experience are different in each historical situation. First, there are still many Haiyan survivors but there are now only a few living Auschwitz survivors. The Hong Kong Holocaust & Tolerance Center, with the participation of the University of Macau, hosted a three-part workshop on the Holocaust composing 1) a seminar from a Holocaust expert, 2) a virtual tour of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, and 3) a sharing from a Greek Auschwitz survivor. From a video call in Athens, one of the very few left to tell the story, Lola Angel, remembers the horror of the Nazi concentration camps very much when 83% of 59,000 Greek Jews were exterminated. Because of the trauma she experienced, she has not spoken about the experience for about seven decades until her sharing during the UN Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration. She clarified the trauma quite clearly: 'I was but a child, but I forgot nothing. The memories still haunt me, and the intense smells of the camp are ever-present.' Indeed, 'there is a fundamental difference between death caused by a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, and massive death caused by human activity, such as is the case of the

Holocaust' (Stylianou and Stylianou-Lambert, 2017: 3).

If we compare this to the trauma experienced in Haiyan, which Dior says 'was life-threatening' and 'apocalyptic' since there was 'massive destruction, loss of lives,' and 'damaged properties,' the embodied perception is different. J can only explain the trauma in terms of pain. J describes it as a '*traumatic* and painful' trial: 'The agony of having no communication with loved ones had intensified the worrisome experience. It was, above anything else, a test of our faith and our humanity.' J specified the trauma not only to the loss of material resources, the 'inadequacy of the government to respond to the immediate needs of the people,' and difficulty of the transport system, but more significantly to the loss of his 'relatives, a former teacher, friends, and former classmates.' As a survivor, trauma survives in pain: 'although we survived, the mental torture and the pain of losing our loved ones remain.'

Using a first-person authority perspective, only the people who experienced it can tell the varying ways in which their experiences had shaped their lives, their intensity, and duration of suffering. The correlation of the Holocaust and Haiyan experience are at best associative, and the differences involve complex pathways of meanings, emotions, and dispositions on an individual level.

Method

Due to the restrictions and stringent protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey or interview template was completed online through Google Forms. Some members who can be easily reached and are available for face-to-face follow-up were consulted for clarifications. Members of the Eastern Visayas Association of Museums (EVAM) responded with consent statements following research ethics.

The participants agreed that their participation was voluntary, that there were no conflicts of interest, and, except for one, that their archived identifying information and responses would be shown only when proper authorities under fair and ethical conditions necessarily request them. The survey and interview template included questions about the respondents' Haiyan experience, their impressions on the proposed establishment of the Haiyan museum, the supposed contents or museum objects of the museum, whether the objects will be therapeutic or traumatic, learning from the Haiyan museum, the other feelings that might be evoked in seeing the objects, whether they would recommend its proposed establishment, and additional insights they wanted to add.

Results and Discussion

Impressions on the proposed establishment of the Haiyan museum

The survivor-curators were mainly in support of a Haiyan museum. The agreements primarily span from 'okay,' 'very much okay,' to being 'grateful' for the proposal. Nilds views the museum as a good 'lesson' for the future, which for Jill can make up as 'memorabilia.' This makes the museum 'timely and relevant' for John, and Joy explains its relevance in the context of its 'educational' element and most especially in 'environmental awareness, cultural sensitivity, [and] empowerment.' Despite its timeliness for others, Dior, a registered psychometrician, and psychologist, strongly opposes it because 'it brings back repressed/traumatic memories. The artifacts may symbolise loss and survival, but they may trigger traumatic memories people wish to never think or be part of their consciousness [anymore].' However, Joy and John both believe that the Haiyan museum is 'necessary.' And John forwards a caveat: 'while it is painful, it is necessary. However, careful analysis and consideration of many things/factors should be observed – careful

that it may not be traumatic and hurtful to the people who are still suffering the pain of that historic and painful event.'

The supposed contents or museum objects of the Haiyan museum

Based on the responses, it can be said that the supposed contents of the museum must have narrativity and temporality. Aside from the materiality of objects like 'paintings from local artists' or 'photos of people and places after the Typhoon,' most 'Survivor-Curators' suggest 'survivor narratives,' especially those which exist in a temporal framework. These are what John calls 'non-tangible assets.' Nilds focuses on 'pre-Haiyan and post-Haiyan struggles,' or as what Mel illustrates, a 'gallery to make a good story for the visitors – like the day before Haiyan, during Haiyan, [and] the story of the survivors after Haiyan.'

There are phenomenological and performative elements of this temporal narrativity: 'narratives of different forms of coping (art, poetry, performance acts, etc.)' or 'the work of arts (poetry, drawings, painting, photos, sketches) of people who experienced Haiyan' must form a 'good storyline.' It can be assumed that what makes a story 'good' is not just displaying 'facts, stories, experiences and the like of those loved ones who died.' Such stories and lived experiences must be 'meaningful artifacts and visuals' whose character can be defined, according to Joy, as 'people-oriented' and 'survivor-sensitive.' In keeping in line with environmental awareness and its manifold meanings, the survivor narratives can be well-embedded with scientific and cultural perspectives. CJ perhaps strongly acclaims the defining character of the objects: 'The best feature is how the affected places and people rise and continue to be resilient after the super typhoon Haiyan.' Within the narrative timeline of the museum's contents, there is an emphasis on artistic coping and resilience.

Trauma, healing, and other feelings

Given the varying degrees of experiencing Haiyan, the 'Survivor-Curators' are mostly realistic in their assessment of how the objects can evoke feelings. There is a particular aspect of contingency that is at play. According to the curators, there are three different contingencies here.

First, Jill argues for object dependency where the feeling that can be evoked is contingent 'on the contents of the museum.' In this view, the objects are quite independent, and Jill seems to accentuate this as a fundamental exigency.

Second, CJ thinks that the evocation of feelings will depend not on the objects but on their curation or presentation: 'It depends on how the museum objects will be presented to the public. If the goal is just to present the tragic event, for me, this will cause trauma to the people. If [the goal is to present the] resiliency of the people, for sure, it is going to be different.' In this view, the ethical question of curation arises, and it is the responsibility of the curator to design an arrangement that is educational, rather than disruptive, to visitors' perception.

But it seems that there is a much weightier contingency with which most 'Survivor-Curators' align their thoughts. Finally, Nilds asserts that the contingency lies on the museum visitors themselves, who may also be survivors, as 'it depends on the person's acceptance of the event.' Mel expounds that 'to some it may be traumatic, seeing it [a Haiyan museum object] again will bring bad memories, but to some, it could also be therapeutic.' This is highly possible as the 'experiential' feature of the objects, John claims, 'both presents reliving the trauma (pain) and healing.' In this feature, the degree of the experience can be argued again. Lei takes note of this by saying that 'it can be therapeutic but for those families whose experiences are [the] worst, it could be traumatic for them.' J supports this by stating that 'the appreciation (or disdain) of the museum objects may differ from one visitor to

another, depending on the depth and gravity of one's experience.'

Without limiting the issue to the healing-trauma binary alone, there are other feelings that the objects can evoke. Moreover, these are ambivalent, or as Lei says, 'diversified' and 'varied.' On the one hand, there is 'pain,' 'grief,' 'anxiety,' 'depression,' 'fear, sadness, and guilt.' On the other hand, there are also lessons of survival, hope, 'joyful moments,' the urge to 'overcome the pain,' being 'grateful to God' and an appreciation of the 'gift of life.' The overcoming of pain, J maintains, helps to 'realize acceptance and healing.'

Given the three different contingencies and varied feelings at hand, what can possibly be done? Because the possibility of evoking both trauma and healing presupposes the exposition of the objects, J thinks there is a need 'to have a sort of "preparation" or "debriefing" before (or after) a museum tour.' He also emphasises the need for 'preliminary research' and 'an expert on psychology, about the profound effects of seeing the museum objects.' Herein lies a psychological opinion from someone working in a psychology clinic. Dior rules out the possibility of healing at this point and banks singularly on trauma: 'For me, it will be traumatic. Memorializing the horrifying experience of Yolanda [Haiyan] is not something therapeutic.' Although this still needs research, Dior believes it to be the case.

Interestingly, despite the traumatic possibility of viewing the objects that can 'bring bad memories,' Mel nonetheless forefronts the museum's necessity and futurity. Says Mel, 'regardless, people will still see it as something that we should share with the world because the world knows what happened and this should not happen again.' This argument of necessity is also what Joy believes. Accordingly, the museum objects would be 'necessarily therapeutic' because they will provide 'healing' and 'empowering for survivors.' Representation of resiliency or being represented as resilient can conjoin with the 'asset' claim, and this necessarily provides empowerment. Joy argues that the necessity of the museum can help with the 'resolve to help prevent disaster' and that the form that empowerment takes can also be epistemological, sustainable, and inclusive. That is, to be 'empowered through knowledge of history, science, and cultures, [the] sense of connection with the rest of humanity, [to] be healed and help heal, understand the politics of disaster, respect the sacred in disaster communities, help improve relief, recovery and rehabilitation systems, help set policies in the protocol and management of disaster dead, lift the spirits of people and communities, strengthen human potential, be concerned with [the] children, youth, elderly, persons w[ith] disabilities, [and] indigenous peoples' (Joy).

Empowerment is a crucial feature that retains its significance in the aspect of healing, as it allows doing more concerning the future. Despite the possibility of trauma, this healing as empowerment rests on the resolve to overcome.

Learning from a Haiyan Museum

Some lessons can be learned in establishing a Haiyan museum as a memorial-based educational institution. In this 'house of memory,' J enumerates the following reminders:

1. The inevitable role of natural disasters in our lives and the challenge of addressing the risks they bring.

2. It will serve as a reminder of how painful a disaster can be vis-a-vis the concern of preparedness.

3. It will serve as a way of acceptance of the facts, events, and hopefully, healing. It will also give insights into the myriad ways people survived and moved on with their lives.

These reflect Jill's lessons 'to save the environment,' to 'always be ready,' and find 'hope after the storm.' The 'Survivor-Curators' seem to

put a premium on climate change, the people, and a sustainable future. These compose the guiding themes to be learned. Dior emphasises 'coping mechanisms' or, to use Lei's words, 'to be resilient in so many ways.' The plurality of approaches in the ways people practice resiliency can perhaps be asserted from Mel's insights on not being 'too dependent with our government' and on 'always be[ing] ready with everything (flashlights, food, improvised floater, etc.).'

In terms of the vital relationship between the people and the environment, Joy sends the message that the museum should help us 'learn to love our planet, nature, and communities.' Additionally, we should 'be proactive towards disaster prevention and natural and cultural heritage conservation and [have a] deeper sense of historicity and social transformation.' In this proactivity, John recommends 'interactive approaches' that will enable participation.

Ultimately, it is an intergenerational learning experience. For CJ, it is about 'educating the next generations of the impacts of typhoons on communities, how we can act as a people against the climate crisis, and [learn from the] science of climate change.'

Recommending the establishment of the museum

All of the 'Survivor-Curators' except one are amenable to recommending the museum's establishment. The sole opposition stems from the psychological recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For Dior, 'some people (no matter how many years [have passed]) are still dealing with their loss, still grieving and encounter[ing] problems in coping with the Yolanda [Haiyan] experience [...] Memorializing it will be really tough for these vulnerable individuals.' This memorializing, however, is viewed as a positive thing for the others. The intergenerational takeaway is to carve an indelible mark 'in memory of our loved ones and those who have struggled to live' (Lei). It will be 'a significant historical event of our times. It would be a gesture of remembrance to the people who perished on the fateful day, and a reminder to the future generation on the impacts (on all aspects) that the ST Yolanda had brought to our lives' (J).

It is for us to be 'reminded each day that people will help each other' (Jill). 'Aside from [being] educational for generations to come,' Nilds says, it can showcase 'memorabilia for survivors, [an] acknowledgment or gratitude for those who helped: [...] friends, relatives, and organizations.'

The Haiyan museum will, therefore, 'provide the present and future generations important information and help them recount their (survivors) feelings and experiences' (John). The intergenerational and educational reasons are necessary. Mel resounds a strong 'yes', 'because we need a place where we can see what really happened, hear real stories, and see the resiliency of the survivors. Museums are places where people see what really happened in the past.' Joy derives from the arguments of empowerment an inclusive feature because she means to involve as many as possible in the task of healing. For CJ, a Haiyan museum will positively 'immortalize the strength and resiliency of our people.'

And by 'our people,' the museum 'should be inclusive. It should gather stories not only centered in Tacloban but more so to people who had faced the typhoon first: the people of Eastern Samar and elsewhere in Eastern Visayas' (Dior). This means that its establishment should cater to the cooperation of everyone in the region, to 'tap private institutions, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), people's organizations to partner with the government and formulate policies and systems for sustainability, perhaps, and institutionalize by way of Republic Acts or Laws or Ordinances' (Joy).

Museums as Spaces for Community Healing

The question of establishing a Haiyan museum delves into the aspects of social, personal, and intergenerational trauma and recovery. Apart

from human disasters brought about by political violence and atrocities, museums of natural disasters seem to present a novel case both in the literature and the field (Kahambing and Lao, 2022). The role of museums for planetary health is crucial as it tarries our vital relationship with the environment amid calls for sustainability. To address the climate change issue, the recent openings of climate museums, both in the traditional and mobile senses, come to mind here (Newell, 2020; Massie and Reyes, 2021).

Though riddled with real contexts, the necessary hope of these museums is to educate the public about the capacity for healing and prevention of further disasters. Fair suggestions for disaster preparations in the Philippines, which is frequented by typhoons, are coupled with ecological knowledge (Kahambing, 2020; 2021). Local knowledge can be a potent source of providing spaces for intangible cultural heritage and the tangible role of museums as those very spaces. By organizing 'these spaces using a framework that reflects the cultural values of the particular community, they will provide the safe space necessary for the individuals of a community to implement the necessary components of healing in order to transcend the trauma' (Van Noy, 2007: 84).

Amid problems with operational definitions faced by the recent 2019 ICOM description of a museum, Chiovatti (2020) maintains that museums must be clearly and openly classified as educational institutions. In museums of natural disasters or, in our case, the Haiyan museum, the spaces must 'create a physical, tangible place where survivors can share their stories, acknowledge the trauma and continue to educate and remember their cultural history' (Van Noy, 2007: 85). Morrow (2016) even claims that apart from signs warning for children, a careful exhibition of the objects 'can be used to educate museum visitors' (135; 140). To borrow some sustainability features in museums where everyone is engaged in the process, 'this healing museum model can provide one mechanism through which communities successfully engage in the healing process' (Van Noy, 2007: 85). To address the potential for re-traumatisation, one will have to take note of the three contingencies mentioned by the 'Survivor-Curators.'

The museum can foster connectivity and meaning-making to objects and visitors through a therapeutic engagement of the museum setting. This means promoting social activity with the community and providing therapeutic organizational development. Examples of which are ensuring strong empathy with the 'Survivor-Curators' as mentors of the healing process, training staff and volunteers in compassion fatigue, facilitating therapeutic encounters and visibility and providing space for reflection (Cowan, Laird, and McKeown, 2020).

It is important that the visitors who may be survivors are 'seen' as humans with complex histories and they should not be treated as passive observers. As cautions, the museum should have prior warning of potential emotional activation and therefore must craft 'appropriate trigger warnings' which seek 'to inform but not alarm, to give visitors options and reminders of their own capacity' (Cowan, Laird, and McKeown, 2020: 182). Suppose the Haiyan Museum will be established, it is both an 'opportunity and responsibility that we move forward, striving to further understand the power and potential of objects and continue to explore their remarkable capacity to awaken in us our fundamental humanity' (Cowan, Laird, and McKeown, 2020: 199).

Conclusion

I have shown in this paper the insights of 'Survivor-Curators' of Region VIII, Philippines on the establishment of a Haiyan museum. Specifically, I have presented their responses on the issue of trauma and/or healing within the supposed memorial-museum establishment. My presentation of the memorial-museum is bent

more towards naturally-caused disasters, particularly the Super Typhoon Haiyan, and the perception of the 'Survivor-Curators.' My analysis of the wider literature on the topic of Typhoon-caused memorial museums, as opposed to memorial museums on volcanic eruptions or earthquakes (Hammond, 2017), is hampered not just by the paucity of information but also by the reality within which the proposal is yet to be. Hence, the paper has not been exhaustive on real factors, given its primary approach to speculation.

There are, however, crucial findings introduced. We have seen the different contingencies that are at play for making a healing museum. That the objects themselves, the manner of presenting them, and the curators and visitors' view and emotions factor in together the diversity of responses and responsibilities in making a healing museum, the approaches to establish a Haiyan museum requires a great sense of sensitivity. It is hoped that the sensitive approaches could lead to empowerment in a sense of preserving and learning from survivor identity and the value of community. The healing part may involve some dark aspects, as a healing museum can be associated to dark tourism, but the intergenerational necessity and the manner of moving forward through museums are crucial steps to begin with.

Following this seminal work, then, and based on the results of the study, the article suggests further investigations. I recommend gathering further insights from potential visitors who are survivors themselves in the form of either psychological intervention or epistemic perception. From a hierarchical expertise perspective, opinions from national and international museum experts should be consulted. As to the idea of linkages, there is a need to follow up with relevant institutions on the supposed establishment of the museum for further context. And finally, to further exhaust the philosophical implications of this study, it is necessary to follow up on the many conceptual schemes that can be found in dealing with subjects and their objects of experience through the relatively emerging field of philosophy of museums.

Works Cited

Chiovatto, M. (2020). 'In Defense of Museum Education. In Defining the museum: challenges and compromises of the 21st century', *ICOFOM Study Series* 48(2): 70-84.

Cohen, E. (2018). 'Thanatourism: A Comparative Approach', in Stone, P., Hartmann, R., Seaton, T., Sharpley, R., and White, L. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*: 157–171. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cowan, B., Laird, R., and McKeown, J. (2020). *Museum Objects, Health and Healing. The Exhibitions – Wellness Collection.* Routledge.

Hammond, J (2017). 'Negotiating Death at the Great Kanto Earthquake Memorial Museum,' in Stylianou, E. and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (eds) *Museums and Photography. Displaying Death*: 21–39. New York, Routledge.

Harrison, V. (2016). 'Introduction', in Harrison, V., Bergqvist, A., and Kemp, G. (eds.) *Philosophy and Museums: Essays on the Philosophy of Museums*: 1–12. Cambridge University Press.

Kahambing, J. (2020). 'Tropical Cyclones and Children during a Pandemic in the Philippines', in *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health* 32(8): 507.

Kahambing, J. (2021). 'Natural Disasters, Ecological Knowledge, and COVID-19 in the Philippines', in *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 36(5): 657–658.

Kahambing, J. and Lao, T. (2022). 'The Role of Museums in Planetary Health Bioethics: A Review', in Waller, A. & Macer, D. (eds) *Planetary Health Bioethics*. New Zealand: Eubios Ethics Institute. forthcoming

Lennon, J. and Foley, M. (2000). *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*. London: Thompson Learning.

Massie, M., & Reyes, A. (2021). 'The Climate Museum', in *World Scientific Encyclopedia of Climate Change: Case Studies of Climate Risk, Action, and Opportunity Volume 1. World Scientific Books*: 287–297. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789811213946_0035

Morrow, P. (2016). 'Are Holocaust Museums Unique?', in Harrison, V., Bergqvist, A., and Kemp, G. (eds) *Philosophy and Museums: Essays on the Philosophy of Museums*: 133–158. Cambridge University Press.

Newell, J. (2020). 'Climate museums: powering action', *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35(6): 599– 617.

Seaton, T. (2018). 'Encountering Engineered and Orchestrated Remembrance: A Situational Model of Dark Tourism and Its History', in Stone, P., Hartmann, R., Seaton, T., Sharpley, R., and White, L. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*: 9–31. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Skinner, J. (2018). '" The Smoke of an Eruption and the Dust of an Earthquake": Dark Tourism, the Sublime, and the Re-animation of the Disaster Location', in Stone, P., Hartmann, R., Seaton, T., Sharpley, R., and White, L. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*: 125–150. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sodaro, A. (2018). *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. Rutgers University Press.

Stone, P. (2018). 'Dark Tourism: Philosophy and Theory', in Stone, P., Hartmann, R., Seaton, T., Sharpley, R., and White, L. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*: 151–155. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stylianou, E. and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2017). 'Approaches to Displaying Death in Museums. An Introduction', in Stylianou, E. and Stylianou-Lambert, T. (eds) *Museums and Photography. Displaying Death*: 1–17. New York, Routledge.

Van Noy, J. (2007). *Can Museums Promote Community Healing? A Healing Museum Model for Indigenous Communities*. MA Thesis, Indigenous Nations Studies and Graduate School, University of Kansas. Available at: https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/4104 (Accessed 6 November 2021).

Witcomb, A. (2013). 'Testimony, Memory, and Art at the Jewish Holocaust Museum, Melbourne, Australia', in Golding, V. and Modest, W. (eds) *Museums and Communities. Curators, Collections, and Collaboration*: 260–274. Bloomsbury Academic.

World Vision. 2013. 'Typhoon Haiyan: Facts, FAQs, and how to help.' Available at: https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2013-typhoon-haiyan-facts (Accessed 2 February 2022).

Visual Submission – ‘Confluent’

Confluent brings attention to art processes and materials that foster a nurturing and empathic environment within our veteran community wellbeing programmes at the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM). Confluent references accessible art mediums such as collage, watercolour, pencil and fabric. When offered with intention and empathy, such mediums elicit creative responses, resonance and connections for individuals. As arts facilitators, we witness and engage in the convergence of experiential processes – the inherent somatic qualities of art making and empathy as a means of engagement, with a capacity for healing and social connection.

Mirroring the encounters within in our programmes, we created Confluent through a collaborative process of collaging and photographing onsite in the ANVAM maker space, and then digitally manipulating key motifs - the watercolour palette, hands and pencil shavings reflecting absorption in creative process, and metaphor sourced from collage as referenced by the bird, sheltering within a frame preparing to emerge from its nest.

Authors:

Jandy Paramanathan and Tanja Johnston

Image credit:

Collage includes image by John Gould

Picus Insularis (Formosan Spotted Woodpecker)

The Birds of Asia, 1850-83

Section II – DECOLONISATION

Interview – In Conversation with Alice Procter: Museums, Decolonisation and Healing

Niki Ferraro

Abstract:

Alice Procter is a UK-based author, historian, tour guide, and researcher best known for her popular Uncomfortable Art Tours. In these tours, held across six National Museums, Procter exposes the colonial legacies in museum collections and displays, while working with participants to unpack imperial ideologies. In 2020, she published her first book, The Whole Picture, which advances the work of her tours, and gives visitors the tools they need to engage critically with museums and histories of empire. Today, the topic of museums and colonialism is prominent in discussions within the museum field, and outside of it. These institutions are increasingly being called upon to address their imperial histories and reform their practices and narratives through decolonial work. This call for change can be understood as a call for healing. For this Issue, I sat down with Procter and explored the theme of museums, decolonisation and healing through the lens of her extensive research and practice.

NF: What does the decolonial healing process entail? What does it look like and how might it function?

AP: A lot of the approaches that we have to the idea of healing tend to be, in many ways, a reiteration of the power structures that museums already have. I think that any kind of decolonial process within a museum space has to be driven by the formerly colonised communities whose approval is being sought or whose stories are being told. These communities have to be allowed to take a very active role in determining what that healing looks like. It's far too easy for a museum to turn around and say, 'We've done some reflection, we're doing some healing.' but if that is always coming from inside, projected out, rather than outside bringing it into the space, it will be limited. Sometimes, in the process of attempting to have these conciliatory gestures, these healing practices will cause harm, and that's where this question of who is in control of the process is really important.

NF: In your book, *The Whole Picture*, you pose the question: 'Is it even possible to decolonise our galleries?' If it is not possible to fully decolonise these spaces, what are the alternatives?

AP: The idea that museums can be decolonised is a really messy one. I hope that we are getting to a point where we've done away with the idea that there will ever be a simple and straightforward [decolonisation] practice, and that it will be

something that comes from within the museum. My pitch, as it were, for a more complete decolonisation is that we think of these spaces as inherently and overpoweringly colonial. Reckoning with this explicitly can be a way of creating, not a decolonised, but certainly an *anticolonial* space within museums. To think about museums moving towards an anticolonial process, the same way we think of being antiracist as being actively involved in resisting racism. To be anticolonial, these institutions have a responsibility to grapple with their own inherent coloniality, to make that complexity and that harm tangible, and to engage with it in a more coherent way as part of their object narratives and gallery stories.

NF: How do restitution and repatriation play a role in this anticolonial healing process?

AP: I see them as being part of that process – they are *not* the whole process, and they can't be done in isolation from the process. When an object is returned to its community, that is often part of this renegotiation of power that is necessary to any sort of healing practice. Often, restitution might be quite a tangible, physical gesture of healing and transformation in those power dynamics. It's something that can augment the process, it can help it along. It can, depending on the circumstances of the object, be the end goal of the process, but the healing is more than restitution. Restitution is part of healing, but it is also more than that as well. These are things that exist within and alongside each other.

NF: It seems like this process must be centred and focused on truth. To reveal that truth requires a great deal of work. Would you agree that we are still very much in a stage of research and discovery when it comes to truth and this history?

AP: Absolutely. In many cases where museums are attempting to repatriate objects, or are actively resisting the repatriation of their collections, a lot of barriers to that process come from this question of truth and an unwillingness to grapple with their potential dishonesty. In order to move towards a truth-focused approach to these objects, there has to be a process of self-reflection, and recognition of the way the truth has been suppressed, ignored, or denied. The research, work, and energy that goes into that is enormous. We often lose sight of the fact that there is a huge amount of work to be done to unravel that truth. It's easy to say, if, for example, you have an object that was stolen, that you should just return it; but, in many cases skipping to the end in that way prevents us from understanding what was done and how it was done. The research of trying to unpack that, whilst I do believe that it should be ultimately moving towards restitution, can also lead to new understandings and information about other objects in the collection or other narratives that have also been dismissed or ignored. I understand, certainly right now, that there's often this feeling of urgency about repatriation. I would absolutely agree that it is an urgent and pressing issue, but in getting to that point where an object is available for repatriation, the time and work is significant.

NF: So, the work is part of the healing process?

AP: The work is part of that process. If you leave out that sort of consideration and re-evaluation and research, it's easier to let it happen again, it's easier to dismiss other parallel or similar narratives and it's easier to pretend that this was a one-off, rather than an institutional, national project.

NF: How might decolonial healing for museums in settler colonial nations differ from healing in the British museum context?

AP: In some ways it's easier, in some ways it's harder. On a purely practical note, there is a closer proximity to the source communities. One of the barriers that museums often cite in the UK is that it's simply too difficult to meet or engage with source communities. If you are in a settler colony,

that is less insurmountable, and proximity matters in that sense. There is also an added weight and an added violence to the fact that these institutions in settler colonies are planted on stolen land; that they are not only housing objects acquired through violence and through imperialism and colonist ambitions, but that their physical existence, in many cases, is an act of violence. There's also more space, therefore, for museums in settler colonies to engage with this kind of anticolonial practice; to work collaboratively and creatively with First Nations and Indigenous communities - on language, for example. In many ways, it's easier to get past the tyrannical distance that is a barrier to decolonial and anticolonial work. Having said that, I can also think of many examples of institutions in settler colonies that, by virtue of being in settler colonies, have a greater investment in protecting the colonial project. So, there is a give and take there, but proximity and presence within these landscapes is overwhelmingly an advantage that they have and need to take advantage of.

NF: Do you consider it fruitful to look at this kind of decolonial/anticolonial work in museums as healing? What implications might this approach or understanding of this work as healing have for museums?

AP: This is so interesting. I think that if we focus on this work solely as being driven by a desire to heal, often the desire to heal is about the desire to remove feelings of guilt or responsibility. The idea that a healing practice is the removal of hurt, the removal of damage, the removal of harm, the erasure of any wound or trauma is something that troubles me. We have to recognise that an anticolonial practice can move towards healing, but I have issues with the idea of healing as a goal because it presupposes that everyone will be okay at the end of the day. When we're talking about healing, I keep thinking of a work by the artist Kader Attia called *The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures*. Within this exhibition he displays objects and images that relate to the idea of the wound and the idea of healing as a cultural process. I find that exhibition a really interesting and useful metaphor for the way that we think about violence and its histories. That in the cultural West, there is this emphasis on the idea that the wound must be concealed. Whereas if we look elsewhere, there are different understandings of wounds. There is the idea that a wound can be something that is deliberately inflicted to give status. There's the idea that carrying a scar gives you powers and certain abilities and strengths. I'm much more interested in this idea of museums as places where those scars are visible and accessible, rather than the idea that museums can somehow facilitate a perfect healing that leaves no one traumatised. I am less interested in museums as sites of healing and more interested in their potential to be places that we go to engage with that which must be healed.

NF: Is it possible for museums to heal from the inside?

AP: In terms of museums healing from within, I would like to see a destruction of hierarchy through the understanding that the different branches of the museum have different specialisms and different values, and that no part of the museum can exist without any of the others. The hierarchies within institutions are barriers to a more ethical, considered, healthier institution. Recognising the value of those different branches, competencies, and skills is part of the process of challenging the way that these institutions exercise certain forms of power. I feel very strongly that staffing hierarchies within museums are an enormous barrier to institutional change. When you consider the way these institutions are staffed, you are more able to engage with histories of violence and imperialism as well. These things can't be separated out.

NF: When we consider those most harmfully impacted by British imperialism and colonialism, do you think the museum can play a role in their healing? If so, how?

AP: The museum can only play as much of a role in their healing as those communities want to allow the museum to play. As a colonial apparatus of the state, museums often attempt to impose healing on others without asking if that's what people want and if that's how they want to experience it and engage with it. I see museums overwhelmingly as spaces that generally have a desire to impact people's lives in a positive way, but the idea of museums as being able to heal is often done clumsily and can be very forced. Museums can only heal people who wish to be healed by museums, and there has to be a level of consent and collaboration in that process. It's not something that can be imposed from the top down.

NF: For generations, the story of Britain's imperial past has been glorified and sanitised. As we manoeuvre through historical revision there has been a great deal of push back and disbelief. These critical revisions complicate national identity and narratives, and can be difficult for people to reconcile with and accept. Do you think the museum is well placed not only to help disseminate a fuller understanding of British imperialism, but also to help the public process and accept these truths? If so, how may the museum facilitate this healing?

AP: This is something that I often engage with in my work, which is the fact that to understand Britain's colonial history, people have to recognise that there was one in the first place, and in doing that, have to unlearn a lot of things that they have taken for granted. This process is also felt very keenly and urgently by people in and from settler colonies. The idea that you have to unlearn part of your history in order to move beyond it and re-evaluate it. I can certainly speak to my own experience of going through that process. One of the most immediate ways I think museums can be involved in this is in resisting hero narratives and the glorification of British history. That is something that is particularly relevant to education work and work with young people. The systems of curricula that these museums are pressed into service of are often invested in celebrating and enshrining individuals. Museums can resist that in their displays, in their interpretation and in the kind of programming they do – and they're a perfect place to do that and to present that increased complexity. In the cultural West, museums are still overwhelmingly treated as sites of education. Museums can take advantage of that reputation to engage with histories of violence and the complexities of these individual figures as well. Especially with young people, there is a huge amount of potential in education programmes and in learning projects within museums that we can use. We can use these spaces to encourage people, firstly, to develop critical thinking skills and critical engagement with history, but also to teach that you can hold multiple truths at once; that you have to hold that complexity and make space for nuance, uncertainty, and contradiction. Museums are a perfect place to do that kind of work because we trust them to tell us stories, for better or for worse.

