English Version

Editorial Note

Museopathies is a compilation of texts by Fernando Estévez about museology and heritage, two of the fields that he emphasized as an anthropologist. Published in magazines, exhibition catalogs and collectively authored books, or written to be read as presentations, they are reproduced here in the chronological order of their appearance, from 1999 to 2015. As editors we have considered it necessary to also add an appendix that we have written, which includes brief descriptions of some of the exhibitions curated by Estévez that have a reflexive affinity with his textual contributions. That is because his intellectual production was never limited to the field of academic essays, since he thought that many of his concerns should be presented in the visual, spatial, and objectual format of a museum exhibition. But both, essay and exhibition, feed off one another throughout his trajectory in such a way that speculations that first took on a textual form were later prolonged into displays, and,

conversely, based on a few exhibitions, the author started to turn over questions whose consideration would be continued in his writings.

We want to express our gratitude to the Autonomous Organization of Museums and Centers of the Cabildo of Tenerife for their kind cession of the images that illustrate this publication; to the personnel of the Museum of History and Anthropology of Tenerife, for their crucial contribution to the museum projects directed by Fernando Estévez; to the colleagues and accomplices of the University of La Laguna, whose breath permeates these pages; to Anthony Shelton, international leader in critical museology, for agreeing to write the prologue to this book and for the analytical depth deployed in it; and, finally to the César Manrique Foundation, since, once again, we can see how comforting it is to work with an institution with such high standards of excellence and exquisiteness.

The Editors

Prologue

Anthony Alan Shelton

Time, Fictions and Heterotopias. The Critical Museology of Fernando Estévez González

Anthony Alan Shelton

> *El museo, esa heterotopía, ese lugar en el que se yuxtaponen múltiples espacios, tanto afirma como niega la sociedad de consumo, un lugar donde el sentido burgués de tiempo monumental se construye sobre esas ruinas, sobre esos desechos de la sociedad de consumo.*
>
> (Estévez, [2011] 2019: 294)

Uncompromising, original, and startlingly lucid, Fernando Estévez González's writings and exhibitions are a cornerstone of critical museology. The interpretive apparatus that emerges from the tense juxtapositions and alternations between his theoretical writings and curatorial practices creates an intellectual / visual praxis that spark profound reflections, illuminate unexpected political and cultural alignments, and create visions about what

museums could become. Textual and visual languages each possess their own qualities and capacities that disclose varied aspects of a problem, condition or what Estévez, following Stephen Bann, refers to as "regimes of curiosity". When juxtaposed together, objects, images and texts – exhibitions and writings – often produce multifaceted and unpredictable dialogues that for Estévez, mutually invigorate both theory and practice ([1999] 2019: 250). His work is characterised by its direct, forceful and profound statements. In one article which opens with the statement: "El pasado está en todas partes", he entreats us intellectually to reconsider accepted views of the temporal texture of everyday reality, but then goes further through the related exhibition, *El pasado en el presente* (Museo de Antropología de Tenerife, Casa de Carta, 2001), to give us the tool which, in this case using the metaphor of building processes and materials, helps us further push our understanding of the social construction of historical consciousness. Similarly, his later exhibition, *Mar de arena de mar* (Casa de los Coroneles, Fuerteventura, 2013), designed as a series of installations based on the formlessness and liquidity of sand and water, was intended to express the indeterminate nature of contemporary identity to encourage us to consider the transformation and erosion of the integrity of the categories of 'native', 'tourist' and 'immigrant' in the Canary Islands and by extension everywhere. Exhibitions for Estévez serve as powerfully evocative metaphors through which to extend critical consciousness to better understand the nature of the world which immerses us. If, as he affirms, neither individual or collective identity can be sustained independent of material anchors, then critical practice provides the means to rethink the foundations of everyday knowledge and reconstitute it anew. Far from reproducing a repetitive codification of established theoretical position, his exhibitions concoct fresh, often jarring relations that suggest new, fragile and unstable alternate and

changing networks and conjunctions of meanings that tirelessly thrust their implications forward ensuring the mobilization of a dynamic and progressive methodology. Nevertheless, for curatorial practice to avoid becoming itself a simulacrum, it must insinuate an uncompromising intervention and interrogation of the world, which bears immediacy, relevance and clarity. Despite their museological importance, he curates exhibitions for a popular audience. His purpose is to entice the curiosity of ordinary people and provide them a tool to interrogate the 'reality' that other museums too often reproduce and legitimate to obfuscate the disturbing social relations underlying the political economy of commodity production that expands to fill a social abyss vacated by metaphysics, religion and politics. I am struck time and time again by the similarities between Estévez's work and that of Jean Baudrillard, John Berger and the parallel simultaneous worlds imagined by the Japanese author, Haruki Murakami, in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, for example. Estévez's critique of museums, heritage and the contemporary world, perfectly affirms Berger's belief that: "Between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the public narratives being offered to give a sense to that life, the empty space, the gap, is enormous" (2001: 176). For Estévez, museums and museologized spaces deny the gap and try to convince us of society's meaningfulness. Nevertheless, as Berger sees the potential of art to disrupt the vacuous familiarity of the world through the sudden intersection of alternative visible orders, Estévez places his optimism to decloak these sinister misrepresentations in a specific type of curatorial practice. As Berger reminds us: "Our customary visible order is not the only one: it coexists with other orders" (2001: 5). For both writers, unruly visual systems and critical curation offer ways of reawakening our consciousness to alternative world orders.

Along with Jacques Hainard, Olivier Gonseth, Mary Bouquet, Nuno Porto, Boris Wastiau, and Klaus Schneider and Jutta Engelhard, Estévez's work has contributed enormously towards a critical museology whose essential vitality comes from the interaction of theory and practice. However, unlike the work of Hainard and his Neuchâtel equip which adopts critical theory and especially deconstruction as an important part of their curatorial methodology, Estévez relies more on a Marxist approach to understanding the expansion of capitalist commodification, consumerism and the retrenchment of local identity politics and its partial dependence on international governmental institutions and established academic divisions of knowledge. Moreover, to avoid accepting and mechanically repeating established curatorial genres and museological practices, he refashioned the Museo de Antropología de Tenerife into a laboratory for visual experimentation, or less grandly to use his own trope, a kitchen where he and his small equip of researchers interrogated and tested museological orthodoxies and established a counter body of exhibition genres and texts. Taking the Canary Islands as a concrete area of field studies, he provides insights into how politics intercede and direct museum policy and reciprocally how museums and their intendent disciplines legitimate politics to create a common phantasmagoria that insinuates itself between common understanding and experience. This grounded museology questions the articulation of cosmopolitanism and provincialism; universalism and cultural and historical specificity, and the ways these different perspectives are mobilized and mediated by political interests and market priorities. Estévez has produced a consistent body of curatorial work that more than anyone else, exposes the strategies, intellectual ellipses and misrepresentations that increasingly form part of the weaponization of culture. This brief introduction and appreciation of his written and curatorial work will limit itself to six themes which are

central to understanding his thought and crucial to the contemporary study of museums: naturalization and neutralization; politics and the senses; amnesia, memory and recollection; tangible and intangible culture; the end of history, and positionality.

I. Naturalization and Neutralization

Estévez positioned the last work in this collection of essays with a characteristically provocative and in some senses ambiguous challenge to his readers: "Los museos, a pesar de que son instituciones dedicadas al pasado, siempre han tenido una gran preocupación por su futuro" (2019: 341), before insisting that despite their claims to the contrary, museums do not preserve the past as it was, but from their own changing perspectives of the present. Referencing Benedict Anderson (1983), he agrees that museums together with maps and censuses are one of the three technologies that shape contemporary consciousness. Far from them being anachronistic, he refers to them as being fundamental to modernity. Museums, by legitimating their authority using supposedly scientific criteria; accepting the established division of academic knowledges, and insisting on their political neutrality and economic disinterestedness, sanctify themselves as the purveyors of objective knowledge. They provide the visible, potentially encyclopedic source and media for the representation of authenticity, while guaranteeing a measure by which commodities circulated, consumed and converted into domestic and personal wares and products can commonly be valued. The museum's occulted, but nevertheless intimate relationship to the marketing and consumption of commodities, permits its authority to insinuate its perfected naturalism into the whole system of capitalist

relations making them appear natural and inevitable and therefore effective, acceptable and even beneficial. The objects behind the museum's walls have been removed from the everyday exchange economy and their commodity value and the sets of social relations which produced them have been supressed and substituted for another that depends on abstracted, different and arcane tutored sensibilities. The arrangement of galleries that divides times, places and types; the circulation of visitors, the separation and relations between storage, study, programming and exhibition areas all follow what was until recently an unchallenged and anticipated order that affirms the timeless, stable and essentialized world that obscures the museum's essential purpose to classify, distinguish and naturalize the existence of the relations between people and things. Estévez recognizes the paradox that despite nearly half a century of challenges and crises, museums in the past twenty years have more than doubled in number and now attract larger audiences than at any time in their history. Their success is dwarfed only by the accelerated museumification of vast spaces of the contemporary world that impinge on our daily lives. Museumification, like 'Disneyfication' and 'Macdonaldization' are usually inexact euphemisms, but Estévez, while using them interchangeably, clearly relates both to describe trends towards organizational standardization, economic optimization, and the homogenization of exhibitions to reflect market demands. Museumification conveys the change from an older experience of the uniformity of space to one, dating from the post-War years, in which there is a growing institutionalized differentiation between the familiar mundane world of work and family to one in which places are put aside for leisure and its increasing identification with extraordinary experiences that have often been culled from the extrapolation of the past into the present. Increasingly, the preservation, reconstruction and conservation of the past, often identified with the spirit of the nation to

constitute cultural patrimony, is becoming indistinguishable from market driven cultural organizations (theme parks, displays of curiosities, fairs and circuses). Commercial experiences and museums not only increasingly share common organizational and financial models, but uncritically adopt a similar vocabulary where museum directors become C.E.Os and arts organizations become 'industries'. Despite them blending more closely together, natural, rural and industrial patrimonial spaces market themselves through their appeal to be different from the everyday; to be entertaining and educational; curious and relevant, and remote but convenient. Set apart as enclaves, museumified spaces possess their own distinct values which prescribe their own rules of comportment, attitudes and sensibilities from those that are employed in the spaces that surround them. For Estévez, museumification increasingly removes terrain from the contemporary working world into redundant spaces governed by non-chronological types of time where the past erupts to become part of the present, where consumption is made to appear subordinated to contemplation or experience, and historical spectacle is offered to supplant the alienation and inauthenticity commonly associated with modernity. Baudrillard describes the condition well: "The social void is scattered with interstitial objects and crystalline clusters which spin around and coalesce in a cerebral chiaroscuro. (Asking) So is the mass, an in vacuo aggregation of individual particles, refuse of the social and of media impulses: an opaque nebula whose growing density absorbs all the surrounding energy and light rays, to collapse finally under its own weight. A black hole which engulfs the social" (1983: 3-4). The management of museums, like that of monuments, national parks and national sports teams, or the organizations that ascribe national character to art schools, literary movements, architectural styles and even gastronomy, are crucial in articulating and naturalizing this network of

space / time interchanges to provide the illusion and reassurance of historical continuity, stability and meaningfulness. Estévez unmasks the chimeras of the simulacra that surrounds us to demonstrate how, despite its appearance to the contrary, patrimonial space is dependent on the everyday space of consumption and modernity. Although offering itself as the antidote to the alienation experienced in modernity and claiming to be a substitute to the inauthentic and mass-produced world around it, museums and museumified spaces depend entirely on them. Museums and museumified spaces are products of the markets attempts to expand its fundamental set of social relations to new zones of production and consumption, and like in other parts of the economy, they depend on modern science, technology, information systems and business operations for their construction, maintenance, conservation, and management. The different 'taste' they pretend to generate and preserve that promises a refuge from the modern, stimulates a large developing and globalized service industry of restoration and reconstruction, craftwork and mass-produced copies and imitations of museum objects; interpretive guides, illustrated books, DVD's, and immersive cultural tours and excursions that promise to disseminate the strengths and values of the past to reinvigorate the everyday. Even neo-medieval and cyber-punk video games, crossplay, and fashion freely invoke the past as an adventure in the present, while critics freely compare electronic experiences to certain exhibition genres. So, blurred has the distinction between the factualized past and its free interpretation become that it is increasingly difficult for many non-experts to distinguish between them as well as between the authority of history and the fantasies of marketing. Exhibitions, like the sites of patrimony, increasingly promise visual experiences whose perfection exceeds that of the original, obscuring their artificial concoction and their abstraction and suspension in an ecology that is completely foreign

to the social relations, organizational structure, technical knowledges or economic system from which museum objects were made. Although heritage institutions pretend to be the product of disinterested science and commitment to authenticity, their purpose to convert experience into marketable commodities, make them progressively unsympathetic to real history, while the persuasive power of the simulacra they produce make it increasingly difficult for their consumers to distinguish between the two. This is a reality kept alive only by machines, science and the logic of the market.

Museums in Estévez's work are institutions every bit as dark and sinister as the manipulators of the matrix in the Wachowski sisters' film trilogy, *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) and *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003). Cybertechnology and museums draw upon similar narratives to generate and maintain a simulacrum that hide the conditions and relations underlying our existence and experience of the real world, to obfuscate the unequal economic and political relations that sustain it. Everywhere, Estévez observes, is gradually being turned into patrimony by extending commodification from the material world to the world of intangible cultural heritage, the experiential world where authenticity claims to be able to satiate the desires that remain unquenched by materialism. We are at the cuff of a new reality, a new simulacrum in which heritage and the appeal to the past is surreptitiously replacing the industrial world and beguiling us with false promises. The body becomes rethought as a machine and the future as a cyborg reality (Estévez, 2004: 23-24). By naturalizing the social and economic relations that support it, museums and heritage render the conditions underlying this new stage of capitalism invisible. Through the compulsiveness of their narratives and the increasing realism of their presentations they diminish, disparage,

ignore or contradict all alternate social relations and metaphysical beliefs, neutralizing everything that might contradict or challenge their hegemony. Estévez applies and develops Guy Debord's characterization of the society of the spectacle by tracing unfailingly the new set of social relations that support and reproduce new visual regimes and their effect in producing a false consciousness of the world. Similarly, his focus on institutions and exhibitions grounds earlier descriptions and analyses of simulacra such as those of Umberto Eco in *Journey in Hyperreality* (1986) and Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995), by describing the social institutions and their mechanisms and strategies that produce and legitimate them. The essays collected together here propose and demonstrate a curatorial methodology, backed-up by Estévez's theoretical writings, to decloak the world and reveal the way it has been constructed.

II. Politics and the Senses

Museum scholarship has uncritically accepted its division into the 'politics' and 'poetics' of representation without considering the impact of depoliticization on its analytical credibility.

If museums have been analysed through two different approaches, poetics that deconstruct their exhibitionary regimes and political analysis which reveal the systems of prestige, power, and economic relations that link them to their wider societies, Estévez aims to reconcile and bring them together as one. Before discussing this further, we might consider substituting the focus on poetics for one on the senses. Because of its connotative qualities, it is not poetics that first lends itself to political manipulation, but the direction of the senses through their evocation of sensibilities,

which are the real target of market attack. Museology, like Estévez's early studies and exhibitions on food and gastronomy, should re-focus itself on the disciplining of the senses. The relations between politics and the senses is in fact what Estévez begins to examine in both his exhibitions and written works, especially in his earlier works on gastronomy.

It is well attested that museums and the processes of museumification overwhelmingly privilege sight above all other senses. Our vocabularies are far richer in describing and valorizing the things we see than those we feel, smell, taste, hear, or otherwise apprehend. Although sight has been the preferred sense through which political economy has provoked material desire it has not entirely ignored the other senses in its attempt to expand and increase consumption. Museum exhibitions have likewise attempted to use technologies to extend their range and create increasingly immersive naturalized environments. The Kobe and London natural history museums have built simulators in misguided attempts to reproduce the dizziness and disorientation felt during earthquakes (the commodification of disaster); the London Science Museum has an escalator that purports to take their visitors on a journey through the earth's core (the commodification of fantasy). More soberly and with greater sincerity, the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka allows its visitors to touch the majority of its displayed objects, while other ethnographic exhibitions, starting with *Nomad and City* (Museum of Mankind, London, 1976), have used spices and other plants and chemicals to evoke the smell of, in this case, Middle Eastern street markets. Nevertheless, most attempts, especially by natural history museums, to stimulate the senses have, as attested by Facebook postings, been underwhelming at best. Comments like these make Estévez far from alone in conceding that not everything in the world can be reduced to

representation or museumificatin. His article, "Descongelando cultura. Alimentación, museos y representación", and the related exhibition, *Alimentación y cultura* (Museo de Antropología, Tenerife, 1999), seek to disclose the cultural politics behind the patrimonialization of food and gastronomy. After examining how mainstream public and private museums reproduce the old dichotomy between science and culture (including history) to naturalize eating habits and nutrition through biological determinism, they present the development and growth of the food industry as a rationalized, scientifically valid response to demographic growth, population concentration, and increased food choices. This is a mechanistic view of the body focused not on pleasure but only on its optimization (Estévez, 2004: 23s) In this equation the division of labour in society and the relations of production and the whole system of consumption and distribution is presented as a rational adaptation to natural law and biological necessities. Science and the humanities are separated in order to privilege the methodology of the first with the ability to identify, trace and describe the operations and effects of universal, external laws underlying the physical universe around us. As noted by Engels, once isolated, these laws are then projected back onto social existence to rationalize and legitimate the social relations on which knowledge generation is dependent (Schmidt, 1962).