NF: In your *Uncomfortable Art Tours* you utilise empathy with participants as you critically analyse specific art objects in the museum. Can you speak to your decision to use empathy in your anticolonial work with museum visitors?

AP: In the museum space, it's easy to pretend that we are distant from these objects. So much of the way that the institution is set up is with this idea that we're looking at things from the past and we shouldn't feel particularly strongly in response to them. We're there to learn, to look at things, to study. We can be inspired, but we can't be moved by these objects. It's really important to me to

encourage visitors to connect with these objects in an emotional and empathetic way, partially because it makes the stories more immediate. It also makes them more painful, and I'm very aware of the fact that in asking visitors to engage empathetically with objects, that can open up a lot of hurt and a lot of room for pain, and so, I try and do it in a considered way. This is why the use of content warnings, for example, comes in really importantly. I try to work with empathy first because it makes these stories more immediate, more tangible, and more relevant. You don't have the luxury of feeling distant or disconnected when you're being asked to *feel* in response. More than that, it's a way of encouraging people who don't necessarily see themselves as 'museum people' to recognise the value in their own responses. That a visitor will see and feel things, and respond in a certain way that a museum professional or an historian might not, and that they will instinctively draw on their own affinities with certain objects – that's really valuable and really beautiful. And so, I try and encourage that and make space for that as a positive thing, as well as harnessing the emotional impact that comes from an empathetic approach.

NF: How might empathy be used in or by museums in dealing with these difficult discussions?

AP: Encouraging empathy between visitors as well is something that's really important here, and that's something I've tried to facilitate in my own work. When you approach fellow visitors with empathy and feeling and consideration, you can extrapolate from there and think in a more considerate way about how we engage with history and historical storytelling. I think that museums are difficult places to engage with empathy, partially because of the kind of institutional power that they hold. When we talk about museums, we're often talking about the capital 'M' museum, rather than understanding the individuals behind that and within that, and that is something that is really complicated. The individuals that make up those institutions can practice empathy, but ultimately, a capital 'M' museum will never be able to be truly empathetic.

NF: Are they any museums currently doing work in decolonial/anticolonial healing who we can look towards as a strong example?

AP: There is no model to which we can turn for a perfect sort of approach or narrative. I see best practice within museums, within academia, within any kind of research or practice as a moving target. Just because someone has the best practice for right now, doesn't mean that that will be the best practice in five years or a week's time. And so, when we look towards institutions for guidance or inspiration, we run the risk of complacency and of losing sight of the fact that this is an ongoing and intensely fluid field. That's not to say that I don't want to give credit to institutions. The institutions that are providing a good model and a good structure for now are the ones that are working collaboratively with communities, who are actively engaging in processes of restitution, who are actively transforming their galleries and their interpretation, and who are adequately compensating the people doing that work and giving them the credit and resources they need to continue — and showing them respect. The institutions that deserve praise are the ones who recognise that this is an incomplete process.

Acknowledgments
Thank you to Alice Procter who was generous with both her time and wisdom.

References

Kader, A. (2012). *The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures*. [Installation].

Procter, A. (2020). *The Whole Picture: The colonial story of the art in our museums and why we need to talk about it*, London: Cassell.

Alternative Museums and the Decolonial Option in Recreating and Re-presenting Heritage Narratives of Contested Medieval Pasts

Paul Edward Montgomery Ramírez

Abstract:

The 'Viking' and 'Anglo-Saxon' form powerful images in the construction of identity among many Europeans and Euro-settlers. These images also carry negative inheritances of colonialism, xenophobia, and white supremacy. Following the successes of right-wing political movements and agendas and rise in nativist policies in Europe and settler-states, the problematic nature of many heritages tied to Medieval pasts have been increasingly drawn into focus. Heritage destinations play a role in this: as agents of healing, or harm.

This article focuses on autoethnographic experiences at Archaeological Open-Air Museums (AOAM) which specialize in narrating the pasts of the so-called 'Viking' and 'Anglo-Saxon'. It explores differing approaches to recreating and re-storying these pasts. Through human exchanges and engagements, and tapping into emotional narrative building, these sites can show a positive capacity to approach difficult elements that are attached to the imaginings of the past and to alter visitor attitudes about these peoples and worlds.

Keywords: decolonisation, living history, white supremacy, visitor studies, medievalism

Imaginings of Medieval(ized) pasts hold an influential position within many modern societies in the West and make for a force in the construction of national identities of European states. Their power extends even into the narrative-making of how populations in settler-states consider themselves (Geary 2003; Kontler 2004). The 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Viking' are interwoven into nationalisms in Europe and settler states. These groups - at times called 'barbarians' - have been re-imagined into powerful socio-political instruments.

So-called barbarians have provided antagonists to the 'civilized' world and have been idolized as the embodiment of powerful qualities. The 'barbarian' has been both destructive and noble, disgusting and sensual. Looking at cinematic depictions over the years draws clear distinctions: violent and womanless societies in films such as *The Long Ships* [1964] (Hoffman 2011, 33); aggressive, jovial, culturally nuanced and semi-permeable in *The Thirteenth Warrior* [1999]; black-clad and horned monstrosities in *Pathfinder* [2007]; highly

sexualized quasi-gangsters in the series *Vikings* [2013–2021]. These multifaceted figures have been attached to, in various ways, the narratives surrounding them, offering a powerful spirit to build identities from.

The nature of heritage is one of contestation, struggle, change, and conflict. Smith (2006, 281) considered the process as 'a struggle over power … because heritage is itself a political resource'. Again, this is to be understood as political on multiple levels. Smith articulated the concept of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) wherein creation and fostering of 'appropriate' heritages is imagined to be primarily in the hands of experts (2006, 29-30). It is in the creation of 'narratives of conflict' between 'expert' and 'public' Daly and Chan (2015, 429) considered the fabrics that create heritage.

By fusing 'barbaric' imageries of freedom, individuality, and strength with the 'civilizing' inheritances of Rome – through empire and the Renaissance – Western populations created powerfully charged national lineages. These 'civilized barbarians' helped to feed into tropes of the Noble Savage, which has found traction as a 'cultural champion' in Europe's post-Roman heritage narratives (Sindbaek 2013). Branding of the 'Viking' and the 'Anglo-Saxon' have found shape in the creation of one of the Council of Europe's cultural routes in 1993, which has since transitioned into part of a cultural tourism organization called the Destination Viking Association with around 100 affiliated sites (Shetland Amenity Trust n.d.). These are powerful brands, politically and economically. They are also essentially entwined with the colonial matrix of power.

Colonizing Pasts in the Present

The maintenance and preservation of power is made possible through an underlying foundation which filters into many aspects of the modern world; a concept called the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo 2011, 2). This coloniality is voiced by postcolonial and Latine subaltern studies and seeks to expose the legacies of colonialism in modernity, beyond overtly colonial and imperialistic spheres, in an allegedly post-colonial world.

The work of theorists like Aníbal Quijano (2000), has influenced the development of subaltern studies in the Americas (Poddar et al 2008, 508) and has spread into Eastern European/Baltic subaltern studies (Boatca 2007). The coloniality of power (also called the colonial matrix of power, or simply coloniality) is supported by reinforcing systems based around an ideological foundation of Eurocentrism, birthed from Renaissance thinking and the so-called Enlightenment (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2011). These colonial and imperial forces are strongly interwoven into national narratives, within which the 'Viking' and the 'Anglo-Saxon' hold purchase.

White Supremacy & Medievalisms

It is not difficult to find anecdotal examples of a connection to the medievalist concept of a 'Viking' or the 'Anglo-Saxon' in racist acts – overt and violent, covert and systematic. The 'Anglo-Saxon' has found use as a racial marker to both modern publics and academia (Rambaran-Olm 2018; 2021). Political rhetoric has exploited medievalist imagery and racialization of these pasts, with Thomas Jefferson suggesting that 'Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended, and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed' (Boyd 1950, 495) be celebrated on the new republic's official seal, a sentiment echoed by the Trumpist America First Caucus in its immigration platform 'America is a nation with a border, and a culture, strengthened by a common

respect for uniquely Anglo-Saxon political traditions' (AFC 2021).

Anglo-Saxon medievalism is interwoven into Anglophone imperialism, with Walt Whitman praising the 'indomitable energy of the Anglo-Saxon character' for the sack of Monterrey during the Mexican-American War (Reynolds 2005, 449). Later, 'Teddy Roosevelt led his "Rough Riders" on the 1898 U.S. invasion of Cuba with a copy of Edmond Demolins' racist manifesto *Anglo-Saxon Superiority* in tow' (Rambaran-Olm & Wade 2021). This spirit also fed the Confederate 'Lost Cause' narrative of being invaded and occupied by the Union; Yankee Normans to the Southern Saxon (Dockray-Miller 2017). While this tradition of overt imperialism may be more difficult to spot in modern times, strongly colonial and racist currents continue to flow from these wells, many of which lead to harm and violence.

Alarming modern cases also feature medievalisms of the 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Viking', like in the use of dog-whistle terms about Vinland (the name given to lands in North America by Scandinavian explorers in the early 1000s CE) in xenophobic rhetoric. This is not without impact, leading to discrimination, violence, and terrorism. The 2017 Portland train stabbings highlight this in the United States (Brown 2017). This xenophobic attachment extends beyond 'Vinland'. On 15 March 2019, the manifesto of the terrorist who massacred fifty Muslims - and injured another fifty - in New Zealand teemed with white supremist language. The terrorist's final phrase, 'I will see you all in Valhalla!' (Murdock 2019) drew the 'Viking' into this violence.

Statues of 'Viking' explorers dot Anglo-America. These have, at times, served as focal points for white supremacists. The Þorfinnur karlsefni statue in Philadelphia, for example, has been a location for Neo-Nazi rallies and wreath-laying ceremonies (Thompson 2020). This figure's traditional status as the father of the 'first white child' born in the Americas should not go unstated. It is the narrative of early 'white' settlers, later massacred by Indigenous people (called Skraelings: meaning 'barbarian' and 'weakling' in modern Icelandic and Danish, respectively) that has resonance among white supremacists and xenophobes. Heritage resources are areas of contestation, and these statues are no exception. The karlsefni statue was cast into a river in 2018, ostensibly over its use by Neo-Nazis (Thompson 2020) and a statue to Leifur Eríksson in Duluth, Minnesota, had its inscription 'Discoverer of America' covered over with paint (Iceland Review 2018). All realms where heritage is woven are territories of struggle.

Public understanding cannot be separated from the engines of heritage work. Historians, archaeologists, and scholars of all descriptions are active participants in the weaving of heritage; just as are members of 'the public'. Allfrey noted the strong emotions tied to concepts like the 'Anglo-Saxon' within both academia and public discourse that feed exclusionary and inaccurate narrations of medieval pasts – and, by extension, presents (2021). Emotional and colonial medievalisms within academia and the 'creation of knowledge' within those spheres have considerable implications. Restrictiveness in the disciplines that inform medievalisms hinder our ability to reach deeper understandings of our pasts (Rambaran-Olm 2021). Indeed, the 'expert' - even the well-intentioned - is often as much an accomplice to coloniality as any member of the 'public'.

Martin, in a study on material culture, stated that through wearing certain brooch designs that Saxon elites 'created a growing sense of superior otherness from preceding Romano-British society' (cited in Harland 2017, 114). Such academic leanings exist within the wider narrative of Saxon exceptionalism, be that through their ethnic purities or, conversely, through their cultural and biological absorption of Romano-British populations. These assumptions, once placed within an academic setting, ripple and flow into

other sources that 'the public' gather understandings of the past from.

Svanberg's work, *Decolonizing the Viking Age* sought to engage with postcolonial theory applied to the so-called Vikings (2003). The thrust of this work surrounded the diversity of graves and assemblages in southern Sweden (Skåne) positioned to deconstruct romantic and nationalistic notions of homogenous 'Viking' society. It, however, did not follow beyond artefact study, nor did it conceive broadly of European narratives as being colonized. In this sense, the work turned decolonization into the exact metaphor that Tuck and Yang (2012) decried.

Cohen, editor of the first collected volume to apply postcolonial theory to Medieval Studies: *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, said 'there is a small but stubborn minority of professors who insist white supremacy doesn't have any connections to the medieval period. Another position is that if there is a connection, both sides ought to be listened to instead of having one side -- white supremacy -- driven out' (in Roll 2017). The studies that inform narratives of the medieval are deeply colonial, and so too are the cultural forums that many engage with these pasts at: the museum.

De(Re?)colonizing the Museum

Coloniality and imperialism are built into the foundations and frameworks of the museum. The origins and early histories of museums have had significant academic attention (see Bennett 1994; 2004; Abt 2011). As individual destinations, museums often are placed within the industry as receptacles of objects. Those items, of course, had previously been assembled and displayed as part of anthropological, biological, and archaeological research; making museums 'custodians of the collections of outmoded scientific disciplines' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 1). This existence is one that the heritage industry has attempted to grapple with since the civil rights movements in the second half of the 20th century.

In this period, museum practitioners grew increasingly aware of their buildings, and the objects within, as contact zones between multiplicities of peoples (Clifford 1997). The move away from overtly colonial aspects of the museum brought them conceptually to re-imagine their position from 'temple' to 'forum' (Lonetree 2012, 4). In this 'Second Museum Age', the static and authoritative site is said to have changed into that forum, that place where communities can engage and discuss (Phillips 2005). The shift to the allegedly communal function of the museum and into an 'agent of heritage' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 1), drew on new options of how to display and interpret objects and pasts.

Some museums began to present themselves as historical artefacts to have their inheritances put up for discussion in the 'forum' (or, arguably, to do nothing of the sort in reality). Others recoiled from the packaging of a museum and re-cast their origins among 'world fairs' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000; Rydell 2011), namely the open-air museum. In the move away from the traditional inheritances of 'the museum', alternative heritage destinations have been tapped into. But these origins remain a part of the exploitative and colonial inheritances of modernity and progressivist worldview.

Open-Air Museums

Several authors have written on the historiography of the open-air museum's origins. Anderson's (1984) placed these with the 'Skansens' in Europe that displayed a 'folk life' believed going extinct by modernity. Many destinations following the Skansen model are devoid of people, save for the visitors to the attraction. These museums, Anderson (1984) felt, were unable to accurately show the very folk life they aimed to preserve.

Open-air museums that feature live interpretations are rooted in pageants that celebrated early colonization (Snow 1993), among conservative organizations connected through lineages connected to settler-colonization (Wallace 1981, 66), and in costumed exhibitions like the US centennial celebration at Philadelphia in 1876 (Anderson 1984, 29-30). Of these sites, it can be said 'that no one single place resembles another, but each in one way or another is something special' (in Paardekooper 2012, 27). For expedience, this work uses the abbreviation AOAM (Archaeological Open-Air Museum) as forwarded by the non-governmental organization EXARC (2008).

AOAMs have been studied for their educational value and ability to engage with unseemly or overlooked pasts (such as Greenspan 2002, 163; Magelssen 2007; Peers 2007; Stupp 2011; Paardekooper 2012; Teunissen 2016). It has been discussed that there is not infrequently a reluctance to tapping into the potentially uncomfortable, or failure to actively engage with an audience (Magelssen 2007, 130- 2; Peers 2007; Tyson 2008; Stupp 2011, 80-2). Despite the colonial inheritances at AOAMs, their theatrical and living nature – not bound within display cases – offer potentials to narration and engagement with pasts (Jackson & Rees-Leahy 2005; Jackson & Kidd 2008; Stupp 2011). It is at these locations that this article finds itself.

Open-Air Museums in Action

This article emerges from a three-year period of research at numerous open-air museums in Northwestern Europe, depicting either a 'Viking' or an 'Anglo-Saxon' past. The project utilized a mixed-methods approach to understand how these forms of heritage destinations can function as a renewable resource, with the potential to approach decolonial options to narrating and re-storying Medieval pasts. Two primary aspects of this project feed into this article: participant observation and visitor interviews. From this multi-faceted and mixed-methods research, there are several aspects and cases that can be teased out for outward-facing exploration.

The cases come from four sites: Foteviken, in Sweden, and the Jorvik Centre, in the UK depicting 'Viking' pasts; West Stow and Jarrow Hall, both in the UK, depicting the 'Anglo-Saxon'. At each site, individuals and groups were interviewed, with total respondents ranging from 58 and 138. Interviewed groups at the sites are as follows: Foteviken (33), Jorvik (40), West Stow (31), and Jarrow Hall (21). Interviews typically lasted between 12 and 20 minutes. Crucial to this research was the use of sentiment analysis, wherein interviewees were asked to describe the culture being depicted at the AOAM. This interview aspect of the research is highlighted in the first case.

Research at some locations took place immediately following polarized political events in the United Kingdom: the referendum on leaving the European Union ('Brexit'), and the snap election held in 2017. In addition, the interviewer's position cannot be ignored (a visible minority possessing a non-European accent). It is within this landscape and individual circumstances that visitor interactions must be understood. Cases involving visitor interviews at 'Anglo-Saxon' AOAMs highlight political and nationalist sentiment.

The 'Anglo-Saxon', Englishness, & Otherness

The West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Country Park in Suffolk, UK, is an AOAM that is founded around an excavation and later 'experiments' in Early Medieval construction. The property contains eight buildings in different styles, which are collected in a 'village'. This village is largely left unoccupied, save for during special events. It is

common to 'Skansen' style AOAMs to project a lived-in space, but where the tenants have (ostensibly temporarily) left.

Another site, in the Northeast of England, Jarrow Hall Anglo-Saxon Village and Bede Museum was presented in a similar fashion. This site's origins rest in the Early Medieval figure, the Venerable Bede, who resided at monasteries in the area and wrote the influential *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in the second quarter of the 700's CE. This site sought to inform the public on this individual and to help depict the time in which he lived.

During the research at West Stow, the site branded itself with the phrase 'The First English Village' on the entrance sign from the road. And while this sign and tagline has since changed, it is a matter of consideration that this was the initial way the site framed itself to visitors. This invocation of 'Englishness' emerged as a common thread throughout visitor interviews.

When asked about their national identity (a question which was left intentionally vague), respondents gave a myriad of answers. At West Stow, over half said 'British' to this question, with the next largest grouping considered themselves English. At Jarrow Hall, identities were even more sharply in favour of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' with only three visitors not defining themselves in those two ways.

This question drew politically charged responses at both sites. At West Stow, one participant grew irate at the question itself and asked if it wasn't obvious that they were 'Anglo-Saxon'? Another responded, 'I'm certainly not British, and I'm not European. I'm English!'. Just as many sentiments in support of Europeanness or a 'Big Britain' were offered by participants both living locally and from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that the district where West Stow is located, St Edmundsbury (now part of West Suffolk), voted to Leave the EU with 56.6%, and South Tyneside – where Jarrow Hall is located – did similar with 62% of the vote (BBC 2016). It was thankfully few participants who brought in agitated socio-political issues to interviews at this early (third) question. But it would be inaccurate to view that as the only incidence of expression of pride in 'Englishness' at these locations.

Attachment to Englishness and the 'Anglo-Saxon' continued throughout the many interviews at each site. Participant groups were asked to describe the cultures being depicted at each site. At West Stow, sixteen groups explicitly described 'Anglo-Saxons' as being English or a part of their own heritage. There was also a preoccupation of trying to rehabilitate the 'image' of these people, with the single most voiced sentiment being that 'Anglo-Saxons' have been given a bad reputation that needed to be corrected. These sentiments appear to place the interviewers as central to this question of what is an 'Anglo-Saxon', with the individuals making themselves and their modern culture synonymous with Early Medieval peoples. Further descriptions of an 'Anglo-Saxon' showed that visitors wished to convey that these people were 'Creative', 'Cultured', 'Intelligent', and 'Industrious'. Often, the tenses of the visitors fluctuated between a past they 'were' and towards a they/we 'are'. In these descriptions it appeared that the participant groups were trying to describe values that they considered of themselves and their own 'English' backgrounds. The separation of a modern people from this 'Anglo-Saxon' packaging was one that often proved elusive in interviews by people who described themselves as either British or English.

Conversely, at the 'Viking' sites in Scandinavia and the UK, a connection to identity was not as prevalent. It may have been partly that at these sites, Scandinavians did not make up the majority of interviewees, but even those who were interviewed did not directly align the 'Viking' with 'Nordicness'. At Foteviken, in Sweden, only five

groups made these associations, while three considered their historic status within the region. At the Jorvik Centre, in the UK, more participants were willing to ascribe 'Nordicness' to Vikings, but this was largely in placing 'Vikings' as being foreign to Great Britain. The most common attribute to describe a Viking by English/British visitors was their reputation for aggression and violence, with twenty groups considering them 'Aggressive', eleven 'Warriors', and eleven 'Savage'.

Modern identity and politics shaped the ways in which the interviewees observed Medieval peoples. Critiques of the 'Anglo-Saxon' as analogous to 'White' identity as described in the above section has a resonance in this prescription of the 'Anglo-Saxon' to Englishness. There was a difficulty among English participants to describe an 'Anglo-Saxon' outside of using terms that positioned themselves as being counterparts through time. West Stow branded itself as being the root of Englishness and little was done to dispel the association. And while both West Stow and Jarrow Hall sought to remind visitors that Anglo-Saxons were themselves not native to Great Britain, this fact was only recognized by three visitors across the sites. The narrative that English/British participants walked away with did not problematize the image of an 'Anglo-Saxon'. Rather than question the racialized inheritances of this term, or even the validity of it – both sites in reality describing Anglian rather than Saxon settlements and kingdoms – these AOAMs did not make this a consideration in their displays. The lack of permanent costumed interpreters did nothing to remedy this absence in the displays' narratives.

The inability of the AOAMs to address colonial medievalisms in the 'Anglo-Saxon' is in a stark contrast to lessons that were found in live approaches to narrating 'the Viking'.

Playing Viking

The Foteviken Viking Reserve (the irony of such a name is not lost on an Indigenous researcher) is perceived by its creator as a film set - an understandable position due to his background in that industry. It is a perspective that brings with it a difference to other AOAMs, and certainly with museums at large. Foteviken is a reconstructed village, with new buildings being periodically constructed (twenty-three were present during my research). As its full name hints at, one of the focal points of the AOAM is that it is always populated (to differing extents, based on day and season). Not only this, but during the periods where more 'Vikings' live at the site (quite literally, individuals are allowed to stay on site, in the village itself, in their own camping set-ups, or in nearby dorms), the AOAM has a schedule of vignettes that play out during the day. These offer the site a unique form of engagement that is worth exploration.

The model that Foteviken utilizes to occupy its village is unique. Not only are there members of staff who live in the immediate area and act as costumed interpreters throughout the year as can be seen at other AOAMs, but it also makes use of two other avenues to fill the destination with life. The first is a work-placement scheme supported by local and state government; the second is to allow longer-term visitors and volunteers to 'be a Viking' for a period. Individuals are given training in the site, the period being presented, and in methods/etiquette to engage with visitors to the site and shadowed by members of the staff to ensure quality.

It was under this scheme of site-population that visitor observation took place. Levels of participant observation were described by Spradley (1980, 58-62), with the researcher role at

Foteviken finding a place between 'moderate' and 'active'. Many of the interpretive functions were undertaken during this research, but one aspect was avoided: interact with visitors to directly pass information along. That is, rather than explaining 'Viking life' to visitors, it was acted out. This was a conscious effort to not occupy the functional and intellectual space of the costumed interpreters.

Over the timespan onsite, participation in some capacity in the vignettes was carried out by the researcher. During some days and vignettes, it was determined to be more important to the research to withdraw from active participation and to engage as a visitor. Roughly every hour, starting from 11.00, the same set of scenes played out each day in the season. Other AOAMs make use of a similar device, like Colonial Williamsburg's Revolutionary City Program (see Teunissen 2016, 127-180). Foteviken's vignettes did not advance a grand narrative – of the American Revolution in Williamsburg's case – but rather depicted more mundane happenings.

The first of the series of vignettes, as with many of the others, had a sense of comedy about it. One of the 'Vikings' made their way through the town complaining of a toothache. Ultimately, they arrived at the blacksmith who removed the offending tooth and then commented - typically to visiting families with children - on the necessity of good oral hygiene.

Other vignettes depicted other aspects of life in likewise darkly humorous ways. Certain interpreters were given the designation of 'thrall' (slave), and were often treated in subhuman and cruel ways throughout the day, although often shown in a comedic light. One such vignette featured a thrall with a leg injury. The freemen quickly decided to amputate the limb. Their bordering on slapstick argument is cut short by a woman who scolds them and speaks to the audience of visitors about health and healing in the period.

But it is the final vignette that was the most forceful. Each day before the AOAM closed, one of the thralls donned a red hat and found a place to hide. Shortly afterwards, one of the freemen went through the town angrily searching for his runaway thrall. Visitors were then asked to help find them, resulting in families participating in this medieval hide-and-seek. Once found by visitors, the thrall is captured by others costumed interpreters and taken to the town square and forced into chains and a stock. As all the visitors gathered, the lead 'Viking' thanked the visitors for their help in recovering the runaway thrall, and how this person must be punished. The position of thralls in the 'Viking' world, their treatment, and forms of punishment were all explained by the town's freemen.

It was at this point that the tone of the audiences changed. Witnessing the scene play out and the visitors' interactions, suggests that what started out as an entertaining game of hide-and-seek became something altogether different, dark, and uncomfortable. They had participated in a slave hunt; they had handed another human over to be punished severely for the crime of wishing to be liberated. Visitors shifted awkwardly as they were told of the punishment that would be inflicted upon the thrall - who they were complicit in the hunting of. Many voiced a desire to let the thrall go, but few were willing to change places - even in a staged environment. Their participation in dehumanization and apprehension to stand up against it perhaps taught visitors more about themselves than they bargained for. The uneasy lesson about dehumanization and complicity in such acts, while framed around 'Viking' society, really spoke to modern life and the banality in evil deeds towards other humans. At Foteviken, the Medieval served as a proxy to discuss issues that modern people face, be that the necessary tedium of hygiene or of taxation, or to touch upon the normalization of othering and dehumanization.

Conclusion

The position of cultural institutions like museums are not neutral, nor are the narratives they forward or render invisible. 'The museum' itself can never be decolonized, as its very roots are those of coloniality. Were it to be appropriately decolonized, the museum would cease to exist; it would become something new. And despite drawing distance from the 'museum', the AOAM may not have enough distance from these colonial roots even if AOAMs 'are rarely characterised as museums, but rather as centres, heritage visitor centres, farms, parks or villages' (Paardekooper 2012, 54). Sources of funding and support by AOAMs have leaned towards the conservative and elite side of the social/cultural spectrum (Handler & Gable 1997, 229-230; Montgomery 1998, ixxiii; Teunissen 2016, 78 & 84-88). These associations have been argued to undermine willpower to problematize narratives that continue to uphold the status of those who benefit from elite and whitewashed pasts (Handler & Gable 1997, 25 & 123). Failure to engage with colonial medievalisms conjured and empowered by white supremacy only aids to bring greater toxicity. The imaginings and absence of the 'Anglo-Saxon' at sites depicting them highlights missed opportunity. Historic realities of the non-native origins of the Angles and the Saxons did not resonate with the British/English visitors. In this, opportunities were missed to counter nativist and xenophobic sentiments through strongly narrating these realities. The relative absence of 'living history' at these AOAMs in comparison to the case at Foteviken is significant to this failure.

AOAMs that take a 'living history' over 'Skansen' approach have greater ability to adapt their narrative strategies in light of differing publics and social issues. Still, this should not be misunderstood as being unproblematically actualized. Heritage resources that depict marginal people have been seen to 'dehistoricize and decontextualize difference so as to neutralize the harsh realities of colonialism and exploitation' (Kamper 2005, 344). Peers (2007) noted the negative racial encounters that interpreters of Native American pasts face in their efforts to engage even 'well-meaning' publics. Colonial Williamsburg presented a slave auction to 'teach the history of our mothers and grandmothers so that every one of you will never forget what happened to them' (Horton 1999, 31). It proved a controversial event, with criticisms that the event glorified slavery or made it a spectacle. While some changed their opinions (Braxton cited in Teunissen 2016, 96), others remained sceptical, like Stupp (2011, 62) who argued that 'contemporary reenactments often fail to recast historically overdetermined narratives that, while perhaps evoking empathy for slaves, ultimately add little to discussions about the legacy of slavery'. Narratives at AOAMs have expanded, as Agamben (in Magelssen 2007, 21-2) argued, not as revolutionary acts, but as reactionary adjustments to contemporary social occurrences.

Attempts at 'inclusion' or narratives of multiculturalism can unwittingly replicate coloniality, like in the problematic depiction of the 'Arab' in a Medieval English setting at the Jorvik Centre (Montgomery Ramirez 2021). It must be kept in mind that diversity and inclusion are not synonymous with decolonization. These projects often intersect, but it cannot be assumed that they also overlap.

There has been a belief in the 'West' that history and its narratives are 'real' while performance cannot be so, because of its basis in stirring emotion (see Jackson & Rees-Leahy 2005; Jackson & Kidd 2008; Schneider 2014; Southerland Clothier 2014). Indeed, 'theatrical' gets used pejoratively by interpretive staff at AOAMs (Magelssen 2007, 118). But costumed interpretation as theatre can use a fiction to produce and pass along a narrative to engage the visiting public with difficult issues, like slavery and systematic racism (Gable, Handler, & Lawson 1992, 798). Foteviken's living approach

drew out a dark experience from what had initially been perceived as a game by visitors. It brought uncomfortable realities - both of the past and of modernity - to the town centre in its escaped thrall vignette. In drawing life, humour, and darkness to visitor experiences, an AOAM can strive to tease out and address colonial attitudes they may not even be aware that they possess.

A visitor can make up their own mind about sensitive, or contested issues (Dicks 2000, 63-4; Bagnall 2003; Kidd 2011). Challenging the very narratives that fuel white supremacy are necessary, even if uncomfortable to some. It is only in doing so that we may be able to view options for decolonial futures in heritage work, and in the greater worlds we live in.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the kind staff at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village, Foteviken Viking Reserve, The Jorvik Viking Centre, and Jarrow Hall Anglo-Saxon Village & Bede Museum for allowing me to undertake my research on their properties. In particular, I would thank Lance Alexander, Björn Jakobsen, Thomas Olsen, Chris Tuckley, and Leigh Venus for their invaluable assistance and contributions that help to inform this work.
This work was supported by the University of York under the Departmental Research Fund and the Viking Society for Northern Research under the Research Support Fund.