Although on the rise, museums and galleries of foods, wines and other alcohols are unable to capture and share tastes and bouquets, and only through the cumbersome use of film are they able to present techniques and rituals around food preparation, table manners or ethical and legal issues over family or community-based food-related knowledge. Estévez positions his own exhibition on food, *Alimentación y cultura* (Museo de Antropología, Tenerife, 1999) in relation to two previous shows: *Food for*

Thought (Science Museum, London, 1990), and the Alimentarium in Vevey, Switzerland, curated and managed by Nestlé. The two public and private museums divided their exhibits based on the division between science and culture (history and ethnography). These dealt respectively with nutrition, physiological and metabolic processes, and the history of the food industry. Rejecting such epistemological divisions and their usual strategy to use science to naturalize culture, Estévez's exhibition adopted a thematic approach. Avoiding the use of glass cases, often employed to transform the banal into the special, *Alimentación y cultura* mixed plastic containers, cartons and shopping trollies; 'real' as well as reconstructed objects, replicas and imitations with reconstructions of a granary, shop, mill and kitchen. The exhibition displayed different types of bread to focus attention on the relation between its form and ingredients to class-based consumption patterns and religious observances. Similarly, animals, previously mainly consumed only by dominant groups and classes, in many societies, are still surrounded by elaborate taboos and norms, which are often associated with sex, vitality or forces that needs to be constantly regulated. In sharp distinction to meat, vegetables were often conceived as passive, insipid, immobile and associated with females, while sweets especially expressed love and affection. Flavours (curry, olive oil, soya) were related to specific national culinary schools. The kitchen, interpreted as especially mediating the relation between prudence and fear in eating habits, was lucidly defined as a space under "a conjunction of rules, norms, practices, classifications and representations that determines what we should eat".

While the biological requirement to eat is irrefutable, what, how, where, when and with whom we eat are, he insists, culturally determined, making food one of the most important loci for establishing relations between individuals, groups and communities and nature. Because societies define

the boundaries between nature and culture differently based on specific ontologies, *Alimentación y cultura*, unlike the other two exhibitions he described, was unable to accept any pre-given definition of science and culture as natural and universally applicable. Indeed, to have done so would have been to violate the intellectual integrity of different cultural realities. Estévez justifies his position through Philippe Descola's (2010) typology of divergent ontologies and debates on perspectivism but could equally have invoked Baudrillard's identification of different types of simulacra which by expressing the relation between object, signified and signifier in irreducible and distinct ways, invalidates empiricist tendencies to reduce them to one. The acceptance of either position clearly problematizes the validity of most museum displays which reduce all different ontologies or simulacra to the same semiotic type, disinheriting objects of their original ontological value and significance and denying the existence of alternative constructions of knowledges. Ontology, by fixing specific relationships between being and reality also defines the range of senses and their competencies within any one society, confirming them as anything but natural or empirically pre-ordained. By ignoring the ontological significance of objects and their representation or conversely, the different realities conferred by different simulacra, we also disinherit non-Western societies of their different definitions and ranges in the way they discipline the senses. Museums therefore, naturalize and reproduce dominant Western definition of the senses, especially sight and its ability to trigger desire, and contribute to neutralizing our ability to discern alternative discriminations and their attendant classifications.

Estévez's presentation of the problematical relationship between politics and the senses can be generalized far more widely outside the field of gastronomy, especially to medical museums where the boundary

between science and culture has a similarly problematic and predatory relationship, and where the space of the laboratory replaces that of the kitchen in mediating the internal and external worlds of the physical body. Moreover, because *Alimentación y cultura* is curated in part as a series of installations, like many of Estévez's exhibitions, it bears interesting comparisons to Ken Arnold's curatorial projects at the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, especially his use of artists to problematize narrative-based exhibitions that may have suffered similar political prejudices.

III. Amnesia, Memory and Recollection

Estévez writes: "Museums don't create false images of reality, but a real image of a reality that is entirely false" ([2009] 2019: 295). The distinction between whether 'reality' is seen as either a physical condition or representation, is epistemologically important because Estévez does not I believe claim that museums knowingly manipulate a given reality and compromise their commitment to objectivity, but that through their uncritical acceptance of that 'reality' as the only possible one, they become blinkered by its persuasive quality. To remedy this self-certainty, Estévez calls for an anthropological approach to museums that from its beginning acknowledges epistemological and ontological relativism, and the cultural parameters of all discourses (Estévez, 2004: 7). There are also additional similarities here with Berger which expands Estévez's critique: "The speed of a cinema film" Berger writes, "is 25 frames per second. God knows how many frames per second flicker past in our daily perception. But it is as if, at the brief moments I'm talking about (the point of rupture and transcendence), suddenly and disconcertingly we see between two frames. We come upon a part of the visible which wasn't destined for us... Our

customary visible order is not the only one: it coexists with other orders" (2001: 5). Exhibitions like those of Estévez, share a similar potential.

Culture, for Estévez is unthinkable independent of the material objects and relations that anchor it. Memory, as one external expression of history, constitutes part of culture and is therefore subject to being fixed and potentially recorded through museums, monuments, museumified landscapes and farming or industrial complexes. Memory however, like everything else that has undergone patrimonialization and commodification has been irreversibly manipulated (Estévez, 2010: 36-37). For memory to have wider social meaning, it needs to be given structure. Fleeting impressions, fragmentary and abstracted recollections, disconnected events, triggered by a suggestive smell, taste, or view, may form part of everyday consciousness, but to render them communicatively meaningful, they require a narrative structure at which point they cease to exist as memories. Personal memoirs, biographies, written archives, recordings are never neutral or unproblematic reproductions, but edited, textually structured conversions of memories and recollections as they existed in consciousness become social documents (Estévez, 2010: 36). The histories supported by these documents have lost their relationship to personal consciousness and lived existence after becoming abstracted, coherent and structured according to socially constructed categories, themes and classifications. As countless science-fiction stories remind us, cyborgs or machine men / women have no use for personal memories. Memories do not survive the death of consciousness, only their partial socially contrived structures survive in the pages of biographies, archival documents, and recordings or as Stephen Bann (1994) demonstrates in his biography of the 17th century collector, John Bargrave, obliquely in the remains of the assemblages of objects that have maintained

their original integrity and outlived them. Museums and other knowledge institutions are not sites of memories, but re-collections and reassemblages of memories into event structures, disciplined into the service of legitimating the social whole.

Ethnographic museums have seldom in their history celebrated individuals or collectors, while museums in settler countries currently discourage what they see as nostalgic indulgencies. This leaves most ethnographic objects bereft of the subjective meanings ascribed them by their collectors and lacking their original cultural contextualization ignored by their collectors or lost by museums. Museums then impose their own classifications, significance and interpretations on objects, which similarly to what Estévez describes for history, never involves the re-inscription of their original significance, which is impossible to rescue and reproduce as a pure form of knowledge, but their significance as mediated through their contemporary condition. Various methodologies have been established to achieve this re-totalization of artifact and significance all of which optimistically deny slippage between the causal relations they construct. Distinct anthropological schools of thought – evolutionism, diffusionism, functionalism, and structuralism – had classifications and models of their own through which they ascribed significance to artifacts. Classificatory approaches are still favoured by collectors, auction houses and art history and archaeological curators which involve comparing the form and decoration of an object to that of others within an authoritatively recognized catalogue raisson. Collaborative methodologies intended to re-attach significance to artifacts through the interpretation of Indigenous, community based traditional knowledge holders, ritual specialists, and elders who are best qualified to speak outside the Western commodity-centred hermeneutic

that makes attempts at authentic retotalization so difficult, hold notable advantages. Nevertheless, it should not be thought that a closer approximation to the original meaning of objects is equitable to objective meaning, as interpreters need also to structure their consciousness to produce meaning; they may sometimes be historically removed from artifacts, and almost inevitably enmeshed in different current social and political conditions.

In the absence of any method, outside of collaboration, to re-establish the relationship between objects and their original significance, there is an enormous predilection for museums to fetishize the artifacts in their collections. The loss or exhaustion of an object's meanings, evidence Berger and Estévez's rupture that threatens the diminution of our lives. Estévez adopts the Marxist concept of fetish alongside the critical history of William Pietz (2007). For them, fetishization is the process through which objects are interpreted independent of or in denial to the social relationships and labour that produced them. The application of any of the above methodologies, can become substitutes for obscuring social relationships and in the case of ethnographic objects, especially the political, economic and social relationships that explain the movement of objects in and out of museum collections.