Works Cited

Abt, J (2011) 'The Origins of the Public Museum', in Macdonald, S (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*: 115-134. Hoboken, NJ, Wiley.

Allfrey, F (2021) 'Ethnonationalism and Medievalism: Reading Affective 'Anglo-Saxonism' Today with the Discovery of Sutton Hoo'. *Postmedieval*, 12(1): 75-99.

Anderson, J (1984) *Time Machines: The World of Living History*. Nashville, TN, American Association for State & Local History.

America Frist Caucus (AFC) (2021) *America First Caucus Policy Platform*. Available at: <https://punchbowl.news/wp-content/uploads/America-First-Caucus-Policy-Platform-FINAL-2.pdf> (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Bagnall, G (2003) 'Performance & Performativity at Heritage Sites'. *Museum & Society*, 1(2): 87-103
BBC (2016) *EU Referendum: Local Results*. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results/local/a (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Bennett, T (1994) *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London, Routledge.

Bennett, T (2004) *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*. London, Routledge.

Boatca, M (2007) 'The Eastern Margins of Empire'. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3): 368-84.

Boyd, JP (ed) (1950) *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol 1, 1760-1776*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

Brown, D (2017) 'Suspect in Portland Hate Crime Murders is a Known White Supremacist'. *Portland Mercury*, 27 May. Available at: http://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2017/05/27/19041594/suspect-in-portland-hate-crime-murders-is-a-known-white-supremacist (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Clifford, J (1997) *Routes: Travel & Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Cohen, J (ed.) (2000) *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Daly, P & Chan, B (2015) '"Putting Broken Pieces Back Together": Reconciliation, Justice, & Heritage in Post-conflict Situations', in W Logan, MN Craith & U Kocke (eds) *A Companion to Heritage Studies*: 491-506. Malden, MA, John Wiley & Sons.

Dicks, B (2000) *Heritage, Place, & Community*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press

Dockray-Miller, M (2017) 'Old English has a Serious Image Issue'. *JStor Daily*, 3 May. Available at: https://daily.jstor.org/old-english-serious-image-problem/ (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

EXARC (2008) 'Definition of Archaeological Open-Air Museum'. *EXARC*, 22 July. Available at: https://exarc.net/about-us/definitions (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Gable, E, Handler, R & Lawson, A (1992) 'On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, & Black & White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg'. *American Ethnologist*, 19(4): 791-805.

Geary, P (2003) *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe.* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

Greenspan, A (2002) *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press.

Hampton, E (1995) 'Memory Comes Before Knowledge: Research May Improve if Researchers Remember their Motives'. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21(supplement): 46–54.

Handler, R & Gable, E (1997) *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press

Harland, JM (2017) 'Rethinking Ethnicity & >Otherness< in Early Anglo-Saxon England'. *Medieval Worlds*, 5: 113–142.

Hoffman, D (2011) 'Guess Who's Coming to Plunder? Or, Disorientation and Desire in 'The Long Ships' (1964)', in Harty, K (ed.*) The Vikings on Film: Essays on Depictions of the Nordic Middle Ages*: 24-38. London, McFarland & Company.

Horton, J (1999) 'The Perils of Telling America's Racial Story'. *The Public Historian*, 21(4): 19-38

Iceland Review (2017) 'White-Nationalists March Toward Statue of Icelandic Viking'. *Iceland Review*, 17 Oct. Available at: https://www.icelandreview.com/news/white-nationalistsmarch-toward-statue-icelandic-viking/ (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Jackson, A & Kidd, J (2008) *Performance, Learning & Heritage*. Manchester: Centre for Applied Theatre Research, University of Manchester. Available at: http://www.plh.manchester.ac.uk/documents/Performance,%20Learning%20&%20Heritage%20-%20Report.pdf (Accessed 22 Jan 2022).

Jackson, A & Rees-Leahy, H (2005) '"Seeing it for Real?" – Authenticity, Theatre, & Learning in Museums'. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre & Performance*, 10: 303-325.

Johnson, C (2002) 'The Dilemmas of Ethnic Privilege: A Comparison of Constructions of 'British', 'English', & 'Anglo-Celtic' Identity in Contemporary British & Australian Political Discourse'. *Ethnicities*, 2(2): 163-188.

Kamper, D (2005) 'American Studies, Ethnography, & Knowledge Production: The Case of American Indian Performers at Knott's Berry Farm'. *American Studies*, 46 (3/4): 339-361.

Kidd, J (2011) 'Performing the Knowing Archive: Heritage Performance & Authenticity'. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17(1): 22-35.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B (2000) The Museum as Catalyst. *Museums 2000: Confirmation or Challenge Keynote*. Vadstena, 29 Sept. Available at: http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/web/vadstena.pdf (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B (2004) From Ethnology to Heritage: The Role of Museums. *SIEF Keynote*. Marseilles, 28 April. Available at: http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/web/SIEF.pdf (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Kontler, L (2004) 'Foundation Myths & the Reflection of History in Modern Hungary', in Godfrey,S & Unger,F (eds) *The Shifting Foundations of Modern Nation-States: Realignments of Belonging*: 131-148. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Lonetree, A (2012) *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National & Tribal Museums*. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press.

Magelssen, S (2007) *Living History Museums: Undoing History Through Performance*. Lanham, MD, Scarecrow Press.

McCabe, S (2005) '"Who is a Tourist?" A Critical Review'. *Tourist Studies*, 5(1): 85–106.

McCabe, S & Foster, C (2006) 'The Role & Function of Narrative in Tourist Interaction'. *Journal of Tourism & Cultural Change*, 4(3): 194–215.

Mignolo, W (2011) *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

Montgomery, D (1998) *A Link Among the Days: The Life & Times of the Rev. Dr. WAR Goodwin, the Father of Colonial Williamsburg*. Richmond, VA, Dietz Press.

Montgomery Ramírez, PE (2021) 'Colonial Representations of Race in Alternative Museums: The 'African' of St Benet's, the 'Arab' of Jorvik, & the 'Black Viking''. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 27(9): 937-952.

Murdock, J (2019) '8chan User Claiming to be New Zealand Shooter Posted 'See You All in Valhalla' Before Mosque Massacre'. *Newsweek*, 15 March. Available at: https://www.newsweek.com/8chan-christchurch-shooting-new-zealand-brenton-tarrant-what-8chan-4chan-1364129 (Accessed 15 Jan 2022).

Paardekooper, R (2012) *The Value of an Archaeological Open-Air Museum is in its Use. Understanding Archaeological Open-Air Museums & Their Visitors*. Leiden, Sidestone.

Peers, L (2007) *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Historic at Historic Reconstructions*. Plymouth, AltaMira Press.

Phillips, R (2005) 'Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 86(1): 83-110.

Poddar, P, Patke, RS & Jensen, L (2008) *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe & its Empires*. Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press.

Quijano, A (2000) 'Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina', in Lander, E (ed) *La colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*: 201-246. Buenos Aires, CLASCO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

Rambaran-Olm, M (2018) 'Anglo-Saxon Studies, Academia & White Supremacy'. *Medium*, 27 June. Available at: https://medium.com/@mrambaranolm/anglo-saxon-studies-academia-and-white-supremacy-17c87b360bf3 (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Rambaran-Olm, M (2021) 'A Wrinkle in Medieval Time: Ironing out Issues Regarding Race, Temporality, and the Early English'. *New Literary History*, 52(3/4): 385-406.

Rambaran-Olm, M & Wade, E (2021) 'The Many Myths of the Term 'Anglo-Saxon'. *Smithsonian Magazine*, 14 July. Available at: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/many-myths-term-anglo-saxon-180978169/ (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Reynolds, D (2005) *John Brown Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, & Seeded Civil Right*. New York, Alfred A Knopf.

Roll, N (2017) 'A Schism in Medieval Studies, for All to See'. *Inside Higher Ed*, 19 Sept. Available at: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/19/one-professors-critique-another-divides-medieval-studies (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Rydell, R (2011) 'World Fairs & Museums', in Macdonald, S (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies*: 135-151. Hoboken, NJ, Wiley: 135-151.

Shetland Amenity Trust (nd) 'Viking Cultural Route'. *Follow the Vikings*. Available at: https://www.followthevikings.com/map (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Sindbaek, S (2013) 'All in One Boat. The Vikings as European & Global Heritage', in Callebaut, D, Mařik, J & Mařiková-Kubková, J (eds) *Heritage Reinvents Europe*: 81-87. Namur, Europae Archaeologiae Consilium.

Smith, L (2006) *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Snow, SE (1993) *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation*. Jackson, MS, University Press of Mississippi.

Spradley, JP (1980) *Participant Observation*. Orlando, FL, Harcourt College Publishers

Svanberg, F (2003) *Decolonizing the Viking Age 1*. Malmö, Daleke Grafiska.

Stupp, J (2011) 'Slavery & the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block'. *Theatre Journalism*, 63(1): 61-84.

Teunissen, M (2016) *Representation of the Past in Public Spheres. Experiencing the Past: The Reconstruction & Recreation of History at Colonial Williamsburg*. Netherlands, Brave New Books.

Thompson, G (2020) 'Where is the Toppled Boathouse Row Viking Statue?' *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 Jan. Available at: https://www.inquirer.com/news/viking-statue-thorfinn-karlsefni-white-nationalists-boathouse-row-20200130.html (Accessed 12 Jan 2022).

Tuck, E & Yang KW (2012) 'Decolonization is Not a Metaphor'. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1): 1-40.

Tyson, A (2008) 'Crafting Emotional Comfort: Interpreting the Painful Past at Living History Museums in the New Economy'. *Museum & Society*, 6(3): 246-262.

Wallace, M (1981) 'Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States'. *Radical History Review*, 25: 63-96.

Short Submission: Is the museum an agent of healing or harm in society?

Intersectionality as Way of Seeing

Geneva Lavern Beckford

The multifaceted function and purpose of the museum in their roles as collectors, educators, preservers, and producers of knowledge has become highly debated within recent decades. Museums are increasingly expected to facilitate the exploration of matters surrounding power, authority, ownership, as well as the presence/absence of specific narratives or voices. Despite the efforts of certain museums and practitioners to enable these changes, debates on the authority of museums and concerns surrounding identity-based exclusion have remained central to both museum discourse and that of our rapidly shifting socio-political landscape. The two issues have become inextricably intertwined over time, with the museum in its various authoritative capacities seen as contributing directly to long-standing key contentions concerning identity-based exclusion in both curatorial and organizational capacities.

Intersectionality as a lens of analysis aids in the dissection of these power structures and how they occur to create power and privilege at both structural and individual levels. At the structural level, intersectionality would allow an examination of how its complex power-dynamics are constructed and build on existing theory regarding how this enables exclusionary practices. Examining where aspects of one's identity intersect to create privilege or oppression on an individual level would allow institutions to fully comprehend the ways in which individuals and communities are disadvantaged/advantaged, in order to re-centre the marginalised and mend community relationships by acknowledging, accounting for, and dissolving these barriers in terms of both entry within the space and curatorial practice.

I pose the belief that intersectionality is essential to addressing exclusionary practices within the museum through the deconstruction and analysis of internal power relations – contributing to a societal healing through addressing previous curatorial transgressions and mending relationships with previously excluded groups, individuals, and communities.

Exhibition Review – Reverse and Re-Orientation in the Work of Noel W. Anderson

Ashley Maum

Fig 1. Noel W. Anderson, *Line Up*, 2016-17. Image courtesy of the artist. Retrieved from: https://www.nwastudios.com/blakoriginmoment

Between October 2019 and January 2020, Noel W. Anderson asked the public of the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 'When did you know you were Black?'. This question, addressing some and implicating others, posed the frame for his solo-exhibition *Blak Origin Moment*. The exhibition deals with violent imagery, including several instances of Black death at the hands of police, as examples of moments where racial recognition is heightened. These become both sites of intervention and the outlines of Anderson's search for an origin moment:

> 'I found myself at the Black archive. *Blak Origin Moment* searches for an origin by way of this archive. Within this abyss, searching through materials related to African American experiences, this work mines historical and contemporary sources to establish a black root.' (Wall text, Hunter Museum)

In confronting this material, *Blak Origin Moment* also seeks to raise questions about the authority of this archive. Anderson works predominantly with textile for *Blak Origin Moment* with many works of jacquard tapestry depicting distorted images (Figure 1). With this, he establishes a particular focus on the (mis)construction of Black identity and experience through media representation.

This review draws focus to the video-work *STOOR*, 2016-17, which helps to consider the exhibition more broadly, while specifically through the lens of healing. The question for me here is not whether definitive healing takes place in or through *Blak Origin Moment*. I instead explore the implications of exhibiting a wound and how the conditions of its exhibition may change the perception of a wound's infliction and mending. In considering these concepts, this review is concerned with how seeing is embedded in forms of power and how viewing, as witnessing, may play a role in healing traumatic memory.

Fig 2. Noel W. Anderson, STOOR (still), 2016-17. Image courtesy of the artist. Retrieved from: https://www.nwastudios.com/blakoriginmoment

STOOR, along with much of *Blak Origin Moment*, consists of already-existing material which Anderson employs as a site of intervention (Figure 2). The work is a nine-minute video from the U.S. television show, *Roots,* (1977). Based on a book by Alex Haley, *Roots* tells the story of his ancestors' path through slavery and emancipation in the American South. Prompted by Donald Trump's calls to 'Make America Great Again', Anderson re-envisions the story as an experiment in what such a 'return' might entail by reversing the audio and footage from a clip of the series (Anderson, 2020). The video-work focuses on a scene where Kunta Kinte, whose abduction from West Africa begins the show, is whipped until he will call himself by the name he has been given as a slave. In its original form, the scene is brutal and stifling. In the reversed and slightly sped up *STOOR*, however, the viewer is no longer able to comprehend the scene's meaning through its chronologic or narrative unfolding. Left grasping at visual associations – dry, red dirt, frayed rope, and the brown leather of the whip – they become disoriented by the characters' incomprehensible speech.

While viewing *STOOR*, we see that all that which is becomes strange in *Blak Origin Moment*, as images become tapestries to be re-stitched and picked apart, as history plays out in reverse. The power in this 'making strange' lies in its disruption, or subversion, of aesthetic and temporal experience as they reflect coloniality and inherent anti-Blackness. Crucial to understanding sensorial experience as embedded in forms of power is to first grasp the political-social construction of perception. Described by Jacques Rancière as 'the distribution of the sensible', this constructed perception delineates how the social world – objects, people, phenomena – is understood (Rancière, 2004). The inherent violence of this 'distribution' becomes clear in reading decolonial theorist Rolando Vázquez, who asserts that modern aesthetics and temporality perform a double act of coloniality by at once validating the world-view of the hegemonic power, which has produced it, and excluding from experience those whose worlds are deemed Other, different, and, in this case, non-white. For the case of aesthetics, the colonialist exclusion of other worlds of sensing and meaning shapes sensibility to control not only *how* but *what* we see in the first instance (Vázquez, 2020b). The coloniality of modern time, on the other hand, takes the shape of an over-focus on

the 'new' and contemporary, which fragments time and excludes the past as a valid site of experience (Vázquez 2020a). Rancière and Vázquez's frameworks help contextualise the radical potential of art to intervene in patterns of meaning-making and construct new forms of political subjectivity, which this review sees enacted within *Blak Origin Moment*.

Thinking with Vázquez, the powers driving colonialism, slavery and, today, the institutionalisation of police brutality are the same shaping – through aesthetics and temporality – public sensibility around Blackness. Noel W. Anderson, in searching through material produced, and therefore marked, by these power structures, deals in *Blak Origin Moment* with the exhibition of a wound, of histories of pain and violence. Encoded in the everyday, we can read its infliction in the archiving of a captured image, eventually consumed as media, as spectacle. Anderson thus warps images and reverses *Roots* to destabilise the meaning of these materials. This is done in an effort to question their authority, while making visible their often-violent role in shaping Black consciousness. The artist also breaks with chronologic time; the origin becomes no single point of emergence on a timeline, but an abyss of relational experience.

Another way to contextualise Anderson's break with chronologic time is through his working with traumatic memory. In her writing on trauma narratives, philosopher Susan J. Brison describes traumatic experience as an 'undoing of the self', a violent disruption of memory which fractures time in such a way that past and present are no longer connected, and futures become unimaginable (Brison, 1999). Brison then moves to assert that sharing trauma narratives with an engaged listener is crucial for healing the fractures created by these memories. *Blak Origin Moment* places its viewer in this moment between the subject undone by trauma and subsequently 'healed' through re-integration of memory. I do not intend to place Anderson himself as the subject here, although he is certainly touched by the violence he represents. Rather, the subject becomes much broader as the artist works more from cultural memory than solely individual. As Brison argues, this engaged listener – the viewer in this instance – allows the traumatised subject to tell their story from their own point of view, as opposed to the point of view of the perpetrator. The viewer thus functions as a crucial mechanism for healing because they ensure the trauma narrative is not told in a vacuum, but received in a social context, where it becomes part of a communal memory.

Fig 3. Noel W. Anderson, *Untitled*, 2019. Installation view of tapestry hanging on the outside of the Hunter Museum. Image courtesy of the artist. Retrieved from: https://www.nwastudios.com/blakoriginmoment

This review has explored *Blak Origin Moment* through the lens of exhibiting a wound to explore the complex forms of viewer experience it engenders. In a dualizing act – posed through the exhibition's initial question: 'When did you know you were Black?' – Anderson invites his audience both as viewers, transformed into witnesses, and as subjects, marked by shared cultural memory. This is especially poignant in the video-work *STOOR*, due to its painfully relevant links to the history of the U.S. South, where the exhibition is presented. The public of the exhibition does not thus stand adjacent to the histories dealt with in *Blak Origin Moment* but becomes engaged as a witness to re-narrated traumatic memory and a key part in potential healing. Anderson confronts viewers with this material, picking it apart and re-shaping it to change the way we look at instances

of anti-Black violence and their connection across time. This change in perception attempts to shift us out of colonialist modes of being as they fragment historical experience and exclude other possible forms of meaning-making. Delineating new pathways for understanding past and present, *Blak Origin Moment* powerfully holds a space for us to think and move along them.

Works Cited

Anderson, N.W. (2020). Interview by Ashley Maum.

Brison, S.J. (1999). 'Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self', in Bal, M., Crewe, J. and Spitzer, L. (eds.). *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*: 39-54. Hanover, University Press of New England.

Rancière, J. (2004) 'Foreword' and 'The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics', in Rockhill G. (ed). *The Politics of Aesthetics*: 9-19. London, Continuum.

Vázquez, R. (2020a). 'Modernity Coloniality and Visibility: The Politics of Time', *Errant Journal* (1): 17-24.

Vázquez, R. (2020b). *Vistas of Modernity: decolonial aesthesis and the end of the contemporary*. Amsterdam, Mondriaan Fonds.

Visual Submission – ‘Save’

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Barts Health NHS Trust has been upgrading spaces for staff rest and respite. Shezad Dawood, Modern Forms and Vital Arts (the Arts & Health service for Barts), collaborated to bring artworks to these staffrooms, to help support wellbeing and acknowledge the incredible dedication of frontline staff who care for, protect and connect us all.

Save is made of damaged photovoltaic cells on varnished chiffon. The artist Haroon Mirza describes it as an 'open-ended proposition'; it is a work that collates meaning as it shapeshifts under the light while you look at it. Created during one of the most extreme health crises in a century, the work depicts a stark combination of the ecological and the human. Yet, despite the emergency, NHS staff empathy for their colleagues and patients forces to the forefront a depth of respect, feeling and mutual aid. We need to keep that safe.

Author:

Alice Woodhouse

Image Credit:

Haroon Mirza, Save 1, 2020, Chiffon,

polyurethane and chalk pen on photovoltaic cells.

Courtesy of hrm199

Section III – INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

Well Implemented: Rethinking Museum Practices to Better Facilitate Chronically Ill and Disabled Individuals

Emily Levick

Abstract:

Returning to museums after lockdown, we can especially appreciate the importance of these places in our lives. Yet, many individuals are unable to experience museums. These people are among the most vulnerable and isolated in our communities: the disabled, the chronically ill, the housebound, and those with mental health conditions.

This paper discusses the multiple and varying needs of these individuals, which need to be met for them to feel welcome and included in museum environments. Viewing museums from the perspective of a chronic illness with wide-ranging symptoms, it considers three separate initiatives, exploring potential ways in which museums can also reach out to those who are housebound. This paper argues for the significant health and wellbeing benefits museums can offer to people, and advocates for the use of museum objects in accessible programming for those with multifaceted needs. Ultimately, it calls for greater awareness and understanding of these audiences and potential audiences.

Key words: museums, disability, chronic illness, health, wellbeing

Museums can be many things to many people. They are places of learning and entertainment. They encourage, inspire, surprise, and enlighten. They are meeting points for socialising, and places to shop. They serve as study hubs for students, teachers, and artists. They can also be places of healing.

As visitors return to museums after many months of lockdown, it is possible to view these spaces with fresh eyes. Walking through the galleries again, and contemplating thousands of years of history and art, we can especially appreciate the importance of these places in our lives. Yet, many individuals are unable to experience museums. Indeed, for some of them, "lockdown" started long before the pandemic, and has no end in sight. These people are among the most vulnerable and isolated in our communities: the disabled, the chronically ill, the housebound, and those with mental health conditions. As Lois Silverman (2002: 69) notes, 'museums assume a healthy visitor

population'. While many of us, fortunately, can spontaneously visit a museum or cultural institution, the 'significant number of people whose struggles impair daily functionings' (ibid: 69) often experience significant barriers, both perceived and actual; while for those who are housebound, a physical visit to a museum is out of the question.

Identifying Barriers

Barriers may take the form of steps and crowded walkways, fluctuating light levels, and varying font styles on text labels, which are generally no trouble to the visitor who can walk or stand with ease, and who does not suffer from sensory overload or sensitivities to environmental changes. The cacophony of voices and sounds echoing through the galleries of a large museum is little more than white noise to most visitors, but to someone with noise sensitivity, such external stimuli may simply be too much. Barriers may also come in the form of negative past experiences, and pre-conceived ideas of what a museum is for, or about.[1] This demonstrates what Trustram (2014: 69) calls the 'museum in the mind', which refers to the 'conscious and unconscious mental construct that a person holds about a museum' and can significantly influence a person's decision to visit, or not visit, a museum. 'Museums have for a long time represented a symbol of exclusion, having always been considered a product of the established order that proposes values conceived a priori as right and acceptable' (Poce et al 2021: 44). As well as physical accessibility being limited for some visitors, the representation of disabled and chronically ill individuals in the collections themselves – as artists, scientists, makers or owners of objects, trailblazers, or other people of note, for example – can also be seen as a form of exclusion. By not including such figures or objects in their representation, museums risk marginalising disabled and chronically ill communities, conveying the impression that these people are not worthy of commemoration in museums. Much work has been done, and is ongoing, in this area of museum studies (see Sandell 2003; Delin 2002; Dodd et al 2008, 2006), and it will therefore not be focused on here. This paper explores how museums might reach out to their – largely invisible – disabled and chronically ill communities through accessible initiatives and alternative platforms. Through proper understanding, and openness to new practices and approaches, museums can facilitate in overcoming many of the access-related barriers experienced by those with health conditions and disabilities. This paper discusses the multiple and varying needs of these individuals, which need to be met for them to feel welcome and included in museum environments. To do this, we focus on an example of one health condition, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), a debilitating illness estimated in 2011 to affect over 17 million people worldwide.[2] The initiatives discussed here are not limited only to assisting individuals with this condition; however, ME presents with such a wide range of symptoms, on multiple levels, that it is helpful as a demonstration of how museums might understand chronic illness and forms of disability, in order to better prepare for therapeutic interventions to facilitate such communities. We explore three separate initiatives, considering potential ways in which museums can also reach out to those who are housebound. This paper argues for the significant health and wellbeing benefits museums can offer to people – those who can physically visit, and those who cannot – and advocates for the use of museum objects in accessible programming for those with multifaceted needs. Ultimately, this paper calls for greater awareness and understanding of these audiences and potential audiences, arguing that, by being open to new approaches, museums have a great capacity for healing across a wide stretch of the community.

Understanding Potential Museum Audiences: Limitations and Individual Needs

It is important to recognise that all health conditions and disabilities affect individuals in different ways – even two people with the same illness will not experience the same symptoms, be affected as severely as each other, or respond to medical or other interventions in the same way. What follows should not be taken as medical guidance; rather, it is an analysis and discussion, from a museum studies perspective, of potential approaches by museums to increase mental and physical accessibility for individuals with some form of illness or disability, with the aim of promoting health and well-being benefits. Such approaches are important not only for the positive impacts they can have on the museum's audiences and potential audiences, but they also reflect positively on the museum as an institution. As Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 115) suggest:

> Given the uncertain economic future faced by many museums…, it is even more imperative now that museums demonstrate their worth and value in good human functioning as a means to maintaining and/or improving health and well-being.

As it is impossible to discuss the full range of conditions which can fall under the umbrella terms of 'disability' and 'chronic illness' or 'health condition' here, it is necessary to be selective. By focusing on a particular condition, we can better understand the scope of health issues we are dealing with, as well as consider how museums might assist visitors and potential visitors experiencing these symptoms. This paper considers Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), commonly known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). This illness is 'primarily neurological, but also involves cognitive, cardiac, cardiovascular, immunological, endocrinological, metabolic, respiratory, hormonal, gastrointestinal and musculo-skeletal dysfunctions and damage' (Bassett/HFME 2004-2012). This condition has been chosen because of its wide-ranging array of more than sixty-four symptoms (Bassett/HFME 2004-2012), which vary from very severe to mild and are common to many other illnesses and disabilities;[3] and because the author has personal experience, and therefore knowledge, of this condition, in a non-medical capacity.[4] Many of the symptoms of Long Covid have also been identified as overlapping with those of ME/CFS (see, for example: Smyth 2021; Geddes 2020; Trueland 2021).

The NHS UK website states that:

> The main symptom of ME/CFS is extreme physical and mental tiredness (fatigue) that does not go away with rest or sleep. This can make it difficult to carry out everyday tasks and activities.
>
> Most people with ME/CFS describe their fatigue as overwhelming and a different type of tiredness from what they've experienced before.
>
> Exercising usually makes the symptoms worse.
>
> ('Symptoms: Myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)')

Among the many other symptoms of this condition, we commonly find muscle or joint pain, weakness, or even paralysis; headaches; dizziness and orthostatic tachycardia; flu-like symptoms; 'brain fog', which includes concentration difficulties, poor word-finding ability, and slow comprehension; and sensitivity to sound, light, smell, and touch (NHS website; Bassett/HFME 2004-2012).

The following provides a basic outline of levels of severity and how these typically affect sufferers.

> ME/CFS symptoms can be considered:

- mild – you're able to carry out everyday activities, such as work, studies or housework, but with difficulty; you may need to give up hobbies or social activities so you can rest in your spare time

- moderate – you may have difficulty moving around easily and problems carrying out daily activities; you may not be able to work or continue with your education and may need to rest often; and you may also have problems sleeping at night

- severe – you may only be able to do very basic daily tasks, such as brushing your teeth; you may be housebound or even bedbound and may need a wheelchair to get around; and you may also have difficulty concentrating, be sensitive to noise and light, and take a long time to recover after activities involving extra effort, such as leaving the house or talking for long periods

- very severe – you may have to spend all your time in bed resting and are fully dependent on carers; you may need help eating, washing and going to the toilet; you may be extremely sensitive to light and noise; you may be unable to swallow and need to be fed using a tube

(NHS website: 'Symptoms: Myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)')

This demonstrates that even the same health condition can affect people in vastly different ways, and suggests that, in any attempt at healthcare or non-medical intervention, these levels of ability and needs should be taken into account.[5] As Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 91-2) note,

> health and well-being are person-specific and individuals respond differently, both in terms of physical and psychological responses; capturing these subtleties and understanding the role of the museum encounter is crucial if we are to truly understand how museums can contribute to enhanced health and well-being.

While it may seem a daunting prospect to reach out to and work with potential visitors with sometimes complex additional requirements, it is important to bear in mind that, regardless of disability or illness, 'these individuals also crave opportunities to learn, to reflect, to restore, and perhaps, most importantly, to affirm a sense of self and continued connections to others in the face of difficulty' (Silverman 2002: 69). Crucially, the person in receipt of therapeutic intervention should always willingly agree to such activities and should never be asked to participate more than they feel comfortable with, or in any way likely to jeopardise their long-term physical or mental recovery. In instances where symptoms and abilities fluctuate widely, a flexible and, to an extent, tailored, approach is called for. Programmes that allow for individual or paired participation, at a time of day and for a length of time that best suits their needs (within the limits of museum opening hours) would be ideal for those with multiple care needs (see, for example, Silverman 2002: 72; Cowan et al 2020: 183). It would, however, be unwise for museums to offer support in cases where symptoms are so severe that any form of stimulation could trigger a relapse of the participant's condition. Indeed, sufferers in this category of severity are most likely to not have '"safe" activity limits within which they will not exacerbate their illness' (Bassett/HFMS 2004-2012). Therefore, when we talk of audiences with severe and very severe health conditions, it is vital to understand the limits of museums' reach. Museums wishing to undertake such projects are advised to consult the relevant medical professionals and practitioners. There will be instances where external intervention is

unnecessary, but expert advice should always be sought if there is any uncertainty.

When dealing with people who have multiple, and at times complex, physical and emotional needs, there will always be certain risks involved, both for museum staff and those they seek to help. 'A museum that seeks to engage staff, volunteers, and visitors in initiatives focused on cultivating well-being cannot do so effectively unless the organization consistently focuses on the importance of well-being for its members' (Cowan et al 2020: 179). Staff may experience 'concern, distress, fear or anxiety…, especially if they are working with people facing serious ill health' (Chatterjee and Noble 2016: 50-1), as well as compassion fatigue (Cowan et al 2020: 181). Training of museum staff in skills such as listening and empathy is crucial, as is awareness of how to mitigate risks of emotional harm to staff,[6] but specialists advise that 'it is neither safe nor ethical to lead participants in explicitly therapeutic activities unless someone with professional skill and qualifications is present' (ibid: 181).

The Museum as a Therapeutic Environment

It is increasingly acknowledged that 'the unique environment of museums' (Cowan et al 2020: 48) offers 'significant therapeutic potential' (Chatterjee and Noble 2016: 51) and 'can powerfully impact on health and well-being' (Dodd and Jones 2014: 43), with participation in cultural activities being understood to 'have a demonstrative and measurable impact on mental and physical health and wellbeing' (ibid: 7). This is leading to a 'critical shift in thinking in international museum policy and practice' (ibid: 6), with museums across the world 'embracing starkly bolder roles as agents of well-being and as vehicles of social change' (Silverman 2002: 2-3). However, one of 'the biggest challenges in advocating the health and well-being benefits of museum encounters is identifying exactly what these benefits are' (Chatterjee and Noble 2016: 91).

Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 49) point to research exemplifying that

> cultural encounters with museums and their collections:
>
> - provide a positive social experience;
> - provide opportunities for learning and acquiring skills;
> - are calming and reduce anxiety;
> - elicit an emotional response that encourages positive feelings such as optimism, hope and enjoyment;
> - promote self-esteem and a sense of identity and community;
> - provide new experiences which may be novel, inspirational and meaningful.

With the realisation that 'medicine is limited in terms of what it can do for chronic and progressive illness, [and] that it cannot tackle the root causes of loneliness and social isolation,… it may now be expedient to explore how other public institutions might step up to the plate and contribute to the delivery of complementary healthcare provision' (Willcocks 2021: 24). Dodd and Jones argue that museums 'are well placed to respond to changes in public health', advocating for museums to use their collections to, among other things, 'improve the health and wellbeing of individuals' (2014: 3).

The concept of utilising museum collections to contribute to therapeutic outcomes is especially relevant to this paper's exploration of ways in which museums can reach out to audiences or potential audiences who suffer from such symptoms as chronic fatigue and pain, sensory overload, cognitive difficulties, and mobility issues, as well as mental health conditions which often go hand-in-glove with long-term ill health, such as depression and anxiety. 'Museum environments provide the right conditions for meaningful

experiences with objects' (Cowan et al 2020: 175), and their 'collections can be used in so many different ways to promote health and wellbeing, contributing to improved quality of life, reduced social isolation, and cognitive and emotional stimulation' (Dodd and Jones 2014: 29). Cowan et al argue that '[m]eaningful engagement with objects is a fundamental factor in supporting psychological health, healing and wellbeing' (Cowan et al 2020: 60), claiming that encounters with museum objects 'have the capacity to provoke memory, trigger emotion, imagination, feelings of calm and peace, reflection, hope, and other psychological processes, particularly when touched and held' (ibid: 49-50). There is also the real possibility that cultural encounters, such as those experienced in museum environments, can be linked to 'reduced pain intensity or need for medication' (Chatterjee and Noble 2016: 115).[7]

How, then, might museums reach out to their disabled, chronically ill, and housebound communities? Taking the symptoms and requirements of individuals with ME as our basis, what forms of therapeutic encounter can the museum provide in such, or similar, cases? How can museums use their collections and resources as therapeutic agents to better facilitate people with physical and mental health struggles? The next section explores a range of initiatives, considering how such practices might provide real and positive health and wellbeing benefits to individuals with difficulties as diverse as chronic fatigue and persistent pain, to anxiety and an inability to leave the house.

Rethinking Museum Practices

Ioannides (2017: 98) suggests that practising therapy 'in non-medical settings such as museums and galleries can increase participants' well-being', adding that gathering in such places as museums, 'surrounded by artworks and objects – away from the austerity of the hospital, the… clinic, machines and white coats – makes people feel that they are in a more hospitable and friendly environment, which can lead to inspiration' (ibid: 102). Considerable attention has been focused on art therapy in museums, with special focus on assisting individuals with mental health conditions. This section looks at how museums can provide therapeutic benefits in other ways – many of which lead to concomitant improvements in mental health.

A study by Koebner et al (2019: 682) hypothesised that, although 'ambulation in any context may aggravate certain pain conditions', 'tours of a museum offered to individuals with chronic pain may decrease perceived social disconnection and pain' due to the 'potential of museums to facilitate a sense of social connection and that social connection may have analgesic properties'. People with chronic pain were invited, with family members and/or friends, on docent-led, one-hour tours of the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California (ibid: 682). Results showed that the 'majority of participants (57%) stated that they experienced pain relief during the tour' (ibid: 684). While not everyone found the tours beneficial (ibid: 687), a promising outcome from the study is the positive impact these tours had on participants' mental well-being, and, in turn, how this enabled them to cope better with their physical health conditions. Isolation caused by chronic illness was identified by Koebner et al's study participants as 'a phenomenon that influences one's physical, psychological, and social life, with the potential to radically alter one's identity' (ibid: 685), aligning with Silverman's (2002: 79) discussion of 'role engulfment', where the role of being a sick person can 'engulf a person's life, overshadowing former, defining roles' they may have had prior to their illness. Participants' largely positive reactions to the tours demonstrate the strong potential for museum-based initiatives to provide significant therapeutic benefits for sufferers of chronic illness, with comments such as '"I feel included"'; '"Physically I still have pain, but I feel good mentally, and I think part of my pain lessens when I feel good

mentally"'; and "you're not focused on the pain"' (Koebner et al 2019: 687).

Koebner et al distinguish this form of intervention from more formal art therapy sessions by suggesting that the former is 'a more generalizable intervention' than the latter, adding that attending a museum-based program without the involvement of health care professionals may be less stigmatizing and more normalizing than art therapy as it does not involve the explicit treatment or diagnosis of medical or mental health problems (ibid: 688).

This approach to supporting sufferers of chronic illness has profound potential, due in part to its informality, suggesting scope for flexibility, in which individuals' needs can be factored into the session without much trouble. These might include allowing for frequent rest points throughout the tour; adapting the amount of information given at any one time, or the methods of delivery, to allow participants with cognitive difficulties to digest it before moving on; and even varying the length of programmes to cater for differing ability levels.

Another promising initiative with considerable potential developed out of unexpected circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges for the museum sector, but arguably brought certain benefits in the form of necessary changes in practice, particularly in methods of content delivery. With museums across the world forced to close their doors, these institutions quickly recognised the need to forge new channels of communication with audiences, and to enable new forms of museum access. The digital platform came into its own during this time, allowing museums to 'show off their content and stay engaged with their audiences – as well as reaching new potential visitors' (Burke et al 2020: 120). These new visitors will have included individuals who had previously been unable to visit museums due to disabilities and health conditions that prevented them from easily, if at all, leaving their homes.

Tan and Tan (2021: 68) provide the example of museums in Singapore and how they addressed the need to not only stay connected with audiences but also to 'mitigate the negative health impact of COVID-19 on people, such as isolation and distress'. Demonstrating 'the caring role museums can assume in response to social circumstances', online initiatives developed by museums in Singapore during the first wave of the pandemic 'offered opportunities for people to remain active and meaningfully engaged when other forms of activities that involve physical interaction are curbed' (Tan and Tan 2021: 70). As Tan and Tan (ibid: 70) observe:

> These online engagements offered participants a much-needed respite from social isolation by connecting and interacting with others from a safe distance. These observations made on the arts and cultural field further highlight the *care capacity of museums through the willingness to reimagine the roles of museums as a resource of health and wellbeing for people* (emphasis added).

The shift to a digital platform demonstrates that significant changes in practice are possible for museums, and that it is within reach of such institutions to engage with non-attending audiences. Even if new practices do not include, or only partially include, online interaction, these initiatives during covid lockdowns give a glimpse of the benefits of rethinking practices, and of potential new pathways museums can take in order to connect with previously unengaged audiences. Museums in Singapore, as Tan and Tan (ibid: 70) report, took into consideration the diverse backgrounds of people partaking of their online activities, resulting in programmes which 'were designed to cater to their varying needs and levels of experience'. This presents a promising avenue of exploration for potential museum audiences who are housebound. If programmes could be tailored to the needs and abilities of a patient with chronic fatigue or associated difficulties – including attention to the possible

need for low screen brightness, quieter delivery of content, and even shorter chunks of interaction to avoid overstimulation and exacerbation of symptoms – it would enable these severely isolated individuals to experience and access the museum and its collections on some level, potentially contributing to feelings of inclusion. Indeed, Tan and Tan (ibid: 70) acknowledge the wider applicability of these initial online experiments, suggesting that digital content creates opportunities for museums to explore partnerships with community organisations and health and social care sectors to expand the reach of their collections and programmes, particularly for beneficiaries who might be bed-bound in their home or care homes.

It should be remembered, however, that not everyone has ready access to the technology necessary for such virtual engagement, and that these barriers require real consideration by museums to ensure that individuals from low-income backgrounds, or who are unable to access digital media without assistance from a carer, are not neglected (see Tan and Tan 2021: 70).

The therapeutic potential of museum outreach initiatives is the final concept to be discussed in this section. As mentioned above, in the case of ME, as well as many other health conditions where chronic fatigue is present, some sufferers are bedbound, making museum visits impossible. This does not necessarily imply that they are also unable to tolerate any form of activity or interaction with others, however. While mindful of the important caveats outlined above, we should not automatically exclude those members of society who, though confined to bed, may nevertheless welcome gentle mental stimulation in the form of physical interaction with museum objects. Utilising 'the bodily, cognitive and emotional connections that objects enable us to make, and which are linked to positive wellbeing', the importance of which is increasingly recognised (Dodd and Jones 2014: 26), museum outreach programmes have the capacity to provide such interaction without the participant overstretching their abilities.

The 'Heritage in Hospitals' project, created jointly by University College London Museums and Collections and University College London Hospitals Arts, aimed 'to take museum objects to patients' bedsides and to assess whether handling museum objects has a positive impact on patient wellbeing' (Chatterjee et al 2009: 164). Loan boxes containing historic objects from museum collections were brought to hospital patients for handling sessions. Results were measured, and demonstrated that 'patients, on average, recorded higher scores on visual analogue scales measuring life satisfaction and health status after handling museum objects' (ibid: 175). Unique aspects of museum objects may contribute to such positive outcomes. Chiming with Silverman's (2010: 62) suggestion that, by 'providing opportunities for comparison, insight, and reframing, exhibits and other interpretive fare can link the self to others in different times and places who have dealt with similar circumstances', an important property of objects, Dodd and Jones (2014: 26) argue,

> is their age and their 'authenticity' – they are the 'real thing.' They provide a connection to the past, to lives lived long ago, to the people who made, owned or used the object – giving some participants the feeling of being in another context or time. This can promote positive feelings of belonging, feeling part of the continuity of time or a wider context…

Cowan et al (2020: 76) observe that when 'an object's associative properties and characteristics are actively engaged, the object becomes catalytic. A pathway is formed toward health and healing.' Related to this point, Chatterjee et al (2009: 172) refer to the way that 'many patients, perhaps unconsciously, used the sessions to help make meaning of their lives and to come to terms with illness'. This demonstrates the potential for museum outreach initiatives involving objects to facilitate reminiscence and encourage the recalling

of happy memories or development of new, positive, associations, especially when gradually given the contextual information for the objects. 'If we understand that meaningful experiences with objects lead organically to engagement with the resources of health and healing, then perhaps we begin to glimpse the enduring and resonant power of museums' (Cowan et al 2020: 175). Consideration should be given, however, to the potential negative effects of object association, or distressing memories which may be recalled by patients, and it is advised that relevant healthcare professionals are consulted before undertaking such programmes.[8]

Concluding Remarks: A Way Forward?

Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 123) argue that '[e]xtending services and programmes to meet public health, social and healthcare objectives is easily within reach of all museums, from small, local services through to large national museums, as well as the wider cultural heritage sector', a sentiment also expressed by Dodd and Jones (2014: 43). For museums and staff new to this area, however, it can be a daunting prospect. How might museums get the ball rolling for such therapeutic initiatives? As Dodd and Jones (ibid: 13) suggest, starting with the local community allows museums to 'begin to locate evidence of health and wellbeing need'. Being aware of such needs 'helps museums to focus their attention on how best they can use their collections, programmes, exhibitions and collective experience to meet those needs' (ibid: 13). Furthermore, Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 51) advise that:

It is important to be clear about the reasons for implementing such an activity, to understand as much as possible about the target audience's needs, to build in relevant planning and training in order to support all of the individuals involved, to set clear expectations from the start, to prepare for all eventualities and to do all of this through consultation with relevant health and social care professionals.

Awareness is key, but it is not only museums which need to be more aware of their healing potential. Chatterjee and Noble (2016: 115-6) suggest that if 'museums really want to contribute to improving individual and community health and well-being, they need to:'

- convince the healthcare sector they have a worthwhile contribution to make and disseminate this impact as widely as possible;
- target, albeit not exclusively, those individuals who are most vulnerable/at risk/in need (e.g. socially isolated adults, particularly those in care where resources are woefully insufficient, mental health service users and those in receipt of other healthcare treatments);
- identify target audiences through partnership working (health and social care services, including the NHS, third sector organisations, including voluntary and community sectors, and academic and scholarly institutions such as universities and think tanks);
- develop interventions with partners (this could include any form of museum/cultural encounter) which are appropriate for their intended audience and which tackle specific health and well-being challenges;…
- integrate health and well-being outcomes into mainstream museum programming in order to build resilience and social capital amongst all audiences.

Therapeutic interventions by museums require reinforcement provided by 'robust and reliable evidence, not only to justify public expenditure in this area, but crucially to ensure that museums and their partners deliver effective and efficient

services which meet the needs of their audiences' (ibid: 3). As healthcare outcomes are 'the main currency and language used by healthcare professionals', museums need to 'communicate and define a system which is understood and valued by both sectors' if they are to 'clearly articulate their therapeutic potential' (ibid: 5).

This paper has demonstrated the remarkable potential for museums to impact positively on the lives of chronically ill individuals, via physical museum attendance, virtual programming, and outreach services. Through the example of one illness, ME, which presents with a wide range of symptoms from mild through to very severe, it has considered ways in which museums can accommodate individuals with a variety of different needs, and the potential therapeutic benefits these initiatives can have on the lives of people suffering from debilitating and often isolating symptoms. While a percentage of individuals will, unfortunately but inevitably, be beyond the reach of therapeutic museum initiatives, many stand to benefit significantly from museum programmes which take into consideration the varying ability levels, and support needs, of people with disabilities and health conditions. Providing more accessible options for experiencing museums and their collections can benefit audiences both new and established, as well as benefit the museums themselves through diversifying programmes, increasing audience reach, and attracting attention of public healthcare and funding bodies. With careful consideration and planning, and with deeper awareness and understanding of the disabled and chronically ill and their individual and collective needs, museums can make a considerable difference to the lives of many.

Notes

[1] Coles (2020: 47) suggests that if people have a 'generally positive attitude towards museums', they are more likely to be 'receptive to the idea of a museum setting for art therapy and to engaging with what they find there', adding that notions of museums being "aloof" 'might negatively impact on the development of a positive therapeutic relationship within that setting' (Coles 2020: 48).

[2] According to the ME Research UK website: 'How many people have ME/CFS?'

[3] The NHS website ('Symptoms: Myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)') states that: 'The symptoms of ME/CFS are similar to those of other conditions.'

[4] The author recently discussed elsewhere how her experience of having ME since childhood had shaped her belief in the power of museums as therapeutic spaces (see Levick 2021).

[5] For more on this, see the ME Association website, especially 'General Information'.

[6] Cowan et al (2020: 180) provide practical advice on this subject.

[7] Chatterjee and Noble acknowledge that more research is needed in this area.

[8] Cowan et al (2020: 180) provide advice on this aspect.

Acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to Dr Urmila Mohan, editor of *The Jugaad Project*, whose initial interest and conversations on this subject encouraged the author to explore it in greater depth. Many thanks also to Bill Griffiths, Director of Milton Keynes Museum, for his helpful comments on the early draft of this paper.

Works Cited

Bassett, J. and Hummingbirds' Foundation for M.E. (HFME) (2004-2012) 'M.E. symptoms', Hummingbirds' Foundation for M.E. (HFME) website. Available at: https://www.hfme.org/mesymptoms.htm (accessed 21-2-22).

Burke, V., Jorgensen, D. and Jorgensen, F. A. (2020) 'Museums at Home: Digital Initiatives in Response to COVID-19', Norsk museumstidsskrift, 2020-12-10 (2), p.117-123. Available at: https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/issn.2464-2525-2020-02-05 (accessed 9-3-22).

Chatterjee, H. and Noble, G. (2016) Museums, Health and Well-Being, Oxon/New York, Routledge.

Chatterjee, H., Vreeland, S. and Noble, G. (2009) 'Museopathy: Exploring the Healing Potential of Handling Museum Objects', *Museum and Society*, Nov. 2009, 7:3, 164-177. Available at: https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas/article/view/145 (accessed 31-1-22).

Coles, A. (2020) 'What Do Museums Mean?: Public Perceptions of the Purposes of Museums and Implications for their Use in Art Therapy' in Coles, A. and Jury, H. (eds.) (2020) *Art Therapy in Museums and Galleries*, London/Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Cowan, B., Laird, R. and McKeown, J. (2020) *Museum Objects, Health and Healing: The Relationship Between Exhibitions and Wellness*, London/New York, Routledge.

Delin, A. (2002) 'Buried in the footnotes: the absence of disabled people in the collective imagery of our past' in Sandell, R. (ed.) Museums, Society, Inequality, London/New York, Routledge, 84-97.

Dodd, J. and Jones, C. (2014) *Mind, body, spirit: How museums impact health and wellbeing*, Leicester, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)/University of Leicester. Available at: https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/publications (accessed 25-10-21).

Dodd, J., Sandell, R., Jolly, D. and Jones, C. (eds.) (2008) *Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums and Galleries*, Leicester, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)/University of Leicester. Available at: https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/publications (accessed 12-2-22).

Dodd, J., Hooper-Greenhill, E., Delin, A. and Jones, C. (2006) *"In the past we would just be invisible": Research into the attitudes of disabled people to museums and heritage*, Leicester, Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)/University of Leicester. Available at: https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/publications (accessed 25-2-22).

Geddes, L. (2020) 'Long Covid: overlap emerges with ME – including debate over treatment', 19th November 2020, *The Guardian* (online). Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/19/long-covid-overlap-emerges-with-me-including-debate-over-treatment (accessed 21-2-22).

Ioannides, E. (2017) 'Museums as Therapeutic Environments and the Contribution of Art Therapy', Museum International, 2017, vol. 68, no. 271-272, 98-109. Available at: https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1111/muse.12125 (accessed 7-7-21).

Koebner, I. J., Fishman, S. M., Paterniti, D., Somner, D., Witt, C. M., Ward, D. and Joseph, J. G. (2019), 'The Art of Analgesia: A Pilot Study of Art Museum Tours to Decrease Pain and Social Disconnection Among Individuals with Chronic Pain', Pain medicine, 2019-04-01, Vol.20 (4), p.681-691. Available at: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T002&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=1&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA607543501&docType=Article&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZONE-MOD1&prodId=AONE&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CA607543501&searchId=R1&userGroupName=leicester&inPS=true (accessed 7-7-21).

Levick, E. A. (2021) 'All Being Well: Exploring the Therapeutic Potential of Museums', *The Jugaad Project*, 28 October 2021. Available at: www.thejugaadproject.pub/home/all-being-well (accessed 3-3-22).

NHS website (no date), 'Symptoms: Myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)'. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome-cfs/symptoms/ (accessed 21-2-2022).

Poce, A., Rosaria, M. and Strano, F. (2021) 'Inclusive Memory: How to promote social inclusion, well-being and critical thinking skills within a museum context' in Kador, T. and Chatterjee, H. (eds.) (2021) *Object-Based Learning and Well-Being: Exploring Material Connections*, London/New York, Routledge, 43-59.

Sandell, R. (2003) 'Social Inclusion, the Museum and the Dynamics of Sectoral Change', Museums and Society, vol. 1, no. 1, 45-62. Available at: https://leicester.figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/Social_inclusion_the_museum_and_the_dynamics_of_sectoral_change/10076048 (accessed 13-10-21)

Silverman, L. H. (2010) *The Social Work of Museums*, London/New York, Routledge.

Silverman, L. H. (2002) 'The therapeutic potential of museums as pathways to inclusion' in Sandell, R. (ed.) (2002) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, London/New York, Routledge, 69-83.

Smyth, C. (2021) 'Covid-19: The similarities between 'long Covid' and ME', BBC News website, 2nd January 2021. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-55369434 (accessed 21-2-22).

Tan, M. K. B. and Tan, C. M. (2021) 'Curating wellness during a pandemic in Singapore: COVID-19, museums, and digital imagination', *Public Health*, 192, 2021, 68-71. Available at: https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0033350621000172 (accessed 5-2-22).

Trueland, J. (2021) 'Long COVID – we've been here before', 12th February 2021, British Medical Association website. Available at: https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/long-covid-we-ve-been-here-before (accessed 21-2-22).

Trustram, M. (2014) 'Asylum and the museum', *American Imago 71*, 1, 67-84. Available at: https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/stable/26305077?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (accessed 2-3-22).

Willcocks, J. (2021) 'Pedagogic prescription: Art and design teaching practice and object-led well-being' in Kador, T. and Chatterjee, H. (eds.) (2021) Object-Based Learning and Well-Being: Exploring Material Connections, London/New York, Routledge, 9-27.

Short Submission

Is the museum an agent of healing or harm in society?

Kai Monet

My first museum job was working as a part-time gallery facilitator. All of my co-workers were people of color. This was healing to my identity as a Filipino-American who grew up in a white upper-middle class neighborhood and attended a predominantly white university. It was the first time my identity was represented and reflected back to me in my peers. Within this POC community, I began to become painfully aware of my upbringing and conditioning to perform whiteness.[1] This experience of community was ironic because the concentration of POC in frontline staff is a common manifestation of racism in museums. POC are historically most represented in museum positions at the bottom of the pay scale, such as security and maintenance.

It took me six years and a master's degree to move from part-time work into a full-time museum position. Once there, I found myself in the familiar position of being one of the few POC. Returning to a position of isolation made me confront my own privileges. My expensive education trained me to navigate the white museum space and afforded me the qualifications needed to access the inequitable full-time museum employment. This process of realization was one of decolonization[2], a process of recognizing how whiteness had shaped my behaviors and subsequently, my success. However, in order to continue my own decolonization, I had to unlearn my conditioning and ultimately leave my job. Museums are rooted in colonialism and white supremacy[3] and I could no longer perpetuate those structures of power as a museum employee.

Decolonizing is healing, but painful. Museums ignited in me a painful process of healing that pushed me to also see how harmful museums can be in society. And over time, the pain of my healing was less than the pain museums had directly inflicted on me as a POC.

Notes:

[1] Whiteness is "a system of ideologies and material effects (privilege and oppression)" that prioritizes, elevates, and upholds white privilege (Castango, 2008, p. 320).

[2] Author's personal definitions of decolonization can be found in this essay: https://medium.com/viewfinder-reflecting-on-museum-education/honoring-my-momentum-of-change-leaving-museums-behind-65611561f3fb.

[3] MASS Action Toolkit: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58fa685dff7c50f78be5f2b2/t/59dcdd27e5dd5b5a1b51d9d8/1507646780650/TOOLKIT_10_2017.pdf

Discovering Difference, Displaying Disability

Jenni Hunt

Abstract:

Museums increasingly want to highlight stories that they have previously overlooked, in order to promote social justice. Disability has often been ignored in our understandings of the past, causing further harm to disabled communities, and presenting an inaccurate view of the past. Keen to explore diverse narratives in their collection, Compton Verney created three Inclusive Histories Fellowships, one of which explored the site's extensive British Folk Art collection through the new lens of discovering links with disability. Within this article, consideration is given to current research in both disability studies and museum studies, alongside the work undertaken at Compton Verney. This is done in order to discuss how museums can find these hidden stories within their collections, and how these can be presented in an informative and welcoming manner, highlighting interesting stories whilst avoiding othering an already marginalised group.

Key words: disability, redisplay, inclusion

It is estimated that fifteen percent of the world's population is disabled (WHO, 2011), and this widespread nature of disability is not something new. Indeed, as Ott points out, until recently the 'most common physical traits included being arthritic, stooped, pock-marked, scarred, toothless or bent and injured in some way' (2005: p. 21). Disabled people have always existed and searching through our shared history highlights figures such as Admiral Nelson, King Henry VIII and Frida Kahlo, alongside countless other nameless figures who were either born with an impairment or acquired one through the course of their life. These figures found themselves facing disabling barriers and attitudes which resonate with the experiences of disabled people today.

When we look at our ideas of the past, however, this widespread existence of disability can be overlooked – and such views can cause harm to modern disabled communities, cutting people off from their heritage and leading to reductive views of what disabled lives have been like in the past, and what they can be now. Museums are able to address this injustice by acknowledging the past existence of disabled individuals, tackling absences, and encouraging and amplifying voices that have been missed or intentionally excluded from the museum space. Museums are increasingly aware of these absent stories and aim to bring these voices into their displays in order to provide a more just, and more accurate, understanding of histories.

This paper examines one project that aimed to do this, undertaken at Compton Verney in Warwickshire. The goal of the project was to bring out previously hidden stories, acknowledging their presence and sharing these connections with their audiences. One strand of the project examined

disability within their collection, leading to the development of a temporary exhibition and blog posts, alongside the creation of a database of information that the site could draw on in future in order to further share such inclusive stories.

This article begins by considering why disability representation matters, before turning to the Compton Verney project. This is followed by a slight step back, considering what this work can teach us about finding and presenting the stories that exist around disability, which are currently hidden away in many collections.

Disability Representation Matters

Disabled people can face a wide range of challenging stereotypes as they go through their lives, and such caricatures are commonly found reproduced in popular media – disabled individuals find themselves represented as monstrous villains in horror films plotting revenge, helpless charity cases, or elite athletes to be praised for overcoming their impairment, as can be seen in some coverage of the Paralympics. Rarely do they find themselves represented as simply people trying to live their lives. Such approaches can serve to dehumanise the individuals presented, stripping them of their normal humanity and reducing them to a single dimension, often linked to horror or disgust. When representations of a particular group are limited in such a way, there will often be real-world consequences.

Challenging negative representations is important for disabled individuals, as such representations have real impacts on their lives. Disabled people find themselves framed 'as outright benefit scroungers [at worst] or at best social burdens unable to contribute to society in any meaningful way' (Soorenian, 2014: p. 72), leading to disabled people facing aggression and hostility, which can cause distress, and finding themselves the victims of hate crimes and discrimination.

Museums are well placed to tackle such negative imagery, as they are able to counter it with records of the lived experiences of disabled people, past and present. They can emphasise their ongoing existence, and link to stories of their past. Disabled individuals are a part of history but have often been hidden away (Snyder and Mitchell, 2006) as medicine has attempted to succeed with a "cure or kill approach" in which the disabled body was either to be normalised or eliminated (Garland-Thomson, 2000: p. 355). These attempts at extermination and removal were not successful, however. Traces of disabled lives remain, and museums are able to use these to tackle the stereotypes which still persist.

If museums can tackle these negative stereotypes, and instead link authentically to disabled lives, they may be able to challenge these attitudes and encourage a sense of pride for disabled people around their identity. This is of benefit to both disabled people and the museum and works by framing historic figures as individuals worth remembering, rather than simply de-humanised objects. This is not to say that disabled people in the past must be treated as perfect, with Katherine Ott highlighting that some of the most interesting stories that museums can tackle emerge from accepting that individuals from minority groups are 'complex human beings who might have… committed unsavoury acts, or been flawed in some way' (Ott, 2010: p. 270). By acknowledging the flawed and complex humanity of historic actors, a more realistic and interesting understanding of the past can be developed.

Narratives around disability and disabled histories are also deeply entwined with other narratives across museum sites, especially given the impact that eugenics (selective breeding of humans to remove certain traits, and to increase others) had on much of the twentieth century as nations sought to control who could reproduce and in doing so sterilised and killed many disabled individuals. Kudlick (2003) highlights the way that much of social history has been underpinned by ideas around disability. A large number of

metaphors are based in disability, and ideas of 'idiocy and deformity' (2003: p. 765) shaped colonialist attitudes with a sense of paternalism. She speaks of how disability raises questions for society, serving to 'reveal and construct notions of citizenship, human difference, social values, sexuality and the complex relationship between the biological and social worlds' (ibid.: p. 793). To Kudlick, disability is foundational to our understanding of humanity and our view of history, but it can only be comprehended that way if it is acknowledged, rather than viewed as afterthought or aberration. She talks of how disability is a category which 'in essence is commonplace, even seen as natural, yet treated as inherently abnormal' (p. 767). Disability is a part of humanity, but it is a part that is often hidden away, ignored, or seen as separate. She argues that in doing this, humanity itself is mistreated and misunderstood.

If museums wish to represent history truthfully, it is important to acknowledge the range of narratives which exist. The ways that museums are able to tackle this representation will be addressed later in this article. For reasons of both social justice and historical accuracy, it is vital that museums are willing to consider their collections anew, examining how stories of difference and disability belong within those spaces and within society more widely. This is a major concern for current museums, with ICOM's proposed new definition of a museum (2019) highlighting the importance of 'acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present… aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice'. Whilst this definition was ultimately not accepted, the fact it was considered shows how central these issues are today (ICOM, 2019).

The Compton Verney Project

Compton Verney is an art gallery set in rural Warwickshire. In 2021, it set out to explore diverse narratives that were within its collections. With the support of The Oxford Research Centre for Humanities, Compton Verney appointed three Inclusive Histories Research Fellows to 'explore new dimensions of its permanent collections' (TORCH, 2021), enhancing the site's knowledge and providing a starting point for further work.

The Fellows set out to explore the collections in different ways – one exploring race in the landscape, another examining ways of queering the collection, and the one that is the focus of this article exploring the presence of disability within the British Folk Art collection which the site holds – the largest collection of British Folk Art in the UK. Work was undertaken between June and October of 2021, with different outputs being developed for the three projects – a short film, a collection trail, and a temporary display.

Having received one of these Fellowships, the author set out to examine the British Folk Art collection, exploring the objects present for links to disability in various ways, which were then recorded and used to develop the display in question. A total of fifty objects were selected with some link to disability, and from this a shortlist was developed of the eleven objects that would be used in the production of the final display. The nature of this selection is discussed in more depth below, however the goal was to produce an exhibition that highlighted the range of ways that objects within the British Folk Art collection linked to disability, and in doing so emphasised the large number of potential links available to explore.

Finding Hidden Histories

Museums are increasingly working to share stories from minority groups in order to be socially purposeful and address current social issues (Chambers, 2010). Museums are not neutral spaces (Sandell, 2007). They have always been political, with Filene (2017: p. 327) arguing that museums have always been expected to use their collections to reinforce certain views of identities.

Instead, what they say (and what they choose not to say) carries a moral weight. This potential moral authority has led to an increased interest in representing a range of people within their collections.

Telling these stories for different groups helps to ensure the democratisation of the museum, recognising the importance of lived experiences. However, consideration needs to be given as to how these stories are approached and whose voices are heard. This is particularly true with groups that have frequently faced negative attitudes. Museums have often been cautious around the representation of disabled individuals. There is a fear that they may replicate past injustices, presenting disabled individuals as something to be stared at, and indeed this has been done by museums in the past. In 2004, Dodd et al. discovered the language used around disability within exhibitions was 'limited, often reductive and stereotypical' (ibid: p. 13), presenting people as victims or as 'rising above' their impairments. However, since then work has been happening to ensure that language used is more empowering and less reductive. A challenge remains, however, as much of the surviving evidence of historic disabled lives comes from the perspective of custodians and doctors, rather than the disabled individuals themselves.

For this reason and many others, presenting disability poses a challenge. Dodd et al. (2006: p. v) acknowledge these potential difficulties, whilst stressing the importance of sharing history 'that presents disabled people and the Deaf community as active participants in history rather than passive victims of their impairments'. This acknowledgement of agency is important to many people within disabled communities, who want to challenge traditional understandings of disability as simply being a lack within an individual.