As Clifford (1997), Pratt (1992), Kopytoff (1988) and Appadurai (1988) have argued, the meaning of objects changes as they travel across and between cultures. This well-established body of work marks the beginning of Estévez own focus on the transformative effects of tourism both on object meanings and museums. "Vivimos en un mundo turístico, un mundo para ser visto, sentido, interpelado, viajado. Hoy todos somos turistas" (Estévez, [2009] 2019: 287). Because of the

belief that modern industrialized societies have lost their identity and authenticity, tourism has been redirected abroad where historical sites and Indigenous peoples are believed to have retained what we have lost. But because individual identity can only be affirmed and relived through material objects, the production and sale of souvenirs has exploded to become a global commodity market that inevitably incorporates those peoples and places that we want to remain separate and authentic within the same market economy as ourselves and our places of origin. We happily condone the fictions created by tour companies and guides, and confirmed in museum exhibitions, to maintain our own hopes against the death of what we take to be an ever decreasing but not entirely disappeared realm of authenticity. It is no accident that tour companies in the 1980s, in Germany sometimes held briefing and orientation sessions in museums and that world-wide museums and university alumni associations now organize their own tours. Within tours, museums are key sites of articulation where history, geography and culture can be triangulated to clearly differentiate and attest the uniqueness of the destination. However, souvenirs too sometimes become accumulated in museums both through misidentification and errors in attribution, and for their virtue as representative of this transnational trade. The souvenir market is itself highly stratified into different economic niches ranging from mass produced icons like snow globes, plastic simulations and postcards of national treasures, to craftwork, art and authentic cultural and natural objects and specimens, any part of which can find its way into one or other museums, where they are usually classified to cordon them off from historical or 'authentic' collections. Nevertheless, Estévez's exhibitions on tourism and souvenirs, subvert such contrived classifications by arguing that all museum objects once had a pre-life

in which they also once circulated within political and value-based exchange systems. This argument collapses the separation of the two realms by demonstrating the arbitrary nature of the meaning ascribed them and by deconstructing the imaginary realities they seek to convey.

Estévez's work also contradicts commonly held explanations of tourism as an expression of Western alienation and the natural appeal of the exotic. Neither does he think that the European Grand Tour in the eighteenth century was the immediate precursor to modern day mass tourism. While movement between places is probably a common attribute of human behaviour, expressed through pastoralism and transhumance and the grand diversity of religious pilgrimages, mass tourism, he argues, was constructed by tour companies, international exhibitions, and new modes of transport which created the desire to see the world and market the difference between familiar and unfamiliar spaces. The desire for the exotic was therefore created by the same market system that created the comfortable mundanity of home. Despite having been presented as opposites, modernism and exoticism are symptoms of the same, hidden system of market relations.

IV. Tangible and Intangible Culture

Intangible culture includes the exegetical sources for understanding the material world and the relationship between them. In this respect the problem of the relationship between intangible and tangible culture is similar to the general problems of reconnecting meaning and artifacts already discussed. Intangible culture is however, a larger category than exegetical texts. UNESCO has divided intangible culture into

oral expressions, theatre arts, rituals and festive acts, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe, traditional craft techniques. The distinction between tangible culture, nature and intangible culture as well as their sub-divisions are according to Estévez always arbitrary and, more importantly, misdirected and ideologically informed. Tangible and intangible culture and nature are fundamentally, he rightly insists, always inseparable. He is a consistent critic of UNESCO for its lack of self-critical reflexivity; its misdirected attempt to standardize museum operations and impose a single school of museology and its extensive legislative apparatus and normative instruments with which it enforces its hegemony. By now, it will be clear that Estévez argues that any attempt to divide natural from cultural heritage involves inadmissible claims to naturalize and universalize the distinction between nature and culture that inevitably contravenes the diversity of cultural sensibilities. But UNESCO, in a telling show of its dependence on Western objectivist philosophy, pre-supposes that patrimony pre-exists its identification and classification, conferring its own lists as precise codifications of existing reality. In the absence of any recognized specialist academic discipline, patrimony lacks precise definition. In fact, Estévez argues, like Regina Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann (2012) and others, that all cultural manifestations have a patrimonial aspect and that the category has recently expanded so greatly that there exist many different types of patrimony including historical, artistic, ethnographic, industrial, paleontological, etc. Moreover, as Bendix herself has written, patrimonies can exist in sharp conflict with each other, like environmental parks and historical and ethnographic sites that are claimed by competing polities or religions, contestation over rights to ownership and mobilization, or sites can be weaponized as propaganda weapon in cases of physical conflicts. Neither, Estévez

insists, are all patrimonies equal (2004: 16). All are partial remnants of the past, which have depended on dominant classes to ascribe them value and therefore indirectly identified what should and should not receive greater care and be passed down through the generations. There is still a tendency towards a fascination with family genealogy where blood and inheritance become definitive of family-based and national patrimonies which always hold the danger of encouraging racism (2004: 17). Today, what is given value is still not decided by communities but by 'experts' working for large global bureaucracies and major museums with a global reach. Even after a thing or document has entered a museum or archive, it can still be edited out of the collection. Archived correspondence, project documents, plans, etc., are periodically sifted and shorn by 'archive scientists', and objects and collections are regularly audited by curators to ensure adherence to the museum's collecting policy and to rid collections of redundancies. In wartime England, Brighton Museum destroyed collections of African weapons because of lack of secure storage space. Elsewhere, collections were lost as institutions assumed new directions such as at the Vancouver Museum; as they diverged from original missions such as at the UBC Museum of Anthropology where Pacific Island and European icon collections were transferred elsewhere; through museum closure as in the case of the East India Company Museum or the Wellcome Historical Museum; and through infestation and lack of care. The history of deaccessioning and transfer has still to be written and the role of museums in disposing of heritage remains in most cases a closely guarded secret. Because the past has been so partially reserved by criteria generated in the present, no full register of intangible or tangible cultural property can ever be completed and attempts to re-correlate the relations between them must remain, in many cases, conjectural.

Given its arbitrary definition, imprecise application, and fluid like transformations, intangible culture, no less than its dependent terms 'culture' and 'heritage', appear to be widely misconceived (Shelton, 2014). Moreover, UNESCO's move from concern to document cultural knowledge and practices in danger of extinction to actively intervene to maintain their vitality appears to be ill-founded. As Estévez points out if an expression is alive it doesn't need protection, while if it's about to disappear, it can't be protected ([2016] 2019: 319). Moreover, because of the accelerated present and temporal / spatial compression in which we live, the past has vastly expanded and proliferated, making it absurd to believe that any appreciable part of it can be nestled and preserved. These logical impossibilities testament to a Borgesian imagination, demonstrate in my view UNESCO's absolute removal from the communities that it seeks to protect and the contradictions inherent in employing a global elite, primarily interested in safeguarding its own prestige and status, to protect local, in many cases impoverished communities, from the effects of a globalizing power of which it is a crucial part. Estévez however, finds a still more persuasive explanation for the fuzzy thinking around intangible culture. For him, intangible culture does not exist as an object of performance for stabilization, purification and classification, but as an ever-changing ephemeral process, aspects of which have survived not because of their strength in resisting change, but because they have constantly adopted to it. To fossilize intangible culture or for external authorities to regulate and administer it would be to convert it into a husk. Alternatively, also following Estévez's argument, to recombine intangible culture with objects would regenerate social practices and reactivate their attendant social relations even in cases where these have become extinct because of failing relevance or political expediency.

V. The End of History

Estévez's writings are haunted by the spectre of history's end, when the past piles up in the present to confuse our sense of sequence, succession, event structures, causality, and consequently as the United States has so astutely and cynically optimized, the criteria to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Nostalgia has shattered history and its present manifestation into a pastiche (Estévez, 2004: 14). When history, unfettered from consensual truth presuppositions, constituted by unconnected and anachronistic fragments that any group or person can ceaselessly combine and recombine, we lose our common identity, values, rationality, consensus and the sureties that hold our constructed worlds together. Europe, for the first time in millennia lives in a post-Aristotelian contemporaneity. This postmodern calamity, which as our current political and economic crises attest is already upon us, is figured in Estévez's evocation of Klee's drawing of the angel of history and Benjamin's related commentary, a discordant imbalanced figure against which the harsh winds pile-up the debris and detritus of the past. Nevertheless, as Estévez insists, it is a partial past that has been sorted and privileged for preservation and selected by the present, that is strewn all around us.

History and the past are constantly reconstructed and simulated according to dominant notions of time. Estévez (2004: 17-19) identifies three major conceptualizations of time in the modern West: social time which pre-existed the first Industrial Revolution; mechanical time coinciding with it becoming a measure of productive activity in capitalism; and instantaneous time that emerged with the beginning of the information age. The nostalgia for the past only began after the Industrial Revolution as specific evocations were constructed to stimulate desire to experience

it in the present. Early travel companies distinguished between the modern and undeveloped world that lay around it in Europe, Africa, Oceania and the Americas, which it attributed selective past qualities. The same strategy was used to progressively widen the market to experience or even to live permanently in a past that was always a foreign country – vernacular building styles; themed communities; miniaturized or copies of monuments, period interiors, etc. There was then, according to Estévez, a broadening of nostalgia from the upper classes who felt nostalgia for the social order they had once dominated to progressively poorer segments of the population, who having never lost the desired lived experience or historical memory still felt nostalgia for it – a nostalgia for: "paisajes que nunca habíamos visto, de casas que nunca habíamos habitado, de músicas que nunca habíamos oído, de ropas que nunca habíamos vestido" (2004: 14-15). Despite sociologists admonishing that we look towards the future for progress, we increasingly follow the market that manipulates us to yearn for a past free from the threat of environmental deterioration, overpopulation, nuclear warfare and looming species extinction. In fact, the market offers a past without any threat at all since the hardships and suffering of work, social insecurity and imperial warfare, and the stark inequalities of life have all been forgotten in the process of its sanitization. The past is marketed as an immutable refuge. It is made to appear as a stable and unchanging template on which we can graft family and national histories, unlike the present and future which are subject to caprice or hidden forces. Despite its malleability and ephemerality, we yearn to embrace what are never no more than manufactured simple and predicable lives. Nostalgia itself appears to have emerged at the same time as the modern nation state and the romantic movement. Only with the differentiation of nationhood, through distinct classifications and typologies, are material, artistic and intellectual cultural difference

invented, and inscribed into specific territories and sites to become transformed into sights for contemplation, admiration and the fashioning of new subjectivities. Berger affirms: "Between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the public narratives being offered to give a sense to that life, the empty space, the gap, is enormous" (2001: 176). The terms and fine focus between Berger and Estévez's writings are different, but both acknowledge the dehumanizing simulacrum; the inescapable meaningless and banality of the life choices offered us; the complicity of museums and heritage parks, while at the same time, they recognize the ability of museums and collections to reveal and stimulate curiosity, even if only momentarily, to expose alternative realities and hope.

The sense of failing clarity, helplessness, and confusion become most widespread when the reality of our institutions and lives become the clearest to us. Like in a story by Haruki Murakami, say *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994-95), we are overtaken by an alternative logic that lays waste to the way we have been when we can no longer maintain the fictions that obscure the real effects of our materialism; when the organization of the society of the spectacle lose their persuasive powers and we are left in an empty darkness confronted by our own mortality. Estévez doesn't need to repeat the dark visions of Baudrillard, because they are now present all around us: in the images of the effects of environmental deterioration; crisis economics; the insecurity of work; growing inequalities in educational systems and medical care; the infantilization of politics in the United States and the United Kingdom, and the rise of strongmen in Russia, China, Turkey and the Philippines. Nevertheless, the influence of Baudrillard, especially his work on simulacra is felt strongly throughout Estévez's museology and curatorial practices.

VI. Positionality

Modernity has affected distinct parts of the world differently, dependent on historical and local conditions, its pace and consistency of development, and its degree of penetration and transformation of markets and social structures. Differences in the experience of modernity influences the way its narrators describe and understand it, and in the longer term will affect the analysis of its global reach and its eclipse and relationship to emerging counter movements that are already challenging its hegemony. Recognizing the importance of reflexivity in the social sciences, Estévez firmly grounds his writings, exhibitions and theoretical formulations in the history and politics of the Canary Islands, where he lived and worked all his life. His understanding of the local political mobilization of museums and galleries is based first on the significance of the islands in European and especially Spanish thought, where they were viewed as the first phase of European expansion and as essential staging ports, where the galleons that eventually discovered the Caribbean and the Americas could be provisioned to continue their western explorations. The islands insularity from Europe, the remnant constructions and objects of a lost civilization discovered there, and the prodigiousness of nature, caused them to be identified with the Isles of the Blessed or the Fortunate Isles, recounted in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey* where the Greek heroes lived, or alternatively, the Elysian Fields or the Gardens of the Hesperides, the three daughters of Atlas. For much of its history, the pre-Spanish population, the Guanches, now believed to be related to the African Berbers, were ignored even after Spanish settlement, as was the history and ethnography of the settlers who, because of their marginalization were considered neither exotic or exceptionally

pioneering, to warrant study or description. Instead, European curiosity was focused on the islands' flora, fauna and geology which was eagerly studied and collected by foreign as well as Spanish and local museums and transformed and incorporated to establish a unique regional identity. Different from the American colonies, Estévez argues their social history, including the process of creolization, was ignored and natural history and pre-history collections, expressing a pure and pristine exotic nature, long dominated museum displays on the islands. For a long time, this history ignores creolization, the introduction of new crops such as sugar, grapes and potatoes and the social relations engendered by their commercial production as well as the islands' modern history.

Museums of ethnography and natural history were modernized or newly developed in the 1970s, but the islands social and economic history remained expunged from the process of identity formation. Estévez clearly sees how, especially in the last few decades with increased awareness of local identity, politicians have been keen to be seen to promote ethnography and natural history museums at the expense of art galleries to invigorate the islands' sense of their own singularity. Nevertheless, despite their self-expressed indifference or hostility to modern and contemporary art, the politicians supported the construction of the Tenerife Espacio de las Artes which opened in 2008. Estévez argues that given the politics of identity on the islands, local government support for ethnographic and natural history museums is not surprising, but he also observes that only an internationally recognized and art historically based museum is able to legitimate and create new discourses on a specifically Canarian artistic school, which also feeds into the expansion of local identity into the arts and gives the islands the international prestige of modernity.

Despite appearance of the hostility between local politics and globalized contemporary art, the two are interdependent – universalized discourse of art history legitimates a local painting school to enhance local identity and international prestige, while an art history that vehemently proclaims its independence from politics and the economy, is enriched and provided facilities from which to extend its intellectual authority through political and private sponsorship.

Despite the different political strategies in which the authorities of art and ethnography / natural history have been conscripted, Estévez supports a rigorous interdisciplinarity which would supersede their current limitations. Suspicious of the current trend towards the development of museum networks, he calls for a new relationship between art and anthropology. Sandwiched between the pressures from global institutions and market forces and the tutelage and machinations of local politics, networks are seldom meaningfully implemented or adequately resourced to become sustainable. Championed by professional associations and international organizations like UNESCO, networks can easily become channels through which to implement codification, standardization, and uniformity to museum practice. The establishment of one overarching museology, subordinated to the economic and political tendencies that his work identifies, is the single most dangerous threat facing museums today. Writing in relation to the Canary Islands, he insists it is not more museums that are needed, but improved resources and more perceptive visions. Estévez is right in identifying local museums, when properly resourced and politically independent, as incubators for different ways of understanding and expressing the world. It is startling that the origins of critical museology were established within the curatorial practices of small or medium museums, usually associated with universities,

on the peripheries of or between cultures and territories; Tenerife, Neuchâtel, Coimbra and Vancouver, before influencing medium-sized metropolitan institutions like the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Köln or the musée ethnographique d'Geneve. The circulation of practitioners and students as well as the openness of a few larger, more academically and critically engaged museums have both helped to disseminate alternative approaches, which, nevertheless, in their majority are limited by management styles and exhibition standardization. Nevertheless, despite being compromised by political manipulation and their insertion into the leisure market, museums for Estévez share the essential common quality of being heterotopias and it is this quality, demonstrated above all other institutions by the Palais d'Tokyo, Paris, with their attendant differences, contradictions, simultaneities and critical hesitations that endow them their potentially subversive qualities.

A concern with the expansion and increased rationalization of the logic underlying capitalist production to previously financially sheltered parts of society runs throughout most of the essays and exhibitions in this volume. The papers and descriptions of exhibitions collected here express a coherent museology, which breaking with current practice, conceives of museums and heritage institutions as increasingly rationalizing and extending the dominant social relations reproduced in commodity production to previously undeveloped parts of society. For the majority of the world's people, commodification and the capitalist system on which it is based, have transformed communality and nature's beauty into a near hell. The point of Estévez's museology is to reveal how the system works to prolong the culture of alienation and misrecognition and to provide a curatorial methodology with which to see the untruths with which we are constantly beguiled.

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Unfreezing Culture: Food, Museums, and Representation

Unfreezing Culture: Food, Museums, and Representation

Many of the varied social and cultural dimensions of food have been incorporated into the complex framework of cultural heritage policies and their presence, as cultural heritage, has increased significantly in the leisure and tourism industries in general, and especially in museums. The scope of this presence, as well as its sociocultural implications – the mobilization of ethnic and local identities, the opening of new market sectors, the orientation of policies managing cultural heritage, etc. – warrant a closer look by social researchers, as well as by the professionals more directly involved in the use and management of these new food heritages. However, there are not enough generalized works that provide a global vision of the relationship between cultural heritage and food and its sociocultural repercussions. In any case, even if we only consider its most obvious and general aspects, we cannot address all those issues here.

In a more limited manner, it is worth highlighting the particular case of the use of food in museums, looking at how it is represented in exhibitions, and, in that context, emphasizing the extent of museums' permeability in respect to the anthropology and sociology of food. Three examples of exhibitions where food occupies a central role will serve to illustrate how different museums are introducing new approaches in museology and incorporating themes and orientations from new tendencies in the anthropology and sociology of food. But it is necessary to start with some notes in regards to the more general issue of cultural heritage policies, although conceptions about it are not easy to share.