The traditional view of disability, otherwise known as the medical model, sees disability as an inherent flaw within the disabled person which needs to be fixed. Such views have led to eugenics, and great restriction and limitation being placed on disabled peoples' lives (Snyder and Mitchell, 2006) as they have undergone attempts to cure them. As a result, many disabled people prefer the social model, which explains that the challenges a disabled individual faces are caused by the barriers created by society and societal attitudes. Disability arises not just from an individual's impairment, but from 'the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers' (Barnes, 1992: p. 2). Such barriers can be lowered by challenging negative attitudes and encouraging empathy and respect towards people who are disabled. Whilst there are remaining challenges with the social model, it can serve as a useful way for museums to present disability to audience members who may not be familiar with anything beyond the medical model.

Choosing to represent disabled individuals in a respectful way can help to further the goals of disability rights activists who campaign for changes in the attitudes disabled people face. Rather than remaining silent and furthering oppression, museums are able to challenge views and help to shape the understandings of their audiences. Using objects from their lives to serve as what Thiemeyer (2015) describes as witnesses can help – with these objects serving as authentic links to history, telling stories and encouraging empathy with those who had gone before. Emphasising links to individuals' lives can help to humanise those being shown.

There are other problems museums face around the display of disability (Sandell, 2007), such as questions around tokenism, outing individuals, and naming those shown in displays and images. Emphasizing someone's disability may feel tokenistic or inappropriate, especially if the individual themselves did not identify as disabled. For example, American President Roosevelt chose throughout his life to keep his disability from the public eye – a decision made to protect his political career. However, depictions of him which acknowledge his disability are now common, as

acknowledgment can help to challenge views around the capacity of disabled individuals. Choosing to continue to hide an individual's disability may be interpreted as saying that disability is something shameful or to be hidden, which can further reinforce negative stereotypes.

When objects lack provenance, it can be harder to explore the way the stories link to disability. In some cases, an object may have been used by numerous disabled people, or the identity of an individual may have been concealed due to issues around privacy, confidentiality and health. In such cases, museums can try to empower those with similar lived experience, turning to them in order to create a more nuanced approach. An example of this can be seen in Hevey's (2010) work which aimed to explore the life of Joseph Merrick, commonly known as 'the Elephant Man', by showing disabled individuals interacting with key objects from his life.

The collection at Compton Verney often had little in the way of provenance, which can make it hard to find connections with disabled histories. However, this site was not alone in facing these difficulties – many objects that were linked to disability may not have been recorded as such. The decision was made to undertake the search using a wide understanding of disability, being open to a large number of different objects, and acknowledging a variety of links, from explicit representations to objects that linked with the roles disabled people played in historic society, to objects which were felt to simply resonate with experiences of disability in the past or today. Being open to a broad understanding of objects linked to disability enabled the museum to find a large number of objects, which could be taken forward in the display.

At Compton Verney, eventually fifty objects were selected that resonated with disabled stories, and from these fifty, eleven were selected to form a focused exhibition in early 2022. By being open to a range of stories, and willing to consider the idea of disability in an encompassing way, a large number of objects could be uncovered – including objects made by disabled individuals, those that represented them, and those that would have been used by them. Assistive devices which were not necessarily used by disabled individuals were also highlighted, in order to draw connections, and to encourage people to reconsider their understandings of devices adapted to help a user complete a particular task.

There are numerous objects to be found in any museum collection that link in some way to the lives of disabled individuals – this group is simply so entwined with history that they are found to present in a range of ways across all societies and cultures. Museums, however, can only find these representations if they are willing to search for them, and to address the potential challenges bound up in such work.

It is important to do this, because such representation emphasises that these objects are worthy of respect and acknowledgement, especially if the representation allows the voices of disabled people to be heard. From the 1970s onwards, there has been a concerted push by disabled people against how they have been exploited and used, at great cost to themselves. They have campaigned for an active role in research that affects them – summarised by the slogan of 'nothing about us without us' which links to emancipatory research in which disabled individuals play the role of co-researchers (Oliver, 1992). In this research, disabled people play a key role in shaping the study and ensuring that they benefit from the work that is carried out, with emphasis on the roles of reciprocity, empowerment, and mutual benefit.

Working alongside disabled individuals can highlight links in a museum's collection that might otherwise have been overlooked, and simultaneously can serve to benefit participants and the museum, allowing for greater depth of understanding and new skills to be developed. Dodd, Jones and Sandell (2017) took this work further in their idea of Trading Zones, in which

individuals with different specialisms came together to collaborate on the project. The lived experience of disabled individuals is valued as is the expertise of museum professionals. By respecting a range of different kinds of expertise, everyone who participates is able to learn and gain from their experience.

When objects linked to disability have been identified and researched, they then need to be presented to the public in a way that prevents the replication of past abuses and can challenge or address negative stereotypes which visitors may hold.

Presenting Hidden Histories

Once objects related to disability had been identified at Compton Verney, it became necessary to decide how to present them to the public. Due to the nature of the exhibit as revealing a previously unmentioned history, these links to disability needed to be made explicit. At the same time, it was felt to be important to avoid the reductive idea of shrinking someone to their disability and ignoring the remainder of their identity. This careful balance had to be managed within a limit of eighty words per object.

When creating the text to accompany the objects at Compton Verney, effort was made to actively humanise those individuals shown. For example, the panel accompanying the portrait of Daniel Lambert read:

> The man shown smiling in this image is Daniel Lambert, a celebrity during his lifetime as the "fattest man in Britain". After losing work as a jail keeper, where he was seen as being fair and kind, he struggled to find more employment. Eventually, he chose to live in London, charging people to visit him. He became wealthy and well-known for his intelligence and personality. Once he had earned enough money, he returned home to breed dogs.

This statement was carefully worded to emphasise the man shown without reducing him to his disability, whilst also addressing the prejudice he faced. Effort was also made to show the agency of the individual, talking about the decisions he made and in doing so acknowledging the control he had over his own destiny. The hope is that by presenting information in such a way, it may challenge assumptions that audiences hold towards disability, encouraging them to consider the topic in new ways.

When presenting disability history, it was felt to be vital that work was presented in an accessible format, and guidance from Shape Arts (2018) was used to assess design elements such as hang height of objects and font for text. This guidance is something that will be used more widely for future exhibitions at the site, regardless of whether or not they include disability in their subject, in order to ensure that the museum is as accessible as possible to disabled members of their audiences.

Due to the small-scale nature of the project in question, it was not possible to formally engage with a number of disabled individuals to collaborate in the development of the work – whilst the project was led by a disabled individual, wider disabled voices could not be included as that was outside the scope of the Fellowship. The creator of the exhibition aimed to include a range of experiences and historic stories, speaking to the curators and members of the Front of House team who knew the collection well to select relevant objects. However, consultation with the disabled community could well have highlighted further objects that were overlooked in this case.

As discussed above, it was important not to misrepresent the links to disability, and in particular to highlight uncertainty, so that the visitors were able to see how these objects connected to wider discussions about disability, and the history of disabled lives. The opening panel

of the exhibition began by addressing the frequent absence of disabled stories, and the prejudices and restrictions disabled people have faced:

> One billion people around the world today have some kind of disability, and most of us will experience disability within our lives. However, often the stories of disabled people aren't talked about – they are hidden and forgotten.
>
> Disabled people have always been part of society and have done lots of different jobs – from cleaning chimneys to ruling the country. Despite this, they have frequently faced negative attitudes, stereotypes and judgements. Often disabled people have faced barriers to employment, which have prevented them from working safely and caused poverty. (Compton Verney, 2022)

This was done in order to help frame the exhibition, basing it as deeply embedded within the social model, and taking a particular view towards the goal of the exhibition – making it clear to audiences that the aim here was to bring forward hidden stories and present them in a way that acknowledges the barriers disabled people have faced, and their presence throughout history.

Many of the objects contained within Compton Verney lacked any kind of provenance, and so the potential linkage with disabled lives was not always clear. Within the opening panel of the text this was stated explicitly:

> Due to a lack of records, usually we can only guess whether a particular object was made or used by a disabled person. However, we know that objects like these were commonly created or used by disabled people. (Compton Verney, 2022)

Addressing this uncertainty was felt to be important, as it opens up new possibilities for museums that may be unsure of the history of their collections. If there is uncertainty about a potential link, that can be acknowledged and the link explored in greater depth, rather than simply leaving the topic unaddressed.

Presenting histories around disability is not necessarily simple, but it is important. Acknowledging uncertainty and prioritising the voice of those with lived experience is vital, as it enables deeper knowledge and a more complex understanding. Doing this also shifts power from the institution to those they work alongside (be that communities or individuals) and empowers the audience that is represented. Such work is increasingly becoming seen as key to the purpose of museums, as shown by the ICOM definition discussed above and Simon's (2010) work on the importance of participation. This is true both of representations around disability, and wider attempts to open up sites to new interpretations and acknowledge a range of histories that have previously been concealed. Museums may have to tackle uncertainty, but such uncertainty reflects the real world, and is therefore to be valued, even and especially when it serves to challenge the narratives that have existed before.

Conclusion

As can be clearly seen from the work done at Compton Verney, collections about people can tell a vast range of stories, including those around disability. If museums are willing to approach their collection with a sense of curiosity and positivity, rather than reluctance and fear, they may well find that they already hold a large number of objects with strong links to disability. However, even when this is not the case, there are other possibilities – museums are able to draw on resonances, expand their collections, and magnify voices.

In this way, it is possible for museums to uncover the rich disability histories that they hold. These are stories that are waiting to be discovered, and once they have been, museums can work to share such stories as widely as possible. In doing this

work, museums must embrace the idea of uncertainty, acknowledging when they are drawing links which are not definite. When objects have become separated from their provenance, it may not be possible for a museum to meaningfully talk about their owner. However, they are able to acknowledge broader connections, and highlight the fact that objects like these ones have been used or made by disabled individuals – even if we are not certain this is true for the object in question.

This edition of Museological Review is focused on the idea of healing, examining how such concepts can move museums forwards. By acknowledging and working to include and empower those who have historically been left absent, museums can provide a source of strength. Acknowledging and addressing past injustices can be carried out in a meaningful way, that both more truthfully acknowledges what has come before, and supports groups that face hardships today.

Works Cited

Barnes, C. (1992) *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination: A Case for Anti-Discrimination Legislation.* London: Hurst and Co. pp. 1-17.

Chambers, E. (2010) 'Face to face: representing facial disfigurement in a museum context' In Sandell, R., Dodd, J., and Garland-Thomson, R. eds., *Re-Presenting Disability*, 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 179-194.

Dodd, J., Hooper-Greenhill, E., Delin, A. and Jones, C. (2006). *In the Past we Would Just Be Invisible: Research into the disabled people to museums and heritage for Colchester Museums* [pdf] Leicester, RCMG. Available at http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/colchester-museums (Accessed: 14 November 2017).

Dodd, J., Jones, C. and Sandell, R. (2017), 'Trading Zones: Collaborative Ventures in Disability History' In Gardner, J. and Hamilton, P. eds., *Handbook of Public History, 1st ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 87-104.

Dodd, J., Sandell, R., Delin, A. and Gay, J. (2004) *Buried in the Footnotes: The representation of disabled people in museum and gallery collections* [pdf] Leicester, RCMG Available at http://hdl.handle.net/2381/33 (Accessed: 1 April 2018).

Filene, B. (2017), 'History Museums and Identity: Finding "Them", "Me" and "Us" in the Gallery' In Gardner, J. and Hamilton, P. eds., *Handbook of Public History, 1st ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 327-348.

Garland-Thomson, R. (2000) 'Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Popular Disability Photography' In Longmore, P. and Umansky, L. eds., *The New Disability History American Perspectives*, 1st ed. New York University Press, pp. 335-74.

Hevey, D. (2010) 'Behind the shadow of Merrick' In Sandell, R., Dodd, J., and Garland-Thomson, R. eds., *Re-Presenting Disability*, 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 79-91.

ICOM (2019) *ICOM announces the alternative museum definition that will be subject to a vote* [online] Available at: https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/ (Accessed: 18 May 2022).

Kudlick, C.J. (2003) 'Why We Need Another "Other"', *The American Historical Review,* 108(3) pp. 763-793.

Museum label for Jenni Hunt, Disabled Lives, Compton Verney, 1 April 2022.

Oliver, M. (1992) 'Changing the Social Relations of Research Production?' *Disability, Handicap and Society,* 7(4), pp. 101-114.

Ott, K. (2005) 'Disability and the Practice of Public History: An Introduction', *The Public Historian,* 27(2), pp. 9-24.

Ott, K. (2010) 'Collective bodies: what museums do for disability' In Sandell, R., Dodd, J., and Garland-Thomson, R. eds., *Re-Presenting Disability*, 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 269-279.

Sandell, R. (2007) *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference,* First Edition. London [u.a.]: Routledge.

ShapeArts (2018) *How to Put On an Accessible Exhibition* [online] Available at: https://www.shapearts.org.uk/News/accessible-exhibitions (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

Simon, N. (2010) *The Participatory Museum, Museum 2.0* [online] Available at: http://www.participatorymuseum.org/ (Accessed: 7 March 2022).

Snyder, S.L. and Mitchell, D.T. (2006) *Cultural Locations of Disability,* First Edition. Chicago [u.a.]: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Soorenian, A. (2014) 'Media, Disability and Human Rights' In Gill, M., Schlund-Vials, C.J., Gill, A.P.M., Sherry, D.M. and Sherry, D.M. eds., *Disability, Human Rights and the Limits of Humanitarianism,* 2nd ed. GB: Routledge, pp. 68-88.

Thiemeyer,T. (2015). 'Work, Specimen, Witness: How different perspectives on museum objects alter the way they are perceived and the values attributed to them', *Museum and Society*, 13(3), pp. 396-412.

TORCH (2021) *Inclusive Histories Research Fellowships* [online] Available at: https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/event/inclusive-histories-research-fellowships (Accessed: 25 January 2022).

World Health Organisation (2011) *World Report on Disability* [online] Available at: https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability (Accessed: 17 May 2022)

Short Submission: Is the museum an agent of healing or harm in society?

Healing, harm or no chance of either?

Tamsin Greaves

'We can't go in there miss, it's too posh.'

If school pupils don't have the opportunity to visit their art and culture whilst at school they are being deprived of a human right. For children from socio-economic backgrounds who don't visit museums the school trip is a major mechanism of inclusion; however, out-of-classroom experiences were in decline before the pandemic (Tapper, 2019) and now they are further endangered.

Visiting museums is good for you but only 13% of museum visitors come from vulnerable groups (O'Neill, 2021). Sydney Poitier's character in the 1968 film, 'To Sir with Love' makes a breakthrough with his difficult class when he takes them to the museum, illustrating the social gains from sharing an out-of-the-ordinary experience (Ballantyne, & Packer, 2016). The cognitive, psychological and social benefits of out-of-the-classroom learning are demonstrated by my pupils' comments whilst visiting Karina Smigla-Bobinski's ADA at Nottingham Castle, Roger Hiorn's Seizure at Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the medieval leaf carvings at Southwell Minster;

'Miss, miss we met an artist! We started a sculpture.'

'It's like being in a crystal cave.'

'You can actually get the feel of them and what you feel in the presence of them.'

Is this the holy grail of art education or another layer of privilege for the entitled? Errol Francis suggested that museums change lives but not always for the better, and Sandra Griffiths from the Red Earth Collective stated museums should allow all types of knowledge to flourish and be seen (Museums Association, 2021). For young people to benefit from positive connections in the museum and/or be inspired to resist the museum's hegemony they have first to be shown the way in.

References:

- Tapper, J. (2019). *England's pupils stuck in classroom as cuts put paid to end-of-term trips*. The Guardian.
- O'Neill, M. (2021). *Creating and Sustaining Equitable Partnerships*. Museums Association.
- Ballantyne, R. & Packer, J. (2016). *Conceptualising the Visitor Experience*. Visitor Studies 128-143.
- *Brave New World*. (2021). Museums Association.

What's Going on Here? Considering the Anti-Racist Possibilities of Visual Thinking Strategies

Ashley Mask, Daniela Fifi and Hannah Heller

Abstract:

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) was founded over 30 years ago. Transformative for its time, VTS prioritises the observations and interpretations of viewers over 'information surround,' or contextual information about artworks. However, in recent years, concerns about equity, diversity, and inclusion in museums and art classrooms have left many art education practitioners and scholars wondering whether this pedagogical approach is truly equitable and supportive of an anti-racist approach to teaching.

In this article, three VTS coaches and experienced museum educators consider the tensions between healing and harm in museum education work that includes VTS. Beginning with a brief outline of the historical origins of VTS and main tenets of the method, the article explores VTS as part of a progressive shift in museological frameworks in late 20th century American museums, highlighting the limitations and potentials posed by it in the context of liberating pedagogies, and offering recommendations for educators who want to critically engage with this pedagogical method today.

Keywords: art museum education, Visual Thinking Strategies, anti-racist pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, liberating pedagogy

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a method for engaging with works of art that prioritises the observations and interpretations of viewers. The method removes the distraction of the 'information surround,' or contextual information about artworks (Yenawine, 2013) and instead centres viewers' perspectives and experiences in relation to the artwork. When VTS was created over 30 years ago, it represented a paradigm shift, as a pedagogical expression of what was taking place at the end of the 20th century in American art museums. At that time, art museums were shifting their focus 'from being *about* something to being *for* somebody' (Weil, 1999:229). Likewise, VTS shifted the exercise of art-looking as something *for* visitors and not *about* art historical facts. However, in recent years, concerns about equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice in museums and art classrooms have left many art education practitioners and scholars wondering whether VTS is truly equitable and supportive of anti-racist teaching.

We are three Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) coaches and experienced museum educators who have spent a lot of time considering the ways that VTS can instil important critical thinking and close looking skills in students, but may also be

damaging, particularly in the context of anti-racist teaching. With this issue's focus on investigating the tension between healing and harm in museum work, we saw an opportunity to coalesce our thinking into a reflective commentary to publicly engage in these questions: When does VTS harm? And equally, when does it heal? Our commentary will consider these questions through the lens of liberating pedagogies, specifically focused on Paulo Freire's concepts of praxis and reflection/action (Freire, 1972). We also utilise critical social-emotional studies (Leonardo and Zembylas, 2013; Trainor, 2008; Winans, 2010) to further interrogate whether VTS can support anti-racist teaching and learning.

These theories challenge us to examine VTS in relation to the crucial components of reflection, action, and transformation that might lead to more healing museum education experiences in the future. Finally, our examination of VTS through these theories offers a potential roadmap in the form of recommendations for educators who want to critically engage with this pedagogical method today.

What is VTS?: Origins of Visual Thinking Strategies

VTS was created in the late 1980's by Philip Yenawine and Dr. Abigail Housen. At the time, Yenawine was the Director of Education at MoMA. Visitor evaluations revealed that for all of the contextual information and educational content being offered by MoMA educators and their programs, visitors were not retaining 'the facts' about the artworks they saw during museum visits (Yenawine, 2013). Troubled by these findings, Yenawine connected with Housen, a Harvard researcher who had spent fifteen years studying not what people know about art, but how they think when looking at art. By focusing on the thinking process, Housen uncovered patterns that led to her theory of Aesthetic Stages, establishing how people make meaning of visual imagery regardless of their prior knowledge about art (Housen, 1983).

Housen's theory was employed to study visitors at MoMA, in an effort to understand not what they learned from the museum, but how they made meaning of art without the interference of 'facts.' The resulting research inspired a specific pedagogical method they called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which was designed for educators to support explorations of artworks that centred visitors and their natural process of making meaning. Subsequent research on the method has shown that it supports students in developing flexible thinking skills, including observation, evidential reasoning, developing (and perhaps revising) a point of view, reasoning with evidence; strengthening language and listening skills, including increasing vocabulary; developing respect for other people's viewpoints and the ability to debate multiple possibilities; developing visual literacy skills and personal connections to art; nurturing curiosity and openness to the unfamiliar; and building confidence and willingness to participate in group discussions (Adams et al., 2006; Burchenal and Grohe, 2008; VTS, n.d.; DeSantis and Housen, 2007).

In the thirty years since VTS was created, a VTS discussion still looks much the same way it did at its inception. Housen and Yenawine devised a series of questions that, on the surface, seem remarkably simple and straightforward (Yenawine, 2013):

1. What's going on here?

2. What do you see that makes you say that?

3. What more can we find?

Educators facilitate VTS discussions with a group of people by using these three simple questions. A discussion begins with the first question, and as observations are made, the educator paraphrases, or repeats the idea shared in each person's comment, leaving out their own opinions and any

contextual information they know about the artwork. If someone's comment includes interpretation without evidence (e.g., 'He looks sad.'), then the educator asks the second question, to encourage deeper looking and draw out visual evidence from the artwork itself ('What do you see that makes you say sad?'). Finally, before taking any new comments, the educator asks the third question, to further encourage deeper looking by the entire group. As the discussion progresses, the educator might link similar ideas together ('Several people think this person might feel sad.') or note differing ideas ('Earlier, someone said they thought the person was sad, but you are thinking they might feel calm.') as part of their paraphrase. Similarly, the educator might frame a comment by identifying the kind of thinking that is taking place ('You are also thinking about feelings, and how someone might feel in this setting.'), but neither linking nor framing incorporates the educator's opinions or contextual information about the artwork. The intentional choice to leave out contextual information allows visitors to feel a sense of ownership and investment in the exploration, bringing with them their prior experiences and knowledge about the world. Over the course of a VTS discussion, people's ideas can evolve and change, based on their own thinking and, crucially, based on what they hear from their peers. Ultimately, a successful VTS discussion engages and enables people to make their own meaning out of art (Yenawine, 2013), rather than passively receiving the facts about the art as dictated by an authority figure, only to most likely forget them later.

Considered in this light, VTS was largely founded on a premise of equity - equity of voices in a discussion, with respectful debate among peers and a rejection of the authoritative voice of the institution - a democratic process in the spirit of Maxine Greene's (1982: 6) *public space*

> 'where human beings, speaking and acting in their plurality, can appear before one another and realise the power they have simply in being together…that they have the capacity to reach out and attain feelings, thoughts, and ways of being, hitherto unimagined'.

While it is hard to imagine today, with VTS being used in museums and schools all over the world, this pedagogical method used to be considered radical (some might argue it still is). Precisely because its goals are often in conflict with the work of museum educators, who are traditionally tasked with enriching dialogues about art by bringing in contextual information – an option not supported by VTS – this approach flew in the face of museum tours that began with a mini-lecture by the educator, including details such as the artist's name, birth and death dates, and the title of the artwork on view. Because VTS relies solely on observations and interpretations by visitors, it elevates visitors above the institution, implying that a work of art is of little value until visitors bring themselves into dialogue with it and each other.

VTS as a healing tool in museum education practices

Given the democratic educational approach to VTS outlined in the section above, how can we think about it as a tool for healing within the museological framework? To answer this question, we would like to shine light on the reasons behind shifts in museological frameworks from the old or traditional approaches to more contemporary entry points as they have given way to healing.

As alluded to earlier, when American art museums shifted their focus 'from being *about* something to being *for* somebody,' people and their stories became a core focus of museums (Weil, 1999: 229). Older, traditional museological frameworks that centred the artworks in the collection as the main ambition of the museum experience came under scrutiny (Davis, 2008). Ethos of contemporary museological mindsets resist traditional entry points and instead drive people-centred approaches in museum practices for

purposes of inclusivity, healing, and community building. This ideological shift began in the mid-twentieth century, and scholars have argued that people-centred museology developed as museums began breaking away from notions of being 'civilising' colonial spaces to locations where the museum returns the narrative of culture to its communities; where the museum experience is imbued with personal and social connections for the visitor; where the museum develops an open-ended interpretation to cultural and art objects, and listens to the stories of people and their communities (Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, 2018; Marstine, 2017; Crooke, 2013; Simon, 2011; Davis, 2008; Scott, 2006). It is a practice of healing that was birthed in response to Indigenous communities demanding a voice in museum programming, in calls for ethnic and social harmony, and in response to societal movements such as the Civil Rights movement (Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, 2018). Educators, artists, museum visitors, and cultural communities demanded re-articulating and re-framing museological epistemologies to be inclusive of the voice of the visitor, the voice of the artist, the voice of cultural communities they exhibit, and the voice of the communities that surround the museum (Johnston, 2021).

Research produced by education philosophers and reformers such as John Dewey (1938), Paulo Freire (1968), and Antonio Gramsci (1971) began to permeate and impact museum practice, which evolved into the *educational turn* in museology. The educational turn describes a museological framework utilising various modalities of educational forms and alternative pedagogical approaches applied to museum program and exhibition development (Johnston, 2021). This was not simply to suggest that museum programs create education as a thematic entry point; but rather, to assert that museum practice should 'increasingly operate as an expanded educational praxis' (Wilson and O'Neill, 2010: 12). Freire (1972: 52) suggested praxis, as a main element of his liberating pedagogy, is rooted in 'reflection, vulnerability, reciprocity, and mutual recognition of teacher and student as equal learning partners in co-constructing meaning in the world'. Liberation pedagogy is an anti-oppressive educational strategy aimed to liberate minds, develop critical consciousness, and empowers learners to question significant societal problems rather than passively absorb them (Freire, 1972). Liberation pedagogy utilises dialogue in order to probe learners to formulate knowledge through inquiry, curiosity, and an awareness of their social realities. Importantly, Freire's (1972: 52) praxis 'is a reflection upon the world in order to transform it' which requires both critical reflection and subsequent critical action as a mode of a transformative learning experience. Entering art museum education from the liberating pedagogical practices of praxis and the educational turn resists traditional approaches to objects that require trained art historical and academic knowledge, removes art and art objects from daily life, and denies visitors the experience of the humanness of art; that is, its moral, civil, personal, and social connections.

At its best, VTS dismantles hierarchies of knowledge because the museum educator is not positioned as the expert of the art collection but rather the facilitator of connecting personal and social meaning between visitors and the collection. This act opens mutual recognition in the learning relationship. VTS also calls for a non-judgemental space when visitors engage with artworks, creating room for vulnerability, reflection, and reciprocity where every visitor's observations are heard and acknowledged. The VTS method does this through open-ended questions and conditional language (Monet, 2019). For example, in response to a learner's inferences, such as 'I see a boy standing by a tree', a VTS facilitator would paraphrase the observations using conditional language such as, 'Okay, the figure in the artwork could be a boy. What do you see that makes you say that it might be a boy?' Framing observations with conditional language welcomes a non-judgemental learning space where every observation provided by learners is equally accepted as viable interpretative narratives for the artwork. Also,

through probing learners to provide evidence for their observations, learners are asked to engage in critical reflection about their own thinking.

Thus, VTS encourages art museum visitors to pause, reflect, observe, describe, and provide meaning and evidence in their observations; it is a fundamentally dialogical practice that encourages critical engagement with artworks through observations and discussion. These critical reflection elements of VTS are directly aligned with liberatory educational practice, whose aim is to heal, transform, and liberate learners.

Limitations of VTS in Anti-Racist Teaching

Despite VTS' ability to provide a non-judgemental, potentially healing space for participants to engage with art and internal work, many art museum educators have articulated its potential to incite emotional and cognitive harm for participants (Antonisse, 2017; Hoel, 2018; Monet, 2019). In the current model of VTS, although learners are actively involved in dialogical learning and critical reflection through non-judgemental spaces of dialogue, VTS falls short on critical action. In the publication, *What More Can We Do?* VTS Coach Kai Monet (2019) explains that the method's open and accepting orientation towards paraphrasing all comments without judgement and without adding to or changing its inherent meaning can create 'space for the perpetuation of oppressive language and ideas' (para 5). Indeed, as an anti-racist educator, Monet finds that VTS may demand that she 'uphold the very forms of oppression [she is] fighting against' (para 4).

VTS proponents posit that providing additional information about an artwork will cloud personal meaning making rather than sharpen it, creating an environment where there are 'right' and 'wrong' answers. However, while 'there is no such thing as right or wrong!' is something art educators often say (we have each said this on a number of our tours to encourage participation), the truth is there very often is a right, or 'more' right, or multiple right ways to interpret an artwork – and even wrong and/or offensive ways (Barrett, 2000; Hubard, 2007). And while VTS was designed to develop the critical thinking skills described above, it is important to note that none of the method's expressed goals is content-related. Many museum educators point to this fact as a significant limitation to its utility in museum teaching contexts, where visitors often come not just to sharpen skills around critical thinking, but to actually learn something about the artworks and artists, as well as engage with artworks on a deeper level (Falk and Dierking, 1992; Rice and Yenawine, 2002).

This limitation has significant consequences when viewed through the lens of anti-racist teaching, which demands a critical examination of the nature of power differentials that contribute to systemic racism, as well as an emphasis on direct action on the part of students and teachers, regardless of race, to correct the status quo (Dei and McDermott, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Kehoe, 1994; Matias, 2016; Tator and Henry, 1991). The genesis of VTS emerged from within institutions that were founded in white supremacy. To understand the history of art museums and their orientation towards race is to understand the history of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism. Mears and Modest (2013) note that the acquisition (often literal theft) by the wealthy and elite of artworks from cultures of color all over the world, 'served to reinforce the distance and presumed difference between those regarded as British [or otherwise White/European] and others regarded as… barbarous and savage' (p. 295). These historical roots continue to have deep impacts as far as the collecting, display, and interpretation of these works (Adams & Koke, 2014). For all the good intentions in education initiatives, this legacy is present in how they conceptualise and operate and the power dynamics they reproduce, posing a challenge in turning them to anti-racist purposes. The VTS method and its subsequent adoption by museums and schools for visitor- and student-centered

learning did not necessarily anticipate anti-racist teaching per se, nor how to address in the moment problematic comments that may seem innocuous to the speaker, but potentially harmful to the rest of the group. VTS' own Commitment to Antiracist Work statement acknowledges these limitations and explicitly states that 'VTS in and of itself is not an antiracist pedagogy' and must be implemented alongside 'a commitment to listening, learning, talking, reflection and action' around social justice issues in order to address systemic inequity (Visual Thinking Strategies, n.d.: 1-2).

Despite this, it could be argued that VTS does have *some* tools within the method to address stereotypical thinking and racialised assumptions. Dewhurst and Hendrick (2016) recommend turning to 'familiar tools' of museum education, such as asking VTS-like questions to prompt critical thinking with our ideas about art. For example, the paraphrase in combination with the second question asking for visual evidence can be used as a tool to call out assumptions, or neutralise stigma (e.g., if a student says they think a figure in the artwork 'looks poor,' the facilitator might paraphrase: 'You're thinking that this person might not have a lot of money. What do you see that makes you say that?'). Participants often quickly realise when they are basing their observation on stereotypes versus observable evidence. Conditional language is another important aspect of the paraphrase, wherein facilitators are encouraged to use phrases such as 'could be,' 'might be,' 'for *you* the artwork looks sad' to convey that while each opinion is valid, they are also personal and not to be taken as any single correct answer (VTS, n.d.).

However, several museum educators have found that these tools may still be insufficient for addressing ignorant and bigoted comments (Antonisse, 2017; Hoel, 2018; Monet, 2019). While VTS trainers readily suggest that no facilitator should simply paraphrase problematic statements without addressing them, doing so within the confines of the method can be tricky without extensive training. The education team at LA MOCA (Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art) was prompted to re-tool the method when they realised VTS was insufficient for discussing a temporary exhibition by artist Kerry James Marshall, whose 'overarching principle is still to move the black figure from the periphery to the center and, secondly, to have these figures operate in a wide range of historical genres and stylistic modes culled from the history of painting' (Marshall, 2014: 26). These educators found that paraphrasing certain participants' comments without qualifying them perpetuated racist stereotypes (Antonisse, 2017). For example, in response to Marshall's painting *School of Beauty, School of Culture* (2012), students more than once commented that one of the Black figure's hands resembled a gorilla's palm. Jeanne Hoel (2018), Associate Director of Education, School and Teacher Programs at LA MOCA describes the various tensions in addressing such a historically weighted observation (para. 15):

> How might we overcome the knee-jerk instinct to immediately silence that student? Doing so would most likely embarrass them rather than lead to productive reflection and could unintentionally teach the group that talking about race is too hard. Failing to respond appropriately, however, risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes by not addressing them.

Hoel's team devised three accommodations to address comments such as these. First, by providing a brief introduction to Marshall and his work before beginning tours, they hoped 'to help model inclusive language' and set the stage for respectful, productive conversations about the constructs of race at play in his work' (Hoel, 2018: para. 8). When this proved helpful but still insufficient, they introduced the societal frame, which is 'a paraphrase that mentions cultural constructs inherent in a comment' (Antonisse, 2017: para. 10). For example, the author describes some visitors' responses to a particular Marshall painting as 'unrealistic' because it depicts Black

figures engaged in leisure activities often associated with Whiteness: boating, picnicking, playing golf (Antonisse, 2017: para. 7). To address the assumptions behind these comments, a museum educator might paraphrase: 'You are thinking about how and where black people are often depicted, and noticing that this image bucks those patterns' (Antonisse, 2017: para. 13). Their team also introduced 'the FYI,' which provides information outside of the content of the paraphrase in order to help participants understand the historical and/or cultural significance behind their comment. Together, LA MOCA's deviations from the original VTS method helped their education staff better address offensive comments in the moment, while still for the most part maintaining the open, affirming atmosphere VTS seeks to create. However, it is worth noting that the modifications they made all involve inserting some contextual information when deemed appropriate or necessary.

VTS as a Critical Social Emotional Learning Tool for Anti-Racism

While these modifications allow educators to address and correct biased thinking and insert contextual information as needed when discussing racialised artworks, little has been written about the possibilities of VTS to capitalise on the democratic space it creates to develop the specific skills, including the critical social-emotional skills, needed to support students' development of anti-racist orientations. While the democratic space can support the healing badly needed in museum spaces, we also want to highlight one under-explored connection between VTS and critical social-emotional learning skills, which underscores the emotional capacities not typically attended to in traditional curricula, but that is needed to engage in productive, critical, and oftentimes emotional, race talk (Sue, 2015). Several scholars note that emotion is an under-researched yet vital element to understanding how students learn in general, and even more so in how they develop racial literacies (Leonardo and Zembylas, 2013; Trainor, 2008; Winans, 2010). Researchers working at the intersection of emotion and learning argue that rather than being separate from how we make sense of the world, or hindering how we learn, emotions and feelings are at the centre of our political and social development (Boler, 1999; Lindquist, 2004; Trainor, 2008). Without looking at emotion and only applying intellectual or logical arguments against racism, anti-racist educators run the risk of not supporting key aspects of students' anti-racist development (Crowley, 2016). At the same time, Leonardo and Porter (2010: 148) problematise typical emotion rules of 'safe' spaces to discuss racism, which 'side step' discomfort and attendant feelings (e.g., anger and frustration) that are exactly the feelings we need to work through to progress. For many people this means 'giving up the need to control meaning,' or letting go of preconceived ideas they bring to conversations about race regarding what is right and wrong, as well as what they must do to fix it (Thompson, 2003: 22).

Several critical emotional researchers propose pedagogies that align with VTS goals for navigating fear, moving through affect, and letting go of control of the narrative; all concepts that require specific pedagogies for implementation in educational contexts. For example, Amy Winans (2010, 2012) employs literature in her teaching to undergird discussion around difference and the feelings those concepts elicit. By talking about race vicariously through different texts, her approach helps students 'recognise that their embodied emotions and thoughts are not them,' but rather are responses to events shaped by (often white supremacist) social norms (Winans, 2012: 160). She advocates for a 'contemplative pedagogy' that 'might help students gain greater awareness, in an embodied sense, of the ways that emotions might consciously and unconsciously inform their beliefs,' and encourage a view of racial literacy that depends on 'inquiry, exploration, and awareness – as opposed to emphasising acquisition of particular knowledge' (ibid: 488). Moving through the discomfort of expressing our own feelings

through discussion of unfamiliar artworks in a non-judgemental space that emphasises inquiry over content, as with the use of VTS, can support students to develop skills around not just expression of emotion, but, when paired with the second question (What do you see that makes you say that?), can support analysis of emotional responses to the work of art and to the interpretations of their peers. This prompts them to consider: Why *do* I react this way to the art? Where does this reaction come from? Exercising this specific muscle can support students applying these skills when discussing other social justice issues, including race and racism. For example, in a VTS discussion it is common for students to react negatively to an artwork; that they don't like it, because it is 'weird.' When prompted by the facilitator, 'What do you see that makes you think it's weird?' the student is put in the position to wrestle with their immediate emotional reaction and think further about where that reaction comes from. Ultimately this muscle might be applied to negative emotional reactions they may have to prise apart in other contexts.

Another quality of critical emotional pedagogies that aligns with the goals of VTS is Boler and Zembylas' (2003) pedagogy of discomfort, formulated for both educators and students to move outside their comfort zones and engage meaningfully with difference. They problematise hegemonic, binary ways of thinking (e.g., straight or gay, white or POC, good or bad, racist or not racist, privileged or not privileged, dominant or nondominant), and highlight that fear of ambiguity and the spaces in between these designations impedes our abilities to fully understand each other. They suggest that engaging with the emotions involved in negotiating the ambiguities that make us who we are can help disrupt these binaries for ourselves as well as achieve the goal of discomfort pedagogy, which for the authors is meant 'to inhabit a more ambiguous sense of self not reduced to the binary positions of good and evil' (Boler and Zembylas: 121).

Through the carefully worded and authentically open-ended questions of the VTS method, participants are invited –encouraged! – to offer different interpretations about the same artwork. The third question of VTS, 'What more can we find?' is repeated after every comment, serving as a constant reminder and invitation that there is always more to find. VTS discussions offer a rare moment in educational spaces to hold multiple truths and interpretations in our hands at the same time, learn to grapple with disagreement, revise our ideas, and understand that our emotional responses are often subconsciously informed by the social norms we live with. In these ways VTS can help students explore these ambiguities through art as a way to combat binary thinking that inhibits identity development and racial literacy (Jones and Okun, 2001; Trainor, 2008).

Recommendations to the Field

While VTS does not currently train or prepare educators specifically for conversations about race, racism, or white supremacy as part of a VTS discussion, educators themselves can do a better job preparing themselves. As with anti-racist work in general, anti-racist teaching begins with the educator. Regardless of the pedagogical approach used, it is imperative that educators do the critically reflective work necessary to better understand their own biases and assumptions, their blind spots and areas for learning, and the white supremacist conditions under which they learned as students and teach as educators (Crum and Hendrick, 2014; Dewhurst and Hendrick, 2018; Ng, Ware and Greenburg, 2017). In doing this, educators may begin to see that simply shifting back to including 'information surround' (Yenawine, 2013) – even if the contextual information relates to race, racism, white supremacy, or any number of other social justice topics – sets us back as a field, reinstating the educator-as-authority and Western notions of knowledge and learning. The result of a return to this way of teaching, without critical reflection, is

that educators again control the (anti-racist) narrative, and deny students, visitors, and themselves the space to explore the complexities, contradictions, and nuances involved in real educational engagement (Khalid and Snyder, 2021).

A pedagogical method alone cannot do the work of transformation. VTS is like other pedagogies in this way, and we propose that the question may not be what healing or harm VTS might do in museums, but rather, what healing or harm *an educator using VTS* might do in museums. By making efforts to understand how anti-racism can function in action through and alongside their use of VTS, educators can embody Freire's (1972) concept of praxis by incorporating both critical reflection and action into their practice. This will look different for each educator, but some possible outcomes we envision include. Where educators once may have felt that they could facilitate a VTS discussion without any prior knowledge about the artwork, perhaps they do need that knowledge. Where educators once trusted the notion that any artwork that visibly tells a story makes for a great VTS discussion, perhaps now they need to more carefully select artworks that tell stories previously untold and challenge the stories they think they know. And where VTS can create a reflective space for important, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations, but cannot contribute to action, educators need to utilise approaches alongside it that can move us all from reflection to action. In this scenario, LA MOCA's modifications might prove useful, as well as thinking of VTS as a complement to critical pedagogical practices, wherein VTS opens-up avenues for dialogue and reflection, then other approaches that practice critical action are enlisted to build upon those reflections.

As we think about the future of museum education, and the real possibility that VTS might be entirely dismissed as a white-centred pedagogy no longer appropriate or suitable for contemporary concerns and audiences, we hope to challenge the impulse to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Given the powerful impact we have seen in our work with school teachers, museum educators, museum visitors, and students, we believe that VTS continues to hold great potential as one tool in the museum education toolbox. We call on educators to reflect on the role they play as a VTS facilitator by carefully considering how they might utilise this pedagogical method responsibly, recognizing that the only way forward is to continue engaging in uncomfortable conversations, pushing through the fear and anxiety many educators feel, to learn from our mistakes, and try again to be better practitioners. We also call on VTS to consider the possibility of modifying the method to suit different situations, inspired by current conversations and practices in the field. VTS was responsive to the needs of museum visitors and students at the time of its inception, even over and above the perceived needs of the museum. Thirty years later, the method and those using it must be equally responsive to the needs of visitors and students today to subvert the impact of centuries-old barriers to participation in art museums, namely colonialism, racism, and elitism, and contribute to healing for all museum visitors.

Works Cited

Adams, M., Foutz, S., Luke, J., and Stein, J. (2006). *Thinking Through Art Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum School Partnership Program Year 3 Preliminary Research Results*. Institute for Learning Innovation. Available at: http://vtshome.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/3Gardner-Museum-Thinking-Through-Art.pdf [Accessed: January 15 2022].

Adams, M. & Koke, J. (2014). "Stuck" Is Where You Need to Pay Attention. In J. B. Acuff & L. Evans (Eds.), *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Antonisse, M. J. (2017). 'The Societal Frame: A Tool to Address Racism in the Galleries'. *Medium*.

Available at: https://medium.com/viewfinder-reflecting-on-museum-education/the-societal-frame-a-tool-to-address-racism-in-the-galleries-3ff63f193ce5 [Accessed: 3 February 2022].

Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, C.E. (2018). *The Social Museum in the Caribbean: Grassroots Heritage Initiatives and Community Engagement*. Leiden, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands, Sidestone Press.

Barrett, T. (2000). 'About Art Interpretation for Art Education', *Studies in Art Education* 42(1): 5–19.

Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*. London, Routledge Psychology Press.

Boler, M., and Zembylas, M. (2003). 'Discomforting truths: The Emotional Terrain of Understanding Differences', in Trifonas, P. P. (ed.) *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Change*: 110–136. London, Routledge Psychology Press.

Burchenal, M. K., and Grohe, M. (2008). 'Reimagining School Programs', *Visual Arts Research* 34(2): 66–75.

Crooke, E. (2013). 'The "Active Museum": How Concern with Community Transformed the Museum', in McCarthy, C. (ed.) *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*: 481-502. New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118829059

Crowley, R. M. (2016). 'Transgressive and negotiated White racial knowledge', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29(8): 1016-1029.

Crum, M., and Hendrick, K. (2014) 'Multicultural Critical Reflective Practice and Contemporary Art', in Acuff, J. B., and Evans, L. (eds.) *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*: 271–298. Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield.

Davis, K.Y. (2008). 'African American Cultural Collections and Museums: Archiving and Preserving Black History', *College & Research Libraries News* 69(11): 695-698.

Dei, G. J. S., and McDermott, M. (2014). 'Introduction to the Politics of Anti-Racism Education: In Search of Strategies for Transformative Learning', In Dei, G. J. S. and McDermott, M. (eds.) *Politics of Anti-Racism Education: In Search of Strategies for Transformative Learning: 1–11*. Springer Netherlands. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-7627-2_1

DeSantis, K., and Housen, A. (2007). 'Aesthetic Development and Creative and Critical Thinking Skills Study'. *VTS Home*. Available at: http://www.issuelab.org/permalink/resource/15725 [Accessed: 19 February 2022].

Dewey, J. (1938). 'The Philosophy of the Arts', in Boydston, J. A. (ed.) *The Later Works of John Dewey, Volume 13, 1938-1939*: 357-368. Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewhurst, M. & Hendrick, K. (2016). 'Dismantling Racism in Museum Education', *Journal of Folklore and Education* 3: 25-30.

Dewhurst, M., and Hendrick, K. (2018). 'Decentering Whiteness and Undoing Racism in Art Museum Education', in Kraehe, A. M., Gaztambide-Fernández, R., and Carpenter II, B.S. (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education*: 451–467. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Falk, J. H., and Dierking, L. D. (1992). *The Museum Experience*. London and New York, Routledge.

Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York, Herder.

Freire, P. (1972). 'Education: Domestication or Liberation?', *Prospects* 2(2): 173-181.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Letteratura e Vita Nazionale*. Roma, Editori riuniti.

Greene, M. (1982). 'Public Education and the Public Space', *Educational Researcher* 11(6): 4-9.

Hoel, J. (2018). 'Honoring Students, Teachers, and the Work of Kerry James Marshall Through VTS'. *VTS Home*. Available at: https://vtshome.org/2018/03/22/honoring-students-teachers-and-the-work-of-kerry-james-marshall-through-vts. [Accessed: January 20 2022].

Housen, A. (1983). *The eye of the beholder: Measuring aesthetic development*. PhD thesis. Harvard University.

Housen, A. (2000). 'Voices of Viewers: Iterative Research, Theory, and Practice', *Arts and Learning Research Journal* 17(1): 1-12.

Hubard, O. M. (2007). 'Negotiating Personal and Cultural Significance: A Theoretical Framework for Art Museum Education', *Curator* 50(4): 401–416.

Johnston, M.A. (2021). *Curating in Context: Slow Curating as a Reflexive Practice*. Belfast, Ireland, Ulster University.

Jones, K and Okun, T. (2001). *White Supremacy Culture. Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*. Minnesota Historical Society. Available at: https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/White_Supremacy_Culture.pdf [Accessed: 3 April 2022].

Kehoe, J. W. (1994). 'Multicultural Education vs Anti-Racist Education: The Debate in Canada'. *Social Education* 58(6): 354–358.

Khalid, A. and Snyder, J. A. (2021) 'Don't Mistake Training for Education'. *Inside Higher Ed* 29. Available at: https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/04/29/colleges-should-focus-education-more-training-about-dei-issues-opinion [Accessed 7 March 2022].

Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). 'Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective'. *Review of Research in Education* 24(1): 211–247. doi:10.2307/1167271

Leonardo, Z., and Porter, R. K. (2010). 'Pedagogy of Fear: Toward a Fanonian Theory of "Safety" in Race Dialogues', *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 13(2): 139–157. doi:10.4324/9781003005995-12

Leonardo, Z., and Zembylas, M. (2013). 'Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis', *Equity & Excellence in Education: University of Massachusetts School of Education Journal* 46(1): 150–165. doi:10.1080/10665684.2013.750539

Lindquist, J. (2004). 'Class Affects, Classroom Affectations: Working through the Paradoxes of Strategic Empathy', *College English* 67(2): 187-209. doi:10.2307/4140717

Marshall, K. J. (2014). *Kerry James Marshall: Painting and Other Stuff*. Belgium, Ludion.

Marstine, J. (2017). *Critical Practice: Artists, Museums, Ethics*. London, Routledge.

Matias, C.E. (2016). *Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education*. Boston, Brill.

Mears, H, Modest, W. (2013). Museums, African Collections and Social Justice. In R. Sandell & E. Nightingale (Eds.), *Museums, Equality and Social Justice* (342-357). London and New York: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203120057-32

Monet K. (2019). 'What More Can We Do?' *VTS Home*. Available at: https://vtshome.org/2019/07/03/what-more-can-we-do/ [Accessed: 9 March 2022].

Ng, W., Ware, S. M., Greenberg, A. (2017) 'Activating Diversity and Inclusion: A Blueprint for Museum Educators as Allies and Change Makers', *Journal of Museum Education* 42(2): 142-154.

Rice, D., and P. Yenawine. (2002). 'A Conversation on Object-Centered Learning in Art Museums', *Curator* 45(4): 289-298. doi:10.1111/j.2151-6952.2002.tb00066.x

Scott, C. (2006). 'Museums: Impact and Value', *Cultural Trends* 15(1): 45-75.

Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. California, Museum 2.0.

Sue, D. W. (2015). *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*. New Jersey, Wiley.

Tator, C., and Henry, F. (1991). *Multicultural Education: Translating Policy into Practice.* Ottawa: Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

Thompson, A. (2003). 'Tiffany, Friend of People of Color: White Investments in Antiracism,' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education: QSE* 16(1): 7–29. doi:10.1080/0951839032000033509

Trainor, J. S. (2008). *Rethinking Racism: Emotion, Persuasion, and Literacy Education in an All-White High School*. Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press.

Visual Thinking Strategies. (n.d.). 'Core School Year 1 Debriefing' [training materials]

Visual Thinking Strategies. (n.d.). 'VTS Commitment to Antiracist Work,' VTS Home. Available at: https://www.canva.com/design/DAEA8_sqz-s/view [Accessed: 5/10/2022].

Weil, S. E. (1999) 'From Being About Something to Being For Somebody: The Ongoing

Transformation of the American Museum', *Daedalus* 128(3): 229–258.

Wilson, M. and O'Neill, P. (2010). 'Curatorial Counter-Rhetorics and the Educational Turn', *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 9(2): 177-193.

Winans, A. E. (2010). 'Cultivating Racial Literacy in White, Segregated Settings: Emotions as Site of Ethical Engagement and Inquiry', *Curriculum Inquiry* 40(3): 475–491. doi:10.1111/j.1467-873x.2010.00494.x

Winans, A. E. (2012). 'Cultivating Critical Emotional Literacy: Cognitive and Contemplative Approaches to Engaging Difference', *College English* 75(2): 150–170.

Yenawine, P. (2013). *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning across School Disciplines.* Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Education Press.

Section IV – HEALING ACTIVITIES

Interview – A Museum's Centring on Healing Through Community Care and Social Responsibility: A Dialogue with Chloe Hayward of The Studio Museum of Harlem (USA)

Kathryn Snyder

Abstract:

Chloe Hayward has been a museum educator for over 20 years. In the past ten, she has undertaken a master's degree in art therapy and brought a community wellness-based practice to her work at The Studio Museum of Harlem in New York City (USA). Her model serves to reduce the stigma of therapy or mental health treatment by weaving supportive, intentional art education within an art community that has always been dedicated to safe spaces for creativity, personal development, and healing from systemic oppression and trauma. Together, we consider how an ethic of care may be practised and centred in museum spaces and how art therapy may contribute to transformative practices in art spaces and museums.

In mid-February, I interviewed Chloe Hayward through a video conference platform to discuss her museum art therapy practice, the ethic of care at its centre, and her vision for the potential for art therapy in museums. We extend our conversation into discussing the power of a place that centres black aesthetics and art of and for BIPOC communities, and the need for the arts in self-care practices.

Ms. Hayward's work extends beyond the usual borders of education to include work with her colleagues to support their health and wellbeing, and collaborations with the curatorial teams to build connections between art on view and the educational components that surround an exhibit and provide opportunities for all audiences to process emotional content. Her efforts, along with the general mission of the museum, aim to create space for black arts and culture to thrive. Bringing healing to community and artists of all levels is an inherent anti-racist, anti-oppressive practice.

Kathryn Snyder: Tell me more about your museum and its relevance in the world of museums generally, and in the community in which it resides.

Chloe Hayward: The Studio Museum of Harlem was founded in 1968. It really was founded as a space for black artists - who were underrepresented and not given visibility and

space in the larger art world - to have a space to not only exhibit, but to make work. Our mission is in our name. Since its founding we have had studio space for artists to come and create work. We are deeply interested, invested, connected to black art and culture, and not just nationally or locally, but internationally and globally as well.

KS: Great. Tell me more about your role there, your work, and your journey to get there.

CH: My current role at The Studio Museum is as the Associate Director of Education. It has been quite a journey to get where I am today. I started my career in museums working at a children's museum in Manhattan; I've worked in early childhood, in public programming, and in what was then called outreach programming. I really found my love and my joy in education. I did want to get more experience in the classroom, so I took a brief pause in my work in museum education, and I went into the classroom. I was an early childhood classroom teacher for quite a while before I started recognizing the ways that the traditional classroom space can be limiting in terms of what I, as an educator was able to offer, and I started to discover that a lot of the work I was doing with young people was centred around art, art making, and the artistic process. I started to recognize the ways in which art could help students to understand themselves and can be a vehicle for bringing community together. That's when I did a little research and discovered there's this incredible field called art therapy, and I took an art therapy course at the New School. I thought, 'this is it'. I realized that I wanted to devote as much time and energy as possible to this work, and then I went to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and I received my Master's in Art Therapy and Creativity Development. While I was working towards my degree, I also applied and got a position at The Studio Museum in 2010 as a Teaching Artist. My first touch point with The Studio Museum was when I was teaching in an early childhood classroom in Harlem; someone from Family Programmes came into my classroom through a school partnership and was teaching about artwork and artists from the museum's permanent collection. I was just blown away at the content and the context of the artwork being offered and how incredible it was. The children in my classroom, which was predominantly full of BIPOC children, were able to see and experience artwork and experiences of the artwork that mirrored and reflected back who they were, and who they are, and who we are, as a culture and a community. This really was a personal thing for me because I grew up in a predominantly white community and I not only did not see my experiences reflected and my image reflected back to me, but oftentimes when I would attempt to make space for that, it was erased. To be able to be in an environment where that is not only offered but celebrated was really something special for the children I worked with, and for me personally and it led me down a path professionally of wanting to be more connected to The Studio Museum.

I worked for five years as a Teaching Artist, and I was able to go into schools and community organizations in Harlem and be in the museum space working alongside incredible artists, educators, and staff who sort of lived and breathed our mission. In 2015, a full-time position became available in Family Programmes; the same person who had come into my classroom in a school partnership, let me know that she was leaving and that this position was going to be available. I promptly applied, and the rest is history. Two years later, I moved to the Education Manager position and, most recently, in 2020, I was made Associate Director of Education, where I've had the privilege to be working with the Director of Education, Shanta Lawson.

KS: It was meant to be.

CH: It was meant to be. To speak to your question about this journey and where it's led me, I

grappled for some time, with what it means to be an art therapist, because I got the degree, I became licensed, registered, and board certified. I am, and always will be an educator at heart and I'm grateful to work with the people I do at the museum because the heart of our education department is care - we always move from a space of care, and I think that that holds true across the institution in whichever department we're talking about, from Curatorial to Communications to Public Programmes and Development. I always grappled with holding these two spaces of art therapist and art educator and then in the last few years I've come to reject this narrative that I have to be compartmentalized into one of these spaces. I'm really working to integrate my educational pedagogy with my therapeutic framework, into this 'third space,' that is the intersection of all the ways that education and wellness and therapy and therapeutic spaces create care, and hold people in whatever it is they're going through.

KS: That's great. I really resonate with that. Our regulations at whatever level put us in those boxes, and yet it's hard to live in them.

CH: Yeah, it's really hard. Mostly, I believe, museums are not recognized as a sight of 'clinical practice' when this work is happening. It's happening in institutions across the country. It's happening, I believe, at The Studio Museum; this creation of therapeutic practices and creation of therapeutic spaces - art is inherently therapeutic, and to not recognize that this could be a space where art therapy programmes can not only live, but thrive and build community, is a little unfortunate. I'm witnessing how the spaces that we are creating at The Studio Museum are dynamic and therapeutic. There's something that's been happening for quite some time, especially in the black community. We make a way for ourselves, and we always have, and we always will. I think there's something powerful and magical about looking at art together, talking about art, and making art in community that builds this sort of therapeutic space. It builds this therapeutic space that is… a community… a community path to healing that is not necessarily found in more traditional spaces of art therapy.

KS: Can you say more about your approach to community care and art therapy?

CH: The work we are doing at The Studio Museum, that has been ongoing since the Museum's inception, is making, creating, and holding space for the black community. My personal theoretical framework springs from a practice that is existential, humanistic, and psychoanalytic. I think that a model that I turn to often is the Open Studio practice, created by the art therapist Pat Allen. That speaks to the ways that I believe our Education Department works, in that the art materials are an offering; they're an offering for self-expression to witness what comes up in the group and in community. In that space, there's a dismantling of hierarchy. In an art therapy Open Studio practice, the therapist holds equal weight; there's no power dynamic, there's no power struggle, it's truly a community of people who have come together to practice as one. A lot of the approach to the programming that I co-create is really coming from a person-centred place. It's not us going in and telling, but it's us going in and listening, and reflecting back what we hear. Many times, reflecting back what we feel is needed through an offering that comes in a set of art materials, programmes, and projects in the spirit of building and co-creating collaboratively as a community, in community, with community.

KS: Say more about how the Open Studio works and how it intersects with the other aspects of the museum.

CH: The Open Studio approach is boiled down very simply to a few things: first, we're all in this space together, so there's no hierarchy, we are 'it' together. We're here together in this space, and while an offering is being made through art

materials, questions, or writing prompts, there's really no one way. We are creating and building whatever it is we're making together. And then lastly, whatever has happened in this space through conversation, verbally and non-verbally, through the image making and looking, that belongs to all of us, and it's a space to witness one another. In that witnessing is that healing space; it is that opportunity for a deeper knowing of oneself and one's community. To speak more specifically, in Family Programmes we had a programme called 'Target Free Sundays' and that was a two-hour drop-in art making experience that happened every week in the Museum, and I would offer materials that were inspired by an exhibition that was happening in the museum. It was not, 'we are making this thing' but, 'these are some of the ideas of the artists, some of the thoughts of the curators, some of the intentions of this exhibition, some of the materials or, this is the process that this artist has explored, let's think about that together and let's explore that together'. What would happen in that space was so special because we had people from the community and beyond - from different countries even - visiting the museum, creating in a space together, just sharing with each other. We're making, and there is no right and wrong, there just 'is'. To be in that space, of just being, was wonderful.

KS: Lovely. And you were speaking of those offerings - that they will often reference the current exhibition. I'm interested in considering how powerful art is; how it conveys important messages, meanings, and feelings. I think that, specifically at a museum that is focused on black aesthetics and culture, I'm imagining that's a powerful part of the programming and 'magic' that happens. Can you speak to that?

CH: I think in a lot of our partnerships that we have across the institution, there's really an open mind and an open ear to hearing what the needs of the people who we're in partnership with need, think, and feel. We respond to that through these programmes, and these offerings and in thinking about what it means to be a space that uplifts, recognizes, celebrates the African diaspora and all that that entails: black culture… We talk in our mission about a dynamic exchange and how I've observed and participated in that over my time at the Museum, being in constant dialogue with my colleagues as well. Part of 'care work', part of 'change work', really is making space for conversations that are not always comfortable. Part of the power and the magic of art is that art is a mirror, a reflection…and so, when you look at a work of art, you're going to see what's reflected back to you. But what about people who don't identify as BIPOC, what are they seeing? And what is their experience of that work? I think that that's why this museum is so powerful and can be so impactful because it really opens the art on the walls for a conversation about people's individual experiences with race and identity. Those are important conversations to always be having, but it's ever more relevant and necessary now.

KS: When we spoke before, you spoke about how you do programmes that support museum staff.

CH: Care happens at all levels. In our school-community partnerships, we were in the process of developing therapeutic workshops for educators. We have created space for some of the teachers, community organizers, people who are giving care, to have space for their own self-care and wellness. I am a member of a group founded at The Studio Museum called CEEW - the Collective for Employee Engagement and Wellness. It's a voluntary group of staff members who wanted to create space for wellness and care among all the staff. We do that through an offering of internal programmes and events. I also created something called 'Art Spa' that originated in the education office. I was testing out materials for one of the workshops, and different staff members kept dropping in. We were working with clay, and the next thing I know, there's almost 20 people sitting around this giant table. Everyone's excited, and

talking and there's this incredible thing happening, and I said to myself, 'we need this as a community, we're talking about art with the community, and showing art in our gallery walls, we should be making art together.' So now it's evolved into a once a month, drop-in art making workshop for staff. Art Spa has now become a part of the offerings that CEEW offers to all museum staff, including interns.

KS: That's great. I mean it seems self-evident that people who work in art spaces should engage in their own art making as part of their self-reflection, self-awareness, self-care. However, I don't think it happens that frequently.

CH: Which is so wild to me. How can we be asking people to do something that we don't do ourselves? How are you going to get someone excited about something if you're not even excited about it? To speak to care, to be a caregiver, you must have a practice of self-care. How are you caring for yourself? What does that look like? I like to think about being an educator or therapist as being a sponge, constantly absorbing and taking in all these thoughts, feelings, experiences. My emotions have to go someplace and wring out or else I'm just to be saturated and what use is that?

KS: To speak to the power of art and the image, when we're absorbing all of these images all the time, we need to find a place to process that. What better way than to do that in some sort of visual, tactile form in our own way, in our own visual language; to reconsider it, rethink it, re-meld it and put it someplace in a new way?

CH: That is what art does! Art is transformative. It's a shifting and moving of energy towards something more… more grounded and healing and real. In a time where things are so uncertain and there's so much going on in the world, art can really be an anchor to ground us all, and to help us do this work of transformation and change.

KS: Tell me about your engagement with other museum staff as the museum is developing exhibitions.

CH: One of the things I really love and respect about working at Studio Museum is the level of co-creation that happens across the institution. The Curatorial Department is phenomenal. There's always an opportunity for communication around information for upcoming exhibitions, and space made for the education department to ask questions and receive feedback. Although the exhibitions are being developed and created by curatorial, there's really a level of respect and contribution that's welcomed from the Educational Department to meet and speak with some of the artists, especially our Artists-in-Residence. We have artists visits where artists will come into a school or a community organization, and communities get to hear from the artists' first-hand experience. The museum's departments are constantly in dialogue with one another, to make sure that the work is seen, felt, heard, received, and explored in a way that is very holistic. I really appreciate that level of care and co-creation.

KS: It speaks to really considering how all parts work together and how you're really thinking about what's going to happen when people are in this space, viewing this work. It speaks to that sense that thought is given to all those aspects up front, so that care and support can be offered.