There is virtually no aspect of social life that does not already have a patrimonial treatment. Heritage, or better, heritages, have not only been established as one of the pillars of the cultural policies of states and public administrations, but they have also turned into a progressively developing industry. This growing importance can be seen in the expansion of the literature on this topic in recent years. Debates have proliferated about the definitions and scopes of all these heritages, but we are no closer to reaching a general agreement, as clearly shown by the discussions about the denomination of ethnographic, ethnologist, anthropological, or cultural heritage. What are even more abundant within this literature are those works devoted to the legal aspects of structuring the legislative frameworks to act on different heritages and, in a more hidden but no less relevant area, to the disciplinary and union interests over those who have to be managed.

Unfortunately, and considering that cultural heritage revolves around uses of the past in the present, little attention has been paid to studying the active presence of the past in contemporary societies. From

functionalism to Marxism, the social sciences have provided different models of the processes through which social relations from the past are reproduced in the present. But there is an important gap in respect to how how societies remember the past and how they incorporate the past into the present. However, this problematic is being incorporated into diverse studies about the uses of the past in contemporary societies (Fowler, 1992; Lowenthal, 1998; Urry, 1996; Walsh, 1992). Building on these authors and ignoring their different positions on other issues, the explosion of heritage, of heritages, could be considered a manifestation of nostalgia, understood as one of the characteristics of the postmodern condition. Nostalgia, combined with rebellion against the present, has unleashed a yearning for the past. This is evident in the increase in aesthetic sensibility for signs and for objects and artifacts that have a patina of antiquity, for old places and buildings, for handicrafts, etc. and also, for traditional foods and old recipes, for "grandma's kitchen."

In summary, this tendency to consume the past has, according to Urry (1996), several aspects that should be highlighted. On one hand, there is a proliferation of enclaves and places that specialize in the exploitation of rural or industrial heritage, which are mainly consumed by the middle classes and service sectors. On the other hand, these heritage sets and spaces exploit one of the cultural habits characteristic of those social sectors: the taste for the restoration and reconstruction of both rural and urban places. Significantly, in the majority of these heritage enclaves, which operate as centers specializing in the commercialization of the past, the academic discipline of history has lost its authority to the benefit of the presentation of heritage through visuals and artifacts. Moreover, heritage is recreated not by taking authentic or real referents from the past, but it is sustained by hyperreal simulated environments, in which

the copy is more "perfect" than the original which it represents. Finally, as many critics have observed, these forms and procedures of presenting heritage inevitably transmit a conservative vision of the past.

The effects of nostalgia or "necrophiliac fever," to use Rojek's (1995) expression, are felt, in turn, at several levels. Thus, buildings and places that historically had not been important in a determined area or territory are dressed up with a patina of antiquity on which important new economic activities are developed. These new economic activities have been generating new types of companies devoted to the rehabilitation, restoration, and management of those places and buildings, and have encouraged other companies to redirect capital, personnel, and experience to this new sector. In this context, it is especially noteworthy how many local authorities have opted for focusing many of their touristic initiatives on cultural heritage, a strategy that manages to minimize local conflicts, since initiatives that are presented as oriented toward the preservation of heritage rarely lead to social contestation. Finally, it is also worth noting that there has been a considerable increase in social groups that pursue the conservation of "their" history and their particular memories, giving rise to a myriad of movements and associations that are more or less distant from official institutions.

In this context, and to further complicate the panorama of the social uses of heritage, as many works have shown, there are serious doubts about how to distinguish real history from false heritage. Each as much as the other can be, and in fact has been, understood in many different ways. Even in museums and heritage complexes where this distinction is, at least theoretically, less ambiguous, there is no uniform reading by different visitors, as convincingly shown by the fact of the frequent

divorce between the expectations of museum curators and exhibition and theme park designers and the interpretations of the public. The patrimonial uses of food do not escape these conditioning factors, which should be taken as a point of departure for their analysis.

But we are especially interested in the expansive incorporation of food into cultural heritage because of its presence in museums. Certainly, the production of food, eating habits, and material culture related to food have always been present to a greater or lesser degree in ethnographic and history museums and old centers of popular arts and traditions. However, this incorporation has increased exponentially, and new museums solely devoted to some aspect of the history and ethnography of food have started to appear. Museums of wine, of cheese, of baking, of pastry-making… and so on and so forth, for practically all food products and industries. Additionally, these museums are of a highly varied nature in regards to their ownership – public or private – and their reach – local, regional, national –. In parallel, new galleries or permanent collections, and especially exhibitions, devoted to food have opened in general museums such as museums of science and technology, history, and anthropology.

It would be impossible to carry out a comparative evaluation and classification here of this enormous variety of museums, that have such different orientations and objectives in terms of their cultural politics, discourses, exhibition systems, and links to the public. But we can at least consider anthropological museums as particularly significant in this area. Certainly there have been important renovations in anthropology museums in recent years, but both in the oldest as well as in many of those created more recently, it is easy to detect the continued persistence of old discourses and exhibitionary systems.

Ever since Boas insisted on the contextualization of objects in ethnographic museums and Malinowski critiqued the scientific sterility of studies of technology for their own sake that ignored social relations, studies of material culture and artifacts were limited to the museum sphere, where they survived oriented toward typological classifications. The most obvious consequences for museums were the sacralization of material culture, the belief that artifacts could transmit, on their own, cultural meanings, and, finally, the separation between museum discourses and anthropological theory.

One of the main motivations behind anthropology's recent approach of museums has been the field's recent re-encounter with studies of material culture, but this coming together can also be observed in current concerns over the connection between anthropological research and popular education through museums, their contribution to aesthetic theory – in considering ethnic artifacts as art objects – and, more generically, the relationship between ethnographic museums and the social construction of ethnic and national identities. But, in a broader sense, the re-encounter between museums and anthropology has fostered the need for a profound evaluation of the role of museums and their social responsibility. Revising and critiquing the systems of representation used in exhibitions, through which meanings are produced by the ways in which objects are classified and displayed, has been the focus of much attention by anthropologists and museologists.

The most recent critiques and rethinkings have greatly affected how historical and ethnographic objects are treated. They have also inevitably affected all the material culture related to food that, in one way or another, has historical and ethnographic dimensions. But, additionally,

the ubiquity of ethnographic objects and their often ephemeral character, poses serious problems for their adequate contextualization in museums. In fact, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991) clearly shows, not everything that is anthropologically considered relevant can be "separated" and reinstalled in museums, or, at least, it involves significant logical, technical, and even ethical difficulties. For example, what occurs with the intangible, the ephemeral, the immobile, or the animate? Concentrating only on food, many of its dimensions and aspects point to these difficulties. The intangible character of culinary know-hows and their transmission, the ephemeral nature of everyday behaviors and rituals related to commensality and table manners. Buildings where food is prepared or consumed can certainly be photographed or filmed, but clear problems result from their three-dimensional re-installation in exhibitions. Even greater difficulties arise from the use of animals and plants, especially if the intent is to display them alive. And, obviously, as many have already questioned, notorious ethical problems emerge when people are used to represent food practices, processes, or customs. Finally, from different perspectives, museums are faced with ethical and legal problems related to the intellectual property rights of popular knowledges about plants, animals or techniques of elaborating products, such as those that clearly arise from the issue of the different products subject to regulations based on the denomination of their origin (Contreras, 1996; Brush and Stabinsky, 1996).

Starting from analyses of how these problems have traditionally been resolved in ethnographic and historical museums, two types of critiques have been developed, which have been called the "poetics" and the "politics" of exhibitions (Lidchi, 1997; Stocking, 1985; Vergo, 1993). In other words, on one hand, the analysis of how meanings are constructed

and produced; on the other, the analysis of museum discourses, of the power that they exercise and their role in different forms of cultural appropriation.

Exhibitions are complex systems of representation in which objects, texts, reconstructions, images, sounds, etc. are combined. In them, one normally seeks to contextualize and reconstruct reality by selecting artifacts that are understood as representative. Texts, images, and objects are structured on three different levels: presentation, in relation to the techniques used; presence, the type of objects displayed and their connotations; and, finally, representation, that is, how the objects, combined with texts and contexts, produce meanings.

Exhibitions are composed then of an articulated set of artifacts, but such a combination is in turn and as a whole, an artifact itself. Semiological studies in museums have made important contributions to decoding these systems of representation, giving rise to significant renovations in exhibition models in recent years. In parallel, the ideological and political nature of museums has equally been an object of evaluation. The internal articulation of objects, texts, contexts, and images to produce meanings grants considerable symbolic power to museum and exhibition curators and designers. But, additionally, museums and their exhibitions play a clear role in the social production of knowledge. Exhibitions are social and historical events that include what artifacts are to be collected, where, by whom, when, and how they are to be exhibited. And these decisions are not only intellectually or scientifically oriented, but also ideologically and politically motivated. It is difficult, then, to separate knowledge and power, thus the symbolic power exercised by museums is inevitably linked to institutional power.