CH: It's like a song. It's like we all have the soundtrack of our lives; we have to be in tune with one another, otherwise it's just going to be a terrible album. I see this metaphor for the work that we do: we're all singing the same song in our own voices and in unison; it's really strong and powerful. That's only possible because there's a care and consideration for one another's tone and style.

KS: What is your hope or vision for how art therapy might work in museum spaces?

CH: I would love to see museum spaces recognized as a site for clinical work. Museums could offer internships towards individuals' Master's Degrees, and those with a degree in Art Therapy. I would love to see a space where art therapy is practiced in museums, not just in a community, therapeutic spatial sense-in its true clinical form.[1] I believe that museums are uniquely positioned to provide these services to the community as another level of accessibility. Museums can learn a lot from art therapy. And in one way or another, I think that museums and art therapy are actually very close cousins. Museums are a home for art, space for art exploration, education, and artists. Art therapy is concerned with creativity; by that definition, to be creative is to change, and to change, you have to have constant motion. Museums need to lean into their creativity and be that change, be that constant flow and forward motion.

KS: That's lovely. I feel like museums, like art therapy, are pulling at the threads of time and landing in a new space.

CH: Time will tell.

Conclusion

As we continue to move through turbulent times, attention is being paid to the relevance of healing, wellness, and art therapy within our larger culture and in museum spaces (Small, 2020). Providing such services within museum spaces may prove to be vital as these are public spaces dedicated to bringing in diverse audiences and embracing creativity. Recent work in the sector calls for museums to assess their relevance and 'advance social, environmental and economic sustainability' to contribute to meaningful action toward well-being (Ndoro, 2020). And while museums, such as The Museum of Modern Art in New York City have been thinking about their ties to healing, occupational therapy, and art therapy since their early years (Davidow, 2018), museums have not embraced this role in large measure. It seems that the time is now to assert this connection and find room for art therapy and the therapeutic practices that the profession might bring within the museum sector. The Studio Museum of Harlem and the work of Chloe Hayward offers a model that embraces community care, social responsibility, and healing.

Notes

[1] Chloe is referring to seeing museums offer clinical art therapy where there is a direct contract for treatment and the therapist and identified client agree on treatment goals and a treatment plan. This contrasts with what she has been talking about throughout the interview where art therapy is a therapeutic process within her museum setting without such a contract but is imbued within many educational and curatorial programs with an ethic of care and trauma-informed sensibility.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Chloe Hayward and The Studio Museum of Harlem for partnering on this interview submission. These are the stories that need to be told about how we can serve our communities in museums, in new ways towards care and well-being and a better world.

Works Cited

Davidow, J. (2018). Art Therapy, occupational therapy, and American Modernism. *American Art, 32*(2), 80-99. https://doi.org/10/1086/699611

Ndoro, W. (2020, July 29). *What are museums for?* ICCROM. https://www.iccrom.org/news/what-are-museums

Small, Z. (2020, June 15). Museums embrace art therapy techniques for unsettled times. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/arts/desig

n/art-therapy-museums-virus.html?searchResultPosition=1

Short Submission

Is the museum an agent of healing or harm in society?

Dominic Seamer

I believe that museums are a healing entity that provide a view into another world and other contexts.

I work in a therapeutic school for pupils aged 5-19 who have a wide range of social, emotional and learning needs and often a comorbidity of diagnoses. As a school, we have long believed that giving pupils opportunities to take learning out of the classroom is absolutely essential and hugely enriching. Our pupils, in previous settings, would have been the children not invited onto trips (not a criticism, but the unfortunate reality of the lack of support available for mainstream schools) and as such, they have been denied experiences that real-life artefacts and encounters with new environments can provide.

We make it a central tenet of our curriculum to include trips and visits. Our pupils have the chance to not only experience what the wider world has to offer, but it also provides real-world opportunities to practice social skills, to mix with the public and to build memories that have long-lasting impacts on their academic work. I am reminded of pre-pandemic visits by our Key Stage 2 class groups to the British Museum to look at Viking exhibits, and to the Natural History Museum to experience the dinosaurs. Both of these embedded masses of learning with the pupils and allowed the teachers to use these memories to build future learning opportunities.

Beyond this, the chance for the pupils to walk through new places, to travel on public transport, to experience the hustle and bustle and to realise they could cope, that they could engage and they could enjoy themselves and remain safe, was transformative for them.

The lasting impact of museum visits can be seen as our pupils move through the school, the memories and experiences travel with them and have a lifelong effect.

Positive Psychology and Museum Education: Towards a Positive Museum Education for Enhancing Children's Wellbeing

Chrysi Vomvogianni

Abstract:

Museums provide opportunities for 'healing' through positive social interaction, learning and acquiring new skills, increasing self-esteem and sense of identity, and reducing social isolation and anxiety. This paper focuses on the contribution of museums to children's well-being through the application of positive psychology, a new and fast-growing field in the science of psychology that focuses on the positive dimensions of human existence. Positive education, which is the application of positive psychology in education, aims to create a positive climate of creativity, inspiration, and psychological resilience in the wider field of education and especially in schools. Museum education can benefit from the incorporation of positive psychological principles and interventions, which are aimed at improving well-being and life satisfaction. This paper aims to transfer positive education principles to the museum environment by presenting museum actions and educational programs in Greece aimed at children's wellbeing.

Keywords: museum education, positive psychology, positive education, children's wellbeing

Positive psychology and positive education

Positive psychology is a growing branch of psychology and as a term was first used in 1998 by Martin Seligman, who was the president of the American Psychological Association and laid the scientific foundations of the field. Seligman pointed out that in the second half of the 20th century, psychology was mainly engaged in the investigation and treatment of mental disorders. Seligman advocated the shift of interest in the study and strengthening of the positive dimensions of human existence. Positive psychology, therefore, scientifically studies the positive characteristics of individuals, groups, and organizations (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The goal of positive psychology is to create interventions that attempt to improve people's lives, both on an individual and social level. A broad range of interventions targeting different populations and contexts have been created with the purpose to increase happiness and wellbeing, improve physical and mental health, or develop resilience (Parks-Sheiner, 2009). All these interventions have a common element: their aim is not to move people from dysfunction to average

functioning, but to help them move towards optimum functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology redirects the focus of psychology to the study of common human strengths and emphasizes positive mental health, positive development and positive aging, positive relationships, positive education, and positive work environments.

Positive education seeks to combine the principles of positive psychology with the teaching of best practices to promote the development and flourishing of children in educational environments. Seligman (2011) defines positive education as the traditional education that focuses on the development of academic skills, aided by approaches that foster wellbeing and promote good mental health, teaching psychological resilience and positive emotions. Moreover, incorporating a wellbeing focus within education can protect against mental health problems, aid with self-management of mental health, and lead to improvements in life satisfaction, learning and creativity, and social cohesion and citizenship (Kern et al., 2015). According to Seligman et al. (2009), the functional integration of positive psychology into the teaching process is necessary, and wellbeing should be taught in schools for three reasons: “as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking” (p. 295).

Positive educational interventions are programs which focus on the positive elements of students' character and aim at cultivating positive emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. At the same time, they contribute to the learning process. Many school interventions have been tested scientifically, showing very promising results in increasing student wellbeing, and improving relationships and academic performance (Waters, 2011). Illustrative examples are the interventions to increase mindfulness, which is a form of awareness when we focus our attention on the present moment with acceptance. In recent years, mindfulness programs have begun to be created in schools and their main objective is the deliberate focus on positive variables, such as the practice of positive character strengths for the students of all ages (Waters et al., 2014).

Wellbeing and the PERMA theory

Wellbeing is one of the concepts that positive psychology studies and has been systematically investigated in recent decades, leading to the development of various theories. The two main theoretical approaches to the study of wellbeing are the hedonic tradition, which focuses on happiness, positive emotions, and life satisfaction, and the eudaimonic tradition, which emphasizes the positive functionality and self-realization (Dodge et al, 2012).

The hedonic approach to wellbeing is the one most studied, pioneered by Ed Diener, who based the approach on the subjective assessment of the individual and introduced the term subjective wellbeing. Diener defined wellbeing as the frequent experience of positive emotions and moods, the rare presence of negative emotions and moods, and life satisfaction. Carol Ryff and her colleagues introduced the eudaimonic approach to the study of wellbeing and formulated a model of positive functionality, which includes the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing: autonomy, personal development, positive relationships, the goal of life, control of the environment, and self-acceptance (Gallagher, 2009).

The most modern theory of wellbeing, which combines both theoretical approaches mentioned, is the PERMA model and was developed by Martin Seligman. The PERMA model considers wellbeing to be broadly comprised of five dimensions: (P) Positive emotions (hedonic feelings of happiness such as joy and contentment); (E) Engagement (feeling absorbed

and engaged in life and connected to activities); (R) positive Relationships (feeling socially integrated, cared about and supported by others); (M) Meaning or purpose (believing that one's life is valuable and feeling connected to something greater than oneself); and (A) Accomplishment (making progress toward goals, feeling capable). The PERMA model suggests that we flourish through balancing the Pleasant Life (feeling good or hedonic wellbeing) with the Meaningful Life (having purpose, contribution and belonging, or eudaimonic wellbeing) (Seligman, 2011).

According to Seligman, every dimension of PERMA is independently associated to wellbeing, can be explored for its own, intrinsic value, and can be defined and measured independently of the other dimensions (Seligman, 2011). The PERMA model has been extended to acknowledge the importance of physical health in overall wellbeing; PERMA-H model includes a positive health dimension (H), thereby offering a more holistic view of wellbeing that includes practices for optimal physical and psychological health (Lai et al, 2018).

Moreover, the PERMA (or PERMA-H) model has been the framework for the implementation of holistic positive education programs. Integration of the PERMA-H model within schools has been linked to student, educator, and parental health and wellbeing (Dubroja et al., 2016). Geelong Grammar School in Australia implements PERMA-H through a program named 'learn it, live it, teach it, embed it'. This program advocates sharing of wellbeing opportunities, active enabling of wellbeing across school activities, and enacting wellbeing through personal use of strengths and skills. Also, explicit teaching of character strengths and wellbeing skills within the classroom and embedding of positive education within the entire school community including in school policies and practices (Hoare et al., 2017). Other examples of PERMA (or PERMA-H) programs in schools include 'Flourish', 'The Flourishing Life', and Maytiv positive psychology school program (Koudigeli and Giotsidi, 2020).

Museums and children's wellbeing: A 'PERMA' perspective

The question that arises is how positive psychology interventions based on PERMA (or PERMA-H) model, can be implemented within the museum and specifically in the field of museum education, to fulfill the educational and the therapeutic role of the museum. Can we talk about a positive museum education for everyone and especially for children?

Museums today have adopted a new role as spaces for wellbeing and social care, offering positive social experiences, reducing social isolation, and providing opportunities for learning and acquisition of new skills. They can offer experiences that reduce anxiety, while at the same time they contribute to positive emotions and increase self-esteem. Moreover, museums offer positive experiences in clinical settings, where they help in better communication between patients, families, caregivers, and health professionals (Chatterjee and Noble, 2016; Silverman, 2010). According to Morse (2021), museums are caring places, through community engagement and participatory practices, while a future direction for museological work can be called 'care-ful museology'.

Chatterjee & Noble (2016), argue for a new field of research and practice in museology which is called Museums in Health. In this context, wellbeing has begun to be included in museum activities, especially for vulnerable groups such as users of mental health services, people with dementia and people with disabilities. In 2011, an annual survey was conducted in England, aiming to explore the policy of museums in relation to health and wellbeing, the practices implemented, the target groups, and the ways of evaluating actions

(Chatterjee & Noble, 2016, p.53). The results of the survey showed that very few museums offered such programs for children, which is surprising, considering that school groups and children in general are a key target group for most museums. Some of the museums which participated in the research implement programs for children, mainly for children with disabilities accompanied by their families or carers, (Chatterjee & Noble, 2016, p.61). These programs were more focused on learning goals than on wellbeing.

Although today, museums provide a multitude of programs that focus on children´s wellbeing, it is rare to find one evaluated in terms of wellbeing. *Body, Mind, Spirit*, a collaboration between the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery and the Children's Hospital Schools in Leicester, is one such program (Woodall, 2015). The program was addressed to teenage children who were hospitalized, and contained object handling activities and discussion about the historical, biographical, and emotional properties of the objects. The program was evaluated through observation, interviews, and the use of the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit, which was modified for the needs of students (Thomson & Chatterjee, 2014). According to Woodall (2015), there is a lack of measurement tools for museum wellbeing activities addressed to children, a field which according to the researcher lends itself to future research (p. 41).

Museums can contribute to the wellbeing of children by applying the principles of positive education, especially the PERMA theory. PERMA-H model can be a useful framework for the design, the implementation and the evaluation of museum activities focusing on children's wellbeing. The PERMA-H approach has been chosen due to its explicit inclusion of physical health alongside affective, social, and psychological aspects of wellbeing. Moreover, one of the fundamental elements of the PERMA-H model is that it comprises both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing perspectives. The PERMA-H model can provide a theoretical basis for the design of museum educational programs, so that the wellbeing of children is included in their goals.

Enhancing children's wellbeing through PERMA: Some examples from Greek museums

Museums in Greece have not so systematically incorporated children's wellbeing into the objectives of their programs. However, considerable efforts have been made in this direction. For example, in 1997 the Hellenic Children's Museum began the implementation of programs for children of various ages with neoplastic diseases that were hospitalized at the 'Aghia Sophia' Children's Hospital (Kalessopoulou, 2002). Similarly, the Byzantine and Christian Museum implemented programs in the same hospital and collaborated with the hospital's Gymnasium and the Child Psychiatry Unit of Inpatient Hospitalization (Fatola, 2017). The objectives of the two programs, apart from the cognitive field and the acquaintance with the exhibits of the museum, were the enhancement of self-esteem, the experience of positive emotions, the creation of positive relationships and the creative expression.

Another program, for primary school children, which is also related to positive education, was implemented by the Museum of Asia Minor Hellenism 'Filio Haidemenos'. The program was part of the museum's management of cultural trauma and the objectives were to understand and develop empathy towards refugees and migrants (Sarigianni, 2018). It is imperative that museums are trauma informed, recognize trauma, create a sense of belonging, and prioritize people's wellbeing.

The basic theoretical pillar of the next educational programs and activities for children, implemented in Greek museums, comes from the PERMA-H

model. The following cases are cited as examples to stress that the theories of positive psychology, and specifically the PERMA-H model, constitute a useful framework for the design of museum educational programs aimed at the wellbeing of preschool children (Shoshani and Slone, 2017).

Initially, reference will be made to the design of a music activity for preschoolers in the program at the Museum of Greek Popular Musical Instruments 'Fivos Anoyianakis' - Center of Ethnomusicology, titled 'Swallows, lalitses and other toys at the Museum of Popular Musical Instruments'. The entire program was based on the PERMA model, while in the individual activities the dimensions of wellbeing, as mentioned by Seligman, were utilized accordingly. In addition, the dimension of physical health (H) was exploited through the design and implementation of music and movement activities in the museum's exhibition areas, as well as in the garden.

The activity took place at the lower floor of the museum, where the idiophones musical instruments are exhibited, with the lalitses (wind musical instruments), the swallows, and the other musical toys. In this activity, emphasis was placed on experiencing positive emotions and on engagement, enhancing the character strengths of the children, through the adoption of different roles, such as the role of the conductor of the orchestra. Additionally, on the strengthening of positive relationships, through the encouragement of acts of kindness and empathy, such as the exchange of musical instruments, so that everyone can play with the instruments they want. The achievement of each child's goals was enhanced through their support, in case of possible failure, but also through the encouragement of children's personal aspirations, such as musical improvisation, which was supported by the rest of the group.

Another activity will be presented, which is part of an educational program for preschool and early school children, designed to celebrate the International Museum Day 2021 at the archaeological site and the Museum of the Ancient Agora of Athens. The design of the educational program focused on the concept of recovery from the psychological effects of the pandemic and the creation of new points of contact with nature and culture, focusing on promoting the wellbeing of children. Through games that promote children's wellbeing, sound walks and games to explore the soundscape, the children got to know the monuments and learned about their conservation and preservation, as well as the protection of their natural and sonic environment.

The activity concerns the categorization of the sounds of the environment according to the emotions they cause, during the sound walk at the archaeological site of the Ancient Agora of Athens. Sound walks are walks that aim at the focused listening of sounds and understanding their meaning, while they are the framework for mindfulness activities (Schafer, 1992). In this activity, children may encounter sounds that are pleasant and unpleasant, and match them with colours, by painting them. Additionally, the box of positive emotions, an intervention used in positive education, is transferred to the box of "positive sounds" (sounds that create positive emotions) where children will store the corresponding sounds, depicting them in paintings. This activity contributes to the expression of positive emotions, which has positive benefits for wellbeing. An expansion to this activity is the implementation of family sound walks in the city, which give rise to discussions on the intense presence of city sounds, in contrast to the quiet environment of archaeological sites.

The previous activity can be extended with activities of expressing positive emotions, such as gratitude, through experiential exercises at the archaeological site. An indicative example of such an exercise is the gratitude tree or flower, which is also addressed to young children (Pezirkianidis

and Kotsoni, 2020). After the completion of the main activities at the archaeological site and the Museum, children with their parents can describe on a note, a moment that caused them the feeling of gratitude. These notes may be the leaves of a tree or the petals of a flower, which could be a temporary exhibit in the museum or at the archaeological site. The tree/flower would be accessible to all and could be read by all visitors, contributing to the cultivation of empathy and communication.

Towards a positive museum education

In conclusion, museums can contribute to the wellbeing of children, if the actions and the educational programs are designed appropriately. Positive education, especially Seligman's PERMA theory, can be a useful framework for the design and implementation of museum actions and educational programs, to integrate wellbeing beyond the cognitive goals. Considerably, more research will need to be done to determine the implementation and evaluation of the PERMA-H model within museum settings, to provide a sustainable and flexible framework for moving towards flourishing museum communities.

The evaluation of the museum interventions focusing on children's wellbeing presents difficulties, due to the lack of appropriate measurement tools. It is proposed to use mixed methods of analysis - appropriate questionnaires in combination with qualitative research methods (Desmarais et al, 2018). As the PERMA-H model has applicability within the field of positive education (Kern et al, 2015), it is a promising framework for the evaluation of museum activities focusing on wellbeing. As it measures subjective perspectives of wellbeing across multiple domains, there is potential to promote children's wellbeing more successfully. Moreover, during the evaluation, the active participation of children with the help of caregivers or their parents is important. The participation of children in research is based on modern approaches, which emphasize the universal involvement of children in the identification of factors that contribute to their wellbeing (Ben-Arieh, 2005).

Works Cited

Ben-Arieh, A. (2005). 'Where are the children? Children's role in measuring and monitoring their well-being', *Social Indicators Research* 74(3): 573–596.

Chatterjee, H.J. and Noble, G. (2016). *Museums, health, and well-being*. Reprint. Abingdon, Routledge.

Desmarais, S., Bedford, L., and Chatterjee, H.J. (2018). *Museums as spaces for wellbeing: A second report from the National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing*. Available at: https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/museums-as-spaces-for-wellbeing-a-second-report.pdf (Downloaded 14 February 2022).

Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., and Sanders, L. (2012). 'The challenge of defining wellbeing', *International Journal of Wellbeing* 2(3): 222-235.

Dubroja, K., O'Connor, M., and Mckenzie, V. (2016). 'Engaging parents in positive education: Results from a pilot program'. *International Journal of Wellbeing* 6: 150–168.

Fatola, R. (2017). 'Museum and hospital: educational activities outside the Museum. The case of the Children's Hospital Aghia Sophia'. *Archaeology & Arts*. Available at: https://www.archaiologia.gr/blog/2017/12/18/μουσείο-και-νοσοκομείο-εκπαιδευτικέ/ (Accessed 14 February 2022).

Gallagher, M.W. (2009). 'Well-being', in Lopez, S.J. (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*: 1030-1034. United Kingdom, Wiley-Blackwell.

Hoare, E., Bott, D., and Robinson, J. (2017). 'Learn it, Live it, Teach it, Embed it: Implementing a whole school approach to foster positive mental health and wellbeing through positive education'. *International Journal of Wellbeing* 7(3): 56–71.

Kalessopoulou, D. (2002). 'Children's museums in hospitals', in Sandell, R. (ed.) *Museums, society, inequality*: 191-199. London and New York, Routledge.

Kern, M. L., Waters, L. E., Adler, A., and White, M. A. (2015). 'A multidimensional approach to measuring wellbeing in students: Application of the PERMA framework'. *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10(3): 262–271.

Koudigeli, F., and Giotsidi, V. (2020). 'Positive interventions in education. Theoretical background and empirical data', in Stalikas, A., Giotsidis, V., and Karakasidou, E. (eds.) *Conquering well-being: Positive interventions, technical & experiential exercises*: 491-551. Athens, Topos Publications.

Lai, M. K., Leung, C., Kwok, S. Y., Hui, A. N., Lo, H. H., Leung, J. T., et al. (2018). 'A multidimensional PERMA-H positive education model, general satisfaction of school life, and character strengths use in Hong Kong senior primary school students: Confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis using the APASO-II'. *Front. Psychol*. 9:1090.

Morse, N. (2021). *The museum as a space of social care*. New York and London, Routledge.

Parks-Sheiner, A. C. (2009). 'Applied positive psychology', in Lopez, S. J. (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*: 58-62. Chichester: Blackwell Publishing.

Pezirkianidis, Ch., and Kotsoni, K. (2020). 'Gratitude interventions.', in Stalikas, A., Giotsidis, V., and Karakasidou, E. (eds.) *Conquering well-being: Positive interventions, technical & experiential exercises*: 303-337. Athens, Topos Publications.

Sarigianni, E. (2018). 'Approaching cultural trauma through museum education', *Museumedu* 6: 197-220.

Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York, Free Press.

Seligman, M., Ernst, R., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., Linkins, M. (2009). 'Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions', *Oxford Review of Education* 35: 293-311.

Seligman, M. and Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). 'Positive psychology: An introduction', *American Psychologist* 55: 5–14.

Schafer, R. M. (1992). *A sound education*. Indian River, Arcana Editions.

Shoshani, A. and Slone, M. (2017). 'Positive education for young children: Effects of a positive psychology intervention for preschool children on subjective wellbeing and learning behaviors', *Front. Psychol*. 8:1866.

Silverman, L.H. (2010). *The social work of museums*. New York and London, Routledge.

Thomson, L.J. and Chatterjee, H.J. (2014). 'Assessing wellbeing outcomes for arts and heritage activities: Development of a Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit', *Journal of Applied Arts & Health* 5(1): 29-50.

Waters, L. (2011). 'A review of school-based positive psychology interventions', *The Australian*

Educational and Developmental Psychologist 28(2): 75–90.

Waters, L., Barsky, A., Ridd, A. and Allen, K. (2014). 'Contemplative education: A systematic, evidence-based review of the effect of meditation interventions in schools', *Journal of Educational Psychology Review* 27: 103–134.

Woodall, A. (2015). 'Body, Mind, Spirit: an interpretive framework for children in hospital schools', *Museological Review* 19: 33-44.

Book Review – The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto – The politics of interdependence,* London and New York: Verso, 2020, £8.99, pp. 114.

Lucrezia Gigante

What would happen if we placed care at the front and centre of our living together? *The Care Manifesto*, published by Verso in the midst of the first lockdown in 2020, addresses the urgency of rethinking the practices and principles of social welfare and community building in our societies through the notion of care. The Manifesto is the result of the joint effort of five scholars across different disciplines, known as the Care Collective.[1] The breadth of academic interests and entry points is palpable in the variety of the scholarly panorama of the book, resulting in a valuable resource for the reader. Although, at times, this is at the cost of depth and accessibility.

The Care Manifesto spans six chapters, organised effectively to accompany the reader in an exploration of this radical proposal. In the first part, the book provides a panning shot of the different scales of our 'careless worlds' and lands on the book's core vision: the model of universal care. Building on the notion of 'caring for', 'about' and 'with' put forward by Joan Tronto (2013), the authors push this formulation further to suggest 'a feminist, queer, anti-racist and eco-socialist perspective where care and care practices are understood as broadly as possible' (The Care Collective 2020: 22). What they argue for is adopting care as an organising principle across all scales, across differences and across borders through a radical reconfiguration of the existing infrastructures of care.

The proposal is explored in more detail in the remaining chapters. The authors unpack their vision of universal care from the closest circle – that of kinship – to further levels, including communities, states, and global markets. For each scale, the authors try to offer examples and a more refined articulation of universal care in that context, although they do not always succeed in providing sufficient practical grounding to their vision.

In *Caring kinships*, the notion of kinship is reframed to include alternatives to the traditional forms associated with the familial Western archetype. The 'promiscuous care' model they put forward includes relations with the other that embrace human and non-human, proximate and distant. Only by expanding our circles of care and recognising them through adequate structural support, the authors argue, will we realise care at all levels.

Caring communities is the most interesting chapter for the purpose of this review, as

it provides thought-provoking ground to think through the interconnectedness of museum practice, especially for community engagement and outreach work. In this chapter, the authors propose the idea of the 'sharing infrastructures' sustained by four main pillars: mutual support, shared resources, public space, and local democracy. Museums are included here, along with other public spaces, as the 'localised environments in which we can flourish: in which we can support each other and generate networks of belonging' (Ibid. 45). The co-production and reorganisation of our public space through collaborative decision-making and local partnerships are necessary conditions for building conviviality (Gilroy, 2004) and caring democracies (Tronto, 2013). It is remarkable how many of these arguments could be applied to museums and communities and, in fact, sits nicely in relation to recent Museum Studies publications concerned with ethics of care in museum engagement work (Morse, 2020), practices of collaboration with the museum's constituencies organised through networks of relationships (Byrne et al., 2018) and partnerships (Lynch et al., 2020). While the argument of museums as arenas of participatory cultural democracy is not new, the language of care and relationships appears to be permeating the discourse on museum's operations in very recent years. And, significantly, it is emerging from the practice, from the work on the ground, from those small pockets of caring communities that *The Care Manifesto* wishes to scale up. In particular, Morse's work *The Museum as a Space of Social Care* (2020) draws on her research at the Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM), *The Constituent Museum* (Byrne et al., 2018) focuses on the experiences of the institutions that form the museum confederation L'Internationale, and *Museums and Social Change* (Lynch et al., 2020) draws on the first-hand experiences of museum practitioners. In this sense, *The Care Manifesto* offers a stimulating perspective to further the conversation about the role of care in museums and the wider radical political implications this shift could bring.

The last two chapters broaden the discussion to the scale of the state and the markets at last. In *Caring states*, the vision of universal care permeates the notions of belonging, citizenship and rights, but limited space is given to an in-depth analysis of the complexity of these suggestions. The practical recommendations focus on providing education, conditions for caring (for example, a four-day work model), and space for the resolution of tensions through caring interactions. This is how the caring state can achieve a 'radical and systematic transformation' (p. 63). In the chapter about *Caring economies*, the authors' criticism of the neoliberal marketisation of care becomes even starker. They advance instead an eco-socialist model, where ownership, consumption and production are informed by caring values. In practical terms, this approach takes the form of locally-embedded cooperatives and horizontal alternatives to the neoliberal market. In these final chapters, one of the main limitations of the book becomes more evident and poses some questions: the (undiscussed) situatedness of this vision. While drawing on Indigenous knowledge and practices to offer alternatives to the Western models, the book remains grounded in the Western ways of life and speaks from and to the Western states (taking most of its examples from the UK, USA, Spain and Greece). Perhaps the biggest weakness is in failing to acknowledge this positioning and then unpack the implications of what it means and how we can foster this vision

of care within the existing (and inherently uncaring) structures.

Overall, *The Care Manifesto* is a potent and timely reading, full of inspiration and, arguably, deliberately utopian. Page after page, it engages with such a wealth of relevant and recent literature that often leaves us wanting for more. At times, more background, more details, more data. Nevertheless, the succinctness of this pamphlet could also be its strength. It makes for a thought-provoking, concentrated reading, bringing home the urgent need for these conversations to be had across society.

As museum people, we should take note.

Notes

[1] The Care Collective was formed in 2017, originally as a London-based reading group. Members include Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal. Their disciplinary backgrounds range from marketing to gender studies, American studies, cultural industries and politics.

Works Cited

Byrne, J. et al. (eds) (2018). *The Constituent Museum. Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation: A Generator of Social Change*. Amsterdam, Valiz.

Gilroy, P. (2004). *After Empire – Melancholia or Convivial Culture?.* London, Routledge.

Lynch, B. et al. (eds) (2020). *Museums and Social Change – Challenging the Unhelpful Museum*. London, Routledge.

Morse, N. (2020). *The Museum as a Space of Social Care*. London, Routledge.

Tronto, J. (2013). *Caring Democracy*. New York, NYU Press.

Visual Submission – 'Empathy in the Shadows'

The raking light of the gallery casts gloom across a downturned face. The viewer instinctively feels the figure's despondency, his resignation, his loneliness in a densely crowded room. But this was not his intended impact.

This figure is a plaster cast of a *diadoumenos*, an ancient Greek statue representing a victorious athlete. Tying a makeshift crown at his brow, the original marble figure was meant to convey the glory of attaining the pinnacle of sporting success. Yet the gallery shadows render him utterly transformed: he inspires sympathy instead.

This unique empathetic experience has much to convey about the value of museum reproductions. Casts' values have long been dependent on their connection to their ancient original artefacts: they often function as purely educational tools for archaeology students. However, the emotions felt here, entirely divorced from those imbued in the ancient referent, emphasise casts' intrinsic significance as objects in their own right.

Author:
Abbey L R Ellis

Section V – HEALING MUSEUMS WITHIN

Museum Unions and Social Change: Reopening with Solidarity

Amanda Tobin Ripley

Abstract:

Over the past two years, an explosion of organised labour activity has emerged across the museum industry in the United States. As the museum world adjusts to the 'new normal' of pandemic life, it is essential that workers continue to join forces against the rampant precarity in the cultural sector, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the often-disastrous managerial responses to government shut-downs. Central to the healing of the sector after the trauma of pandemic-related layoffs and furloughs – and critical to the success of museums in the 21st century – is the shift in the self-identification of art museum workers away from the conceptualization of creative labour as removed from 'other' kinds of labour. This psycho-social transition on a mass scale opens the possibility of a movement of 'liberatory unionism' that can work to heal not just the museum sector, but harness worker power in support of intersectional social justice.

Keywords: museum workers, liberatory unionism, precarity

Over the past two years, an explosion of organised labour activity has emerged across the museum industry in the United States. The current unionisation wave started just before the COVID-19 pandemic, arguably with the 2019 establishment of the New Museum Union with Local 2110, a division of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union (Paparella, 2020). The pandemic and its sweeping closures and mass layoffs and furloughs, often of the most vulnerable workers (Moon, 2020), in conjunction with the realisation that museum endowments have emerged unscathed (Knight, 2021) and museum executives' pay has continued to grow, has, however, reinvigorated and expanded union organising activity across the country. Museums have long been a sector that has eschewed organised labour, with a few notable exceptions. Yet in 2020 alone, the Union Membership and Coverage Database estimates that 13% of museums established labour unions (Guarino, 2021); as of this writing, several more museums have filed for an election with the National Labor Relations Board (ibid.) and the workers at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston have implemented a one-day strike on November 17, 2021 (Gerber, 2021).