In this field, those museums and exhibitions in which food is presented as a global phenomenon, or at least with the intention of encompassing it in a broad sense, perhaps best lend themselves to an assessment of how food is represented. Obviously, at a minimum, it is necessary to specify what is meant by food in a global sense. Anthropology and sociology have developed a wide spectrum of theoretical and research problematics that demonstrate the very diverse and intricate dimensions of food. But the idea of a food system might be useful for our purposes as a guide to the set of aspects that, in one way or another, should be present and serve as a reference in museums and exhibitions devoted to this topic.

The different theoretical focuses of the anthropology and sociology of food more or less explicitly contemplate this concept of a food system or, at least, the identification of its main components. Here we are not as interested in highlighting how these theoretical focuses resolve the articulation of these components (for a summary review see, Beardsworth and Keil, 1997) as we are in, more simply, showing that, regardless of their sometimes radically different interpretations, there is already sufficient agreement in the sense that the complex processes involved in food and eating can and should be analyzed as a system. And this is true even when only considering its social and cultural dimensions, while ignoring the most strictly biological ones.

A few years ago, Jack Goody (1995 [1982]) proposed considering five large processes involved in food systems – growth, storage, cooking, eating, and cleaning – which would correspond to different phases – production, distribution, preparation, consumption, and waste elimination – and certain locations – agricultural lands, barns and markets, kitchens, tables, and sinks –. Freekleton and her collaborators (1989) proposed a

more complex model, starting from the inputs provided by agriculture and fishing and by food imports and exports, in which food processors play a central role, along with the markets that supply food products to wholesalers and retailers, who, finally, sell to consumers. The growing attention to the latter, and more broadly, to the dynamics of consumption, has contributed to broadening the scope of the concept of a food system. Thus, applying the general theory of what he denominates "systems of provision," Ben Fine (1996) proposes a model of the food system in which production and consumption, which have traditionally divided the respective focuses of economists and nutritionists, are not contemplated one-dimensionally, but rather both perspectives are integrated more globally, combining the interrelations between the inorganic and organic components of agriculture and food production and consumption.

But, as indicated above, the goal is not to determine the value of these different proposals to understand the functioning of food systems, but to highlight that all of their components and connections should form part of how museums represent food. Now, three cases will serve to analyze these questions and to illustrate how food is represented in exhibitions, considering their poetics and politics, as well as, on the other hand, how the history, anthropology, and sociology of food are used in these exhibitions.

The chosen cases, which certainly exist among many others, are good examples of the increasing presence of food in museums. But, at the same time, they are sufficiently different in their museological objectives to allow us to appreciate the different solutions that they give to the representation of food. The three examples are: the *Alimentarium* in Vevey, Switzerland; the exhibition *Food for Thought* in the Science

Museum in London; and the exhibition *Food and Culture* in the Museum of Anthropology in Tenerife.

The Alimentarium is a large museum entirely devoted to food and nutrition sponsored by the Nestle corporation. It is, therefore, a private museum backed by one of the largest international food corporations. *Food for Thought*, in turn, is an exhibition in a section of one of the most popular public museums in the United Kingdom. Finally, *Food and Culture* is a temporary exhibit in a small, local, publicly owned museum (Tenerife Council). They are, therefore, three fairly different cases in regards to their institutional character, their scientific-cultural orientation, and their audiences. However, they have one important element in common. In each of the three cases, food is treated, or it is claimed that it is treated, according to a perspective that could be characterized as globalizing and multi-disciplinary. Their objectives are not to present the food culture of one society in particular or of a determined historical period, or to solely emphasize a specific theme. Food is explicitly focused on both as a biocultural and pan-human phenomenon, and the utilization of the practices and patterns of food behavior and artifacts from different cultures or different time periods, serve, in their variety, to reinforce the basic idea of eating as a human universal.

There are two common elements shared by the Alimentarium and *Food for Thought*. In both cases, the exhibitions are divided into two large sections: a "scientific" one and a "historical" one. The Alimentarium is actually divided into three sections: scientific, historical, and ethnological. The scientific part, in these two exhibitions, is devoted to human nutrition, from nutritional requirements and metabolic and physiological processes to statistical data about consumption. The historical sections

are preferentially oriented to the evolution of the food industry, where, logically, the presence of European culture stands out. The Alimentarium dedicates one section, the ethnological one, to present the global variety in food practices and behaviors through examples from the Philippines and Africa. But, ultimately, the history of the food industry becomes the real protagonist.

In the Museum of Anthropology in Tenerife, the exhibition *Food and Culture* presents a journey through different aspects of food, following the central themes of the anthropology and sociology of food. There is not a section devoted explicitly to nutrition, and nutritional information only appears occasionally and in order for its importance to be contextualized in relation to sociocultural conditions, which is what the exhibit constantly emphasizes. Nor is there a historical section, but rather artifacts and presentations of a historical nature are used to illustrate or document a certain theme. But neither is it an exhibition about food in the Canary Islands. The frequent historical and ethnographic references to food from the Canary Islands throughout the exhibition are also used to illustrate or document a more general theme.

In these exhibitions there is a recurring use of materials that, from a certain aesthetic perspective, could be considered to not be very "noble" (plastics, methacrylates, cardboard…), as well as replicas or imitations. In general, the use of these materials, replicas and imitations, produces the opposite effect to that obtained by the very common tendency in many museums toward the sacralization of objects, where, enclosed in glass cases, items acquire the added value of unique objects transmuting their original nature until they come to be considered objects of art. However, these materials and simulacra are generally used in the areas presenting

“scientific” content in the previously mentioned exhibitions. Here the designers assume that the authority and prestige that science holds for the public is such that it is not necessary to represent it with authentic objects. To the contrary, authentic objects would distract the visitors’ attention, making them focus on the objects and not what is really important in those areas: generally, that the exhibition’s contents are founded on a scientific basis or by rigorously corroborated data. In the exhibition in the Museum of Anthropology in Tenerife, however, the use of these materials is present throughout the exhibit, which constantly combines real objects with imitations.

However, in the historical and ethnographic sections and presentations, “authentic” and “real” objects dominate, as well as reconstructions and simulacra. In these sections, glass cases decontextualize the objects, which were originally banal and quotidian, – a grinder, a coffee machine, a place setting, etc. – so that the physical separation and protection provided by the glass grants the objects a greater degree of uniqueness. On the other hand, in the open representations – a barn, a shop, a kitchen, a mill – one perceives a process of naturalization, through which the objects appear to represent themselves. Here, the tags and texts provide additional or descriptive information; the context is foregrounded and gives meaning to the presentation. The simulacra, the imitations of real objects, use these “tricks” so that their presentation is not initially questioned, in order to denote something real. Later, through photographs or texts – although not always – the subterfuges that were used are revealed.

All of these expository resources reveal how these exhibition contexts, and therefore the exhibitions themselves, should be considered fictions, artifacts. The utilization of authentic, reconstructed objects – made by

the museum according to the design of the original – and simulacra in combination with texts, images, and sounds make exhibitions complex systems of representation.

In this way, the exhibitions express the weight of the symbolic power in the hands of museums. But this power, this authority, at least in many cases, is being relativized or nuanced by museums themselves, which attempt to transmit the relativity of their own discourses to the public, and, therefore, minimize their power of authority over visitors. However, this recognition of multiple voices, of reflexivity, of the existence of interpretations that differ from those of the museum, while signifying an important change in respect to traditional forms of communicating social knowledge through exhibitions, are still, in many cases, acts of purification of that symbolic power, whose frankness keeps the institutional power that they represent hidden from the public. In these examples that we have considered those institutional powers are: the Nestle corporation, the sponsors of the Science Museum, and the Tenerife government.

In short, the increasing presence of food in cultural heritage policies and especially in museums highlights and reproduces the more general problematic of the representation of culture in museums. Certainly, academic anthropology has shown little interest in museums and cultural heritage policies, although recently there are clear manifestations of their incorporation into the agenda of theoretical problems that are important for the discipline. In any case, anthropology's relative disinterest in museums and cultural heritage does not exempt professionals working in museums or linked to the management of cultural heritage from being anthropologically informed. In the field of food, anthropology can contribute decisively to renewing museums' discourses, both by providing

general models and by introducing new problematics related to food in contemporary society. Otherwise, this may be the best way to convince academic anthropology that museums are an important terrain for the application and dissemination of biocultural studies of food practices and behaviors. These can be necessary steps for unfreezing the culture in and of museums.

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Museum Networks:
Connections and Entanglements

Museum Networks: Connections and Entanglements

The many numerous networks of local museums already in existence, including those that have a determined history and those that exist more as declarations of intentions, demand a more systematic and in-depth debate on the part of professionals. The dedication of this Fourth Museology Conference to this problematic is a clear indicator that these networks of museums have gained importance among those who are most interested in the management and perspectives of local museums. Along this line, the following considerations – the result, on one hand, of observations of the dynamic undertaken in recent years by the Island Network of Museums of Tenerife (sponsored by the Autonomous Organization of Museums and Centers of the Tenerife Council) and, on the other hand, following similar experiences in other contexts –, seek to introduce some questions into the agenda of debates about networks of local museums, avoiding, however, circumscribing them in specific cases or particular casuistries.