As the museum world adjusts to the 'new normal' of pandemic life, it is essential that workers

continue to join forces against the rampant precarity in the cultural sector (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Luckman, 2013; Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012; Südkamp and Dempsey, 2021; among others), exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the often-disastrous managerial responses to government shut-downs. Indeed, central to the healing of the sector after the trauma of pandemic-related layoffs and furloughs – and critical to the success of museums in the 21st century – is the shift in the self-identification of art museum workers away from the long-established conceptualization of creative labour as removed from 'other' kinds of labour. This psycho-social transition on a mass scale opens the possibility of greater cross-class solidarity and social change in a movement of 'liberatory unionism' (Livingston, 2021) that can work to heal not just the museum sector, but harness worker power in support of intersectional social justice.

Is Cultural Work Even 'Work'?

Most scholarly attention to labour in the creative sector thus far has focused on the performing arts, particularly in for-profit industries like film and television (Gray and Seeber, 1996; McKinlay and Smith, 2009; Shane, 2013). This may be a result of the longer history of unions in the performing arts, though Gray and Seeber (1996) suggest that the effects of labour disputes in the entertainment industries are more widely felt, given the impact a TV writers' strike may have on the public sphere. Whatever the case, working conditions and experiences within the cultural sector have been 'scandalously ignored' in academia (Gill and Pratt, 2008: 20), leading to a preponderance of stereotypes and cultural myths about creative work and a need for more research into creative labour. This article seeks to contribute to the effort to more fully understand labour conditions within the art museum sector through its focus on the burgeoning union movement therein.

Many of the myths about cultural work are entrenched in societal attitudes towards creativity as an inherent good. Much of this attitude stems from Victorian era socialism, particularly from the works of Arts and Crafts Movement leaders William Morris and John Ruskin (Luckman, 2013; Oakley, 2013; Throsby, 2011). For these two influential thinkers, 'good work' requires engagement and fulfilment, and employers who value their workers as people, not simply as a means to an end, will benefit from greater productivity. These conceptions laid the foundation for a valorization of creative work that is self-actualizing, an ideal 'desired, if not always realized [*sic*], in the contemporary creative economy' (Luckman, 2013: 25). While self-actualising, creative work is inherently fulfilling and ought to be a goal for any industry, this ideology has engendered a complicated dynamic around compensation. Indeed, not only is this attitude useful in justifying low pay - workers are happy to do the work for the work's sake, so employers have little incentive to increase wages - it also establishes a rationale for not paying creative workers at all. Ruskin went so far as to argue that 'an artist who works only for money will produce bad art... [and] the most we need to do to generate great art is to provide artists with just enough money to live on and leave them alone' (Throsby, 2011: 284).

In feeding into the stereotype of the 'starving artist' in this way, Ruskin and others following in his wake have contributed to an idealised separation between cultural production and the marketplace. It is a nice fantasy to think artists could create work independent of capital, but in reality, artistic 'genius' has always been intertwined with market demands, from navigating the personal whims of private, wealthy patrons to the fundamental reality of paying bills in a capitalist society. Furthermore, ignorance of an artist's dependence on an income (whether through wilful exploitation or through romanticisation of the role of the artist) sets up a dangerous situation in which the means of cultural production are only accessible to the elite

classes, with disastrous consequences for democracy (Oakley, 2013). Artists themselves have long been 'put[ing their] exceptionality to work' (W.A.G.E., 2016: para. 6), organising against exploitation and for fair pay. The 'Working Artists and the Greater Economy' (W.A.G.E.) campaign established in 2014, for example, provides certification to non-profits committed to paying artists fair wages; museums have, however, consistently trailed smaller non-profits in participation rates (W.A.G.E., 2017).

While Ruskin explicitly names artists in his conceptualisation of good work, these rationales easily apply to all workers in the creative sector, including museum workers. To Ross (2008), 'it is assumed that creative jobs, by their nature, are not deficient in gratification. If anything, their packaging of mental challenges and sensuous self-immersion is perceived to deliver a surplus of pleasure and satisfaction' (34). Though the rewards of this kind of autonomy and fulfilment may be real, he points to the associated costs rampant in the sector: long hours, low pay, and dispensability. Indeed, the motivation for self-actualisation, combined with what he describes as a 'coping mentality' associated with the starving artist paradigm, has made cultural workers into 'a godsend for managers looking for employees capable of self-discipline under the most extreme job pressure' (ibid.). In other words, in the pursuit of meaningful work, cultural workers accept the financial sacrifice. Gill and Pratt (2008) stress the importance of examining the *un*pleasant affective experiences of work, such as exhaustion, frustration, fear, and competitiveness, alongside personal fulfilment (16). They further highlight the ways in which work overtakes the whole life of the worker, largely facilitated by claims on time; this phenomenon goes beyond the expectation that workers check their emails at all hours to a new approach to leisure that is increasingly bound up with labour, such as producing content for companies like YouTube or using social media sites that leave data trails generating enormous wealth for companies. These conditions, they contend, create:

> 'health hazards of a different kind from the workplace accidents of industrial work: there may be fewer burns and severed limbs, but the injuries of this high-end creative labour include exhaustion, burn-out, alcohol and drug-related problems, premature heart attacks and strokes, and a whole host of mental and emotional disorders related to anxiety and depression...' (18).

This framework suggests that rather than placing the blame of burnout on the individual who just 'isn't working hard enough,' it is necessary to look to the structures and conditions of the workplace itself to identify and address the root causes of these phenomena.

Pay Equity & Radical Transparency

This dynamic of financial and personal sacrifice for the sake of good work raises the barrier of entry to the field for anyone who is not 'otherwise subsidized [*sic*],' i.e., those without access to generational wealth or spousal support (Whitaker, 2021: 257). Gill and Pratt (2008) describe

> 'the preponderance of youthful, able-bodied people in [the creative industries], marked gender inequalities, high levels of educational achievement, complex entanglements of class, nationality, and ethnicity, and ... the relative lack of caring responsibilities undertaken by people involved in this kind of work...' (14).

A 2019 demographic study of art museum educators in the US demonstrates a similar homogeneity among this group of workers, who tend to be White, heterosexual, cisgender women between the ages of 26-40 with spouses but without caretaking responsibilities (Kletchka,

2021). This reality points to the rhetorical hypocrisies of museums, who have increasingly been touting their educational missions as existing for all people – particularly in response to increased public pressure arising after the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020 – while in practice reinforcing racial and class hierarchies in their workforces (Ng and Ware, 2014). Though the creative sector was once hailed as a driver of social equality, not-for-profits sustain and even exacerbate the inequality they purport to address (Banks et al., 2013).

One of the factors in this social ossification is the pervasiveness of unpaid labour within the creative sector, primarily in the form of volunteers and internships. Ross (2013) cites how unpaid internships 'cumulatively provide a $2 billion subsidy to employers in the US alone' and emphasises that

> '[f]inancing an unpaid internship, or a series of them, is usually only within the reach of families with wealth, and so there is a clear class divide opening up between those who can afford to graduate from the unpaid positions into the prestige institutions of cultural workers and those who cannot' (177).

Because of the racial wealth gap in the US, this also means that those who can afford unpaid internships are more likely White, contributing to the racial homogeneity of the field. Südkamp and Dempsey (2021) trace how unpaid internships have become a prerequisite to future employment, as they offer opportunities for networking and demonstrating one's employability, creating a 'cruel paradox' in the field in which paid employment is restricted to those with the economic resources to first contribute unpaid labour (344).

For Moon (2020), the museum field is at a point where it is 'addicted to underpaid and unpaid labour, enabling disproportionately high output while concealing true costs to workers and society' (212). Indeed, as early as the 1960s in the US, there has been a recognition that creative labour subsidises institutional budgets, leading one author to consider workers as de facto 'philanthropists' in contributing their labour for such paltry salaries (Wetenhall, 2019: 89). Though low pay is often considered to be a solution to budgetary pressures in a society where non-profits and cultural organisations are chronically underfunded and receive little government support, Whitaker (2021) highlights three long-term negative consequences of this choice:

> 'lack of inclusion in the workforce of those who work for pay, substantial costs to both productivity and morale in increased turnover, and substantial opportunity cost to the field in that generalists will have too high an incentive to leave the arts to work in other fields, reinforcing the arts as a bastion of specialists despite museum missions touting access by the general public' (255).

She continues, 'It is key to empathetic leadership in museums to be able to see this invisible cost to the field and to imagine fully what is lost' (258). Indeed, some of these longer-term costs are beginning to manifest in widespread vacancies and turnover, as the 'great museum exodus' sees continued resignations from museum workers across departments (Byrd-McDevitt, 2021), leading to the untenable situation in which fewer workers remain to do even more work for the same low levels of pay.

One of the first collective movements to combat systemic low pay across the field was the Art+Museum Transparency spreadsheet,[1] a crowd-sourced social media campaign that emerged in 2019 and invited museum workers to share their salary information publicly (with a range of options for anonymity to protect workers from retribution). Südkamp and Dempsey (2021) describe this effort as an example of 'resistant transparency,' which they define as 'a strategic communication practice

involving navigating between the visibility of, and control over, wage and employment information, collection, and distribution' (359). In other words, the organisers behind the Art+Museum Transparency campaign wielded salary transparency in a way that protected the identities of those who contributed to the data set while simultaneously enabling public scrutiny of the pervasive low and/or inconsistent wages across the sector. The concurrent social media campaign used Twitter as a platform to call for direct accountability, often tagging museums directly in posts advocating for paying interns a living wage, for example. The spreadsheet and the discourse around it, both on social media and elsewhere, galvanised many museum workers to begin unionisation efforts (Paparella, 2020).

The Rise of the 'Precariat'

Low wages are not the only aspect of cultural sector labour driving workers to unionise, however. Much of the collective organising is also in response to rising precarity within (though not exclusive to) the sector, in which work is characterised by 'a preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of creative labourer (e.g. web designer, artist, fashion designer); an attitudinal mindset that is a blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and "keeping up" in rapidly changing fields...' (Gill and Pratt, 2008: 14).

Ross (2008) traces the way precarity, a longstanding feature of low-wage labour in the service sectors, has begun to characterise professional, high-wage industries as well, with the rise of late capitalism. Precarity has become so embedded in the creative sector that Gill and Pratt (2008) suggest that creative industries adopt the term *precariat*, 'a neologism that brings together the meanings of precariousness and proletariat to signify both an experience of exploitation and a (potential) new political subjectivity' (3). They further describe how many of the working conditions of the precariat, such as freelancing or casualized employment, place workers outside the traditional protections of a labour union, even if a union existed. Whitaker (2021) details art museums' reliance on this kind of contingent labour, citing research into the prevalence of part-time contracts for educators and other museum workers, with a total of 'roughly one third of [US] art museum workers in non-permanent employment contracts' (259).

Ross (2008), however, cautions against remedies for precarity that advocate for a return to former employment and compensation models, in which a single-family wage for a (male) breadwinner depended on unpaid (female) labour in the home. Murray and Gollmizter (2012) argue for labour organising to seek greater protections and security that maintains enough flexibility to permit creative pursuits. Luckman (2013), on the other hand, advocates a return to the guild model of worker associations to protect against the increased individualism that contract gig labour engenders. Guild associations allow creative workers to maintain autonomy, if they so choose, while still leveraging collective power against exploitation. Though the labour unions emerging in the museum field are each connected to a single employer, the guild model (or independent actors' and stagehands' unions) could serve as examples for future organising that would offer protections to all museum workers, whether long-term or contract workers.

Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Museum Workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shut-downs have been an undeniable shock to the already precarious creative sector, exacerbating

the dismal working conditions so pervasive in art museums. Researchers estimated that the pandemic cost the creative sector 'an estimated 2.7 million jobs and more than $150 billion in sales of goods and services, amounting to nearly a third of creative-industry jobs and almost 10% of annual sales. Creative occupations are estimated to lose more than 2.3 million jobs and $74 billion in average monthly earnings, representing 30% of the industry's jobs and 15% of its total average monthly wages' (Florida and Seman, 2020: 21).

A report from the American Alliance of Museums foretold a bleak future for museums, estimating that up to one third of museums would close permanently, and that 53% of museums took the drastic measures of laying off or furloughing staff in response to anticipated budget deficits (American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting, 2020). As Antar et al. (2020) point out, the majority of those affected by the layoffs were museum workers of colour and front-line staff, as museums' 'financial responses to the crisis have continued to prioritize [*sic*] dependence on capital over the value and dignity of workers' (para. 19).

The fact of layoffs and furloughs itself can be difficult enough, but Moon (2020) also documents the dehumanising and disorganised communications about such layoffs, ranging from workers receiving termination notice via group text to front-line staff receiving emails while full-time staff received personal phone calls from leadership. These accounts, though anecdotal, point to what Moon describes as 'a crisis of management across the field' (198) and indicate deep breaches of trust among a workforce that museums are attempting to now rehire upon reopening to the public. In the US, Museum Workers Speak, an activist collective founded in 2015 to address internal issues of equity and social change, stepped up to fill the void that institutions created in abandoning their workers. In declaring: 'when our institutions will not stand in solidarity with us, we must stand in solidarity with each other' (Antal et al., 2020: para. 4), Museum Workers Speak created a mutual aid fund for museum workers who suddenly found themselves unemployed during a global pandemic, raising over $70,000 to distribute to vulnerable workers and further building organising momentum in workers across the sector.

Social Construction Theory and the Creative Worker

These examples of recent labour activity across the museum field imply a growing sense of worker solidarity that may challenge and transform many of the assumptions about cultural work that lead to systemic precarity and low pay. This shift in the social construction of the creative worker, connected to participation in museum unions, has the potential to support revitalisation, healing, and increased public relevance within the field. Schneider and Ingram (1993) define social construction as: 'the cultural characterizations or popular images of the persons or groups whose behavior and well-being are affected by public policy. These characterizations are normative and evaluative, portraying groups in positive or negative terms through symbolic language, metaphors, and stories' [*sic*] (334).

As demonstrated above, one of the most pervasive social constructions of creative workers is the archetype of the 'starving artist,' whose personal and financial sacrifices in the name of art have become widely fetishized and used as an excuse to legitimise non-existent or poverty wages. Richard Florida's (2002) influential research on the 'Creative Class' offers another, related social construction of workers united in shared values of individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness (79). Peck (2005), however, criticises Florida's emphasis on creative meritocracy as 'essentially... libertarian,' in its inattention to inequality, working poverty, and the need for government social welfare programs and labour unions (757).

Because it is workers driving social change in labour conditions in museums, particular attention needs to be paid to the social constructions they hold of themselves. As previously described, fulfilment and self-actualisation are real motivations for working in the cultural sector, thus 'the *meanings* which cultural workers give to this should be central...' (Gill and Pratt, 2008: 18, emphasis in the original). To this end, Townsend (2000) conducted a survey of opera administrative workers and for-profit administrative workers to determine what differences exist between their motivators. The data indicate that arts workers differ from for-profit workers in placing a higher value on social good, and that they are significantly less satisfied (and actively dissatisfied) with rates of pay. Townsend continues: 'Of equal significance is the demonstration that there are no differences between samples in individuals' needs for personal development, their value of money, and the importance they attach to work, relative to other activities in their lives' (430). He reports that arts workers report equal job satisfaction, even though they are dissatisfied with pay, meaning there is something else offsetting that dissatisfaction, which the author posits is the social good factor. Additional research is needed to determine whether this holds true twenty years later; rising activism and mass resignations indicate that the social good factor may no longer be enough to compensate for poverty wages.

The widespread conception of creative work as 'good work', or art work as special, has also perpetuated a classist hierarchy (Toynbee, 2013). Most art museum workers are first-time union members, given that the field has had such low rates of unionisation for most of its history. Many museum workers also conceive of labour unions as existing only 'for coal miners' (Kopel, 2021: para. 7) and employees in blue-collar industries, internalising a hierarchy of labour that prevented many from even exploring unionisation as a legitimate option. In a series of interviews with recently unionised employees at the Tenement Museum in New York City, one worker describes this shift:

> 'I'd been teaching labor history, but I'd never been in a union. I'd never formed a union. I didn't know that much about how they worked in a twenty-first century context.... [U]nionization is...something that we're doing because we are workers in a workplace who have rights. And so, I think realizing that and being able to communicate that was, in some ways, the most important part of what we were doing in our union' [*sic*] (cited in Urban, 2021: 90).

Embracing the identity of 'worker,' therefore, has been critical in establishing and activating union membership. As the unionisation wave grows, this shift in self-identity foretells a growing class consciousness and social mobilisation within the museum sector.

Liberatory Unionism

The implications in such a framework shift are enormous, for the working class within creative industries and the efficacy of larger social movements towards equity and justice. Schneider and Ingram (1993) argue that social constructions can have implications for citizenship, as policies send messages that may affect groups' participation in democracy. The potential of creative workers embracing a 'liberatory unionism' (Livingston, 2021) in which their self-conceptualisation as workers is inherently connected to broader social struggles for racial equity, decolonisation, and more, could energize these movements and build greater cross-class and interracial coalitions. In labour history, this conception of liberatory unionism is related to earlier theories of Social Movement Unionism (SMU) from the 1980s and 1990s, in which 'The economic and social structure is seen as determined by political struggle; classes as shaped and re-shaped through struggle; all

struggles are understood as political struggles; the problem is seen — simultaneously — as the interlocked and interdependent structures of capital, state, patriarchy, imperialism, and racism; the end is not the grasping of state power and the nationalization [*sic*] of the commanding heights of the economy, but the overcoming of exploitation and domination throughout society...' (Waterman, 1993: 253).

SMU conceives of organising as beyond the traditional manager-worker collective bargaining relationship to connect with activist neighbourhood and community organisations, using a class lens in social struggles to leverage collective worker power in support of those who are vulnerable and oppressed (Devinatz, 2008). Not only does this social movement orientation help address social struggles, the relationship is reciprocal: linking issues of work to larger social concerns can help build organising momentum among a populace increasingly unfamiliar with labour unions but perhaps active in other social justice efforts. Says Devinatz (2008), '...SMU has provided U.S. institutions with the needed ammunition, so they at least have a fighting chance in an environment that has been increasingly hostile to unions for more than a quarter of a century' (210).

In Scottish labour writer Eve Livingston's conceptualization of liberatory unionism, active participation in unions is *the* critical factor social movements must harness to address other systemic oppressions (Kinniburgh, 2021). This is also a unionism that reckons with the exclusive, White-centric history of the labour movement and its reduction of all oppression to class, and 'accounts for the ways in which our class and material circumstances are reinforced and reproduced through, for example, our gender, race, sexuality or disability' (Livingston, 2021: 60). Liberatory unionism instead acknowledges the limitations of a singular focus on class, and works to build an intersectional coalition of workers fighting against many forms of oppression.

Several aspects of contemporary working conditions can be the foundation for building a shared solidarity towards social justice goals. The first is the common experience of precarity; the fact that 'cultural workers [are] one among other groups of vulnerable workers across economic sectors' (Murray & Gollmitzer 2012: 428) means that cultural worker organising can find common ground with anti-poverty initiatives seeking living wages, insurance, disability benefits, and family leave. Gill and Pratt (2008) cite theorist's Judith Butler's conception of a 'precarious life' in the recognition that precarity in the 21st century encompasses not only work but 'a variety of struggles, including those relating to migration, citizenship, LBGT and feminist movements' (10), all of which might be bridging opportunities. Ross (2013) stresses that the student debt crisis may be another rallying point, as the creative sector requires 'a debt-financed degree as an entry credential' (177) or even graduate degree(s) contributing to further debt. Furthermore, there is increasing recognition that cultural work is not immaterial, as frequently posited, but intricately bound in webs of production and consumption in which workers in non-profit arts organisations that exist for the public good are reliant on exploitative labour systems that produce the technologies upon which we are all increasingly dependent (Neislon, 2013; Maxwell and Miller, 2013).

Gill and Pratt (2008) question whether a true solidarity can be found among precarious workers with varying levels of social and cultural capital, and Ross (2008) admits that '[a cross-class coalition] is easier to imagine on paper as a theoretically plausible construct than as a flesh-and-blood coalition in broad agreement on strategies and goals' (41). He does, however, point to historical examples in which creative workers have joined forces with other workers, such as the 2008 'Hollywood to the Docks' initiative in which actors participated in a 28-mile march alongside janitors and longshoremen. Furthermore, active union membership has been found to diminish racism among White workers

and foster multiracial solidarity (Day, 2020). The fact that museums have been establishing wall-to-wall unions, in which all eligible[2] workers are included whether in custodial or curatorial departments, is an indication of their ability to work together towards a common cause, though more research is needed to better understand the interpersonal and power dynamics within those relationships. Initial findings from Urban (2021) supports the conception that unionisation has helped build solidarity across class and racial divides, saying: 'Workers at the Tenement Museum see collective bargaining rights as a tool to help mitigate the class and racial privileges that limit workers' entry into, and ability to stay in, jobs at the museum' (83). American arts labour writer and former member of the New Museum Union, Dana Kopel (2021) summarises the sentiment among many museum workers who see their struggle as united with the labour organisers at Amazon or Starbucks: 'the changes being pushed for in art institutions – equitable compensation, an end to white supremacy, giving all workers a say in the conditions of their labor [*sic*] – are intrinsically connected to larger processes and global injustices' (para. 7). Focusing on and growing these interconnections among sectors considered blue collar and those considered white collar gives meaning to the labour rallying cry of 'solidarity.' Faine (1972) and Whitaker (2021) even point to the transformative potential of management joining in solidarity with their unionised workers to more collectively work towards raising wages, meeting the common goals of reducing burnout and turnover and increasing employee wellbeing.

The stakes are high for this paradigmatic shift. Museum workers are increasingly disillusioned with the field, at the same time as a growing body of research points to the transformative power of arts engagement (Armstrong et al., 2021; Dewhurst, 2018; Murawski, 2021, among others). Recruiting and retaining a qualified, committed body of workers is, therefore, critical not only for the success of the field but for larger humanistic aims of promoting the kinds of personal and intercultural healing museums can support. To do so, museum workers must continue to embrace their identities as arts *workers,* while museum leaders need to embrace the unionisation movement and implement policies of shared leadership, transparency, and accountability to rebuild institutions based on trust and common cause. Whitaker (2021) advises that 'to actually listen to protests and unions — to discover "we" stories that include them rightfully as vital stakeholders in museums — is to avoid existential risks that may not be reversible' (263). Museums can and should contribute towards collective empowerment. As museum workers continue to establish wall-to-wall labour unions across the country, their growing cross-class and interracial solidarity may have transformative effects for social welfare and democracy and enabling museums to live up to their status as not-for-profits by furthering the public good.

Notes

[1] The Art+Museum Transparency spreadsheet can be accessed via their website at: https://www.artandmuseumtransparency.org/spreadsheets

[2] Labour law precedent in the US prohibits museum security guards from joining the same union as other museum staff members because some may have (current or historical) connections to police departments and their unions. All other workers who are not designated as managers are eligible.

Works Cited

American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting. (2020). *National snapshot of COVID-19 impact on United States museums* [PowerPoint slides]. https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AAMCOVID-19SnapshotSurvey-1. pdf

Antar, A., Greenberg, A., Fernandez, G., Heller, H., and Swisher, K. (2020). 'Mutual aid and organizing for museum workers in crisis.' *Viewfinder: Reflecting on Museum Education,* (12), 11 September [online]. Available at: https://medium.com/viewfinder-reflecting-on-museum-education/mutual-aid-and-organiz ing-for-museum-workers-in-crisis-c91162eee6c5 (Accessed: 15 November 2021).

Armstrong, J., Evans, L., Legari, S., Ostheimer, R.T., Palamara, A., and Wiskera, E. (2021). 'Weaving trauma awareness into museum education.' *Journal of Museum Education* 46 (4): 454-466.

Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (2013). 'Introduction' in Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.) *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 1-16.

Byrd-McDevitt, L. (2021). 'The great museum exodus,' Lori Byrd-McDevitt, 30 August [online]. Available at: https://lorileebyrd.medium.com/the-great-museum-exodus-b3bc1b899621 (Accessed 17 September 2021).

Day, M. (2020). 'Unions are essential for eliminating racism.' *Jacobin*, 7 July [online]. Available at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/07/multirac ial-solidarity-unions (Accessed: 16 November 2021).

Devinatz, V.G. (2008) 'Social-movement unionism and U.S. labor's uncertain future.' *Journal of Collective Negotiations,* 32(3): 203-213.

Dewhurst, M. (2018). *Teachers Bridging Difference: Exploring Identity with Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Faine, H. (1972). 'Unions and the arts.' *The American Economic Review,* 62(1/2): 70-77.

Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. and Seman, M. (2020). 'Lost art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy.*' Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings* [online]. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/20200810_Brookings metro_Cov id19-and-creative-economy_Final.pdf (Accessed 7 November 2021)

Gerber, D. (2021). 'MFA workers stage one-day strike, demanding better wages, benefits.' *The Boston Globe,* 17 November [online]. Available at: https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/11/17/arts /mfa-workers-stage-one-day-strike-demand ing-better-wages-benefits/ (Accessed 15 November 2021).

Gill, R. and Pratt, A. (2008). 'In the social factory? Immaterial labor, precariousness and cultural work.' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7-8): 1-30.

Gray, L. and Seeber, R. (eds.) (1996). *Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Arts and Entertainment*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Gray, L. and Seeber, R. (1996). 'Introduction' in Gray, L.S. and Seeber, R.L. (eds.) *Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Arts and Entertainment*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, pp. 1-14.

Guarino, M. (2021). '"We are in crisis mode": Museum workers are turning to unions over conditions they say are untenable.' *Washington Post,* 4 November [online]. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainmen t/museums/museums-workers-unionizing/ 2021/11/03/d4655ee8-2863-11ec-9de8-156fed3e81bf_story.html (Accessed: 15 November 2021).

Kinniburgh, C. (Executive Producer). (2021). 'Toward a liberatory unionism, with Eve Livingston' [Audio podcast episode], in *Belabored*, Dissent Magazine, 8 October [online]. Available

at: https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/belabored-make-bosses-pay-eve-livingston (Accessed 10 October 2021).

Kletchka, D.C. (2021). 'Art museum educators: Who are they *now*?' *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 64(1): 79-97.

Knight, C. (2021). 'Commentary: Art Museum endowments soared in the pandemic. So why sell art to pay the bills?' *Los Angeles Times,* 8 June [online]. Available at: https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-06-08/art-museums-endowments-covid-pandemic-dividend (Accessed: 10 June 2021).

Kopel, D. (2021). 'Putting in the work.' Texte Zur Kunst, 3 March [online]. Available at: https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/dana-kopel-putting-work/ (Accessed 3 March 2021).

Livingston, E. (2021). *Make Bosses Pay: Why We Need Unions*. London: Pluto Press.

Luckman, S. (2013). 'Precarious labour then and now: The British Arts and Crafts Movement and cultural work revisited.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.) *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 19-29.

Maxwell, R. and Miller, T. (2013). 'Learning from Luddites: Media labour, technology and life below the line.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.) *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 113-121.

McKinlay, A. and Smith, C. (eds.). (2009). *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*. London: Red Globe Press.

Moon, M. (2020). 'Retooling for the revolution: Framing the future of museum management after COVID-19.' *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy* (2): 193-219.

Murawski, M. (2021). *Museums as Agents of Change: A Guide to Becoming a Changemaker*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, & London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Murray, C. and Gollmitzer, M. (2012). 'Escaping the precarity trap: A call for creative labour policy.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 18(4): 419-438.

Neilson, B. (2013). 'Logistics of cultural work.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.), *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 99-112.

Ng, W., and Ware, S. M. (2014). 'Excellence and equity?' In Acuff, J. B. and Evans, L. (eds.), *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today.* Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 37–58.

Oakley, K. (2013). 'Absentee workers: Representation and participation in the cultural industries.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.), *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 56-68.

Paparella, M. (2020). 'The museum union wave.' Art Papers [online]. Available at: https://www.artpapers.org/the-museum-union-wave/ (Accessed 1 November 2021)

Peck, J. (2005). 'Struggling with the creative class.' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29(4): 740-770.

Ross, A. (2008). 'The new geography of work: Power to the precarious?' *Theory, Culture and Society* 25(7-8): 31-49.

Ross, A. (2013). 'Theorizing cultural work: An interview with the editors.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.), *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 175-182.

Schneider, A. & Ingram, H. (1993). 'Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy.' *The American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334-347.

Shane, R. (2013). 'Resurgence or deterioration? The state of cultural unions in the 21st century.' *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 43(3): 139-152.

Südkamp, C.M. and Dempsey, S.E. (2021). 'Resistant transparency and nonprofit labor: Challenging precarity in the Art + Museum wage transparency campaign.' *Management Communication Quarterly* 35(3): 341-367.

Throsby, D. (2011). '*The Political Economy of Art*: Ruskin and contemporary cultural economics.' *History of Political Economy* 43(2): 275-294.

Townsend, A.M. (2000). 'An exploratory study of administrative workers in the arts: Are they really different from for-profit workers?' *Public Personnel Management* 29(3): 423-434.

Toynbee, J. (2013). 'How special? Cultural work, copyright, politics.' In Banks, M., Gill, R., and Taylor, S. (eds.), *Theorizing Cultural Work: Labour, Continuity and Change in Cultural and Creative Industries*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 85-98.

Urban, A. with Fulton, R.E., Reid, E., Wait, J., and Walber, D. (2021). '"We are workers in a workplace who have rights": Unionization, COVID-19, and the place of labor at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.' *The Public Historian* 43(2): 81-102.

W.A.G.E. (2016). 'How to fix the art world, Part 1.' *ArtNews*, 18 November [online]. Available at: https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/how-to-fix-the-art-world-part-1-7335/#wage (Accessed 14 January 2022).

W.A.G.E. (2017). 'Why labor now.' 13 February [online]. Available at: https://us5.campaign-archive.com/?u=0357b89afaea8d97ebecac258&id=7e0ebeaec5 (Accessed 14 January 2022).

Waterman, P. (1993). 'Social-movement unionism: A new union model for a new world order?' *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 15(3): 245-278.

Wetenhall, J. (2019). 'Counter-intuitions for museum compensation.' In Salerno, D.E., Gold, M.S., and Durocher, K.L. (eds.), *For Love or Money: Confronting the State of Museum Salaries*. Edinburgh and Boston: MuseumsEtc, pp. 70-89.

Whitaker, A. (2021). 'Reconsidering people as the institution: Empathy, pay equity, and deaccessioning as key leadership strategies in art museums.' *Curator: The Museum Journal* 64(2): 253-267.

School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester
19 University Road
Leicester, LE1 7RF, UK

email: museologicalreview@leicester.ac.uk
website: www.le.ac.uk/museological-review