The benefits expressed in the formulations of principles and the declarations of intentions to promote museum networks often hide very problematic aspects, beyond the most obvious ones in relation to their management and maintenance. Without supposing to be a completed list or an exposition of priorities, there are various aspects worth considering. First, networks of local museums cannot avoid two of the most important dichotomies that run through museums today: the crossroads created between the local and the global, and the opposition between the disciplinary and the transdisciplinary. The first refers primarily to problems related to the territorial reach of these networks, while the second affects the thematic and disciplinary orientations of museums. Secondly, we cannot lose sight of the fact that, like museums taken individually, networks of museums also form part of, and in fact act as a leading agent on, the terrain of the revival of identity in recent decades. Thus one of the problems inevitably faced by museum networks derives from the exercise of tutelage and control by the political institutions that sponsor them. Third, museum networks are also traversed, if possible to a greater extent than each museum on its own, by the processes of the McDonaldization of tourism and leisure industries, a phenomenon that has also greatly affected museum institutions. In this context it is clear that, if museum professionals want to avoid the disappearance of their museum "cultures," they must prevent museum networks from acting as mechanisms for the standardization of museum management and orientation. Fourth, and closely linked to the previous point, we should consider that, beyond the homogenizing effects of globalization, applying the same museography, which in turn results from the same museological approaches, is one of the main causes of the "cloning" effect that currently characterizes many territorially distant and thematically different museums. In that sense, the question must inevitably be raised of to what extent an increasingly

"universalized" museography does not impede what is supposed to be one of the primary objectives of museum networks: contributing to the differentiation and valorization of local heritages. Finally, the importance of initiatives and policies for the standardization of museum collections and resources is posited as potentially one of the main missions of networks of local museums.

From the unification of criteria for cataloging collections to lending resources and exhibitions, including the exchange of teaching and administrative management experiences, museums continue dragging out the already old difficulties for establishing stable frameworks for collaboration. Among the many initiatives developed in this sense, recently proposals to create museum networks have proliferated in the local sphere. It is not a coincidence that these initiatives of institutional collaboration, most of which are driven by public administrations, are called networks, nor that this denomination has been so quickly generalized. A network is certainly one of the most common metaphors, both in the sciences and the humanities, to characterize the contemporary world. Obviously its success is related to the popularization of telecommunications and specifically the Internet, which have marked the dominant meaning of this term. Far from being merely an issue of naming, the term "network" today refers to so many different meanings that, in fact, they are based on and give rise to openly different epistemologies and methodologies (Latour, 1999). The fact is that the most recent initiatives for collaboration between local museums tend to be called, configured as, or organized as networks.

Despite its current popularity, the creation of networks of local museums has not meant, in many cases, their implementation in practice, but rather, it has been reduced to a goal, an enumeration of objectives, and,

in many cases, a mere reference. Moreover, confusing the declarations of principles with the real dynamic of museums, the enthusiasts of local museum networks have had much to say about their benefits and little to say about their inconvenient aspects and dangerous potential. Along this line, at most, the debate remains reduced to the "technical" difficulties for implementing and maintaining networks, ignoring their impacts on the museums inscribed in them.

First, in all the proposals for local museum networks, two pairs of dichotomies can be seen that greatly mediate their configuration: the global-local and the disciplinary-transdisciplinary. The first dichotomy, inherited from others such as the center-periphery, points to the territorial reach and organization of networks. We start here from the premise, usually not explicitly formulated, that networks of local museums should be a response to globalization, which is understood as a danger to the autonomy and future of local museums. Museum networks are conceived, in this sense, as mechanisms of resistance, as a safeguard against homogenization. However, given that the creation of networks of local museums is usually driven by local political agencies, those networks tend to be a reflection, when not an extrapolation, of the political-administrative organizations of which they are a part, whether autonomous areas, provinces, islands, regions, municipalities... This dynamic is derived from the "naturalization" of those political-administrative organizations, on the other hand, this conception is also assumed by the museum professionals who consider them to be given and unmovable. The most notorious consequence of this "naturalization" is that it makes it impossible to create networks of local museums outside of the framework of established political-administrative divisions. Other organizational criteria, that could be more operative for collaborations

between local museums, beyond their strict territorial circumscription, are thus neutralized.

But the problems derived from their thematic orientation or affiliation overlap with those caused by the territorial configuration of networks of local museums. Despite many declarations of principles about interdisciplinarity that inspire the creation of networks, the tendency seems to point to a more or less radical separation between art museums and "the rest," and within the second category, an affinity between "historical" and "ethnographic" museums. This also goes back to another "naturalization," through which museum professionals accept a priori that the divisions of academic knowledge, especially the division of university disciplines, should correspond to different types of museums. And just as political-administrative mimicry can impede collaboration between local museums that transcends their territorial framework, assuming the naturalness of divisions of academic knowledge as a basic criteria for the establishment of museums could also be impeding not only collaboration between them but also, probably, the improvement of museum offerings at a local scale. In recent years, significant impulses for transdiciplinary research and teaching have emerged within the social sciences and humanities; paradoxically, these orientations have only been timidly reflected in museums.

On the other hand, in the debate about networks of local museums, the role that they have played on the terrain of cultural identities cannot be ignored. Driven and sponsored by political institutions, networks of local museums give them an ideological legitimacy by transferring their cultural prestige and tradition. Now well, that legitimacy is basically tied to local identity politics. There is a wide array of both old and new work

about the interrelation between museums and politics, and, specifically, about the role that museums have played as depositories and vehicles of the representation of different national cultures (Boswell and Evans, 1999; Bouquet, 2000; Hallam and Street, 1999). In postmodernity, additionally, museums are expected to also serve as projections of local cultures for the market of cultural consumption, leisure, and tourism. Along that line, museums cannot escape the pressures to act as mediators between politics, local populations, and tourists (Kirshenblatt, 1998). And therefore, under the conditions of globalization, museums are required to contribute to the establishment of mechanisms of fixation and subjection of local populations who would otherwise escape the control of local political elites (Appadurai, 1996). In this situation, it would be at the least naive to reduce the problematic of networks of local museums to technical-administrative questions, ignoring the fact that, from a political perspective, networks are inevitably articulated to better ensure political-institutional control. Paradoxically, in an era of hybrid and ephemeral identities, important sectors of local societies do not expect their museums to become reflections of *mestizaje*, pluralism, or multiculturalism, but bastions of "authentic" local cultural traditions. Under these assumptions, it is obvious that political stewardship is cosubstantial with systems of museum networks.

But in the context of globalization, with its real and fictitious threats of cultural homogenization, there is a growing concern among professionals over what many have called the Disneyfication of museum offerings. Traversing types, natures, and thematic scopes, it is clear that many museums are succumbing to the McDonaldization of cultural consumption, especially under the theme park syndrome and the most generic yet suffocating pressures to demonstrate their economic viability

(Ritzer and Liska, 1997). Another symptom continues to be that, while they are required to serve as an identity platform for local elites, those local elites evaluate museums according to their economic performance and the "objective" criteria of the number of visitors. So that museums are required to simultaneously be profitable as theme parks and also "serious" as institutions of high culture. But it is certainly a pretentious aspiration that one institution be part of the leisure and tourism industry, be economically powerful, serve as a mechanism for political-ideological legitimization, be a depository of cultural heritage, and, finally, give at least the appearance of autonomously establishing its own cultural politics.

However, the dangers of the Disneyfication of museums do not only lie in the generalization of management systems or the imposition of economic profitability. These, certainly, are clearly important aspects, but, undoubtedly, they do not only occur in the museum world. Disneyfication, both as a phenomenon of the standardization of museum offerings at the international scale and of their insertion into policies for the commercialization of local cultural heritages, is an issue that primarily refers to the homogenization of exhibition cultures. Thus, these processes demonstrate the progressive disappearance of many museum "cultures" – in the fields of cataloging collections, of museography, of administrative management, of teaching, etc. – that succumb to the standardization of exhibitions and museum activities with the objective of attracting the public through an offering that is familiar and self-indulgent. All of these museum "cultures" have been the result of the historical decantation of very different types of collections, disciplinary focuses, and politics of representation, in turn, in very different territorial and cultural contexts (Bennett, 1998; Carbonell, 2004; Greenberg et al., 1996). But these "cultures" are giving way to mimicry both in marketing policies and in

exhibition strategies. Thus, under the appearance of distinctiveness, which presides over the approach of many local museums, which resort to exalting the particularities of their collections, their repeated use of the same museographical approaches, the same thematic structures, and the same exhibition and expographic resources remains hidden. In other words, the McDonaldization of museums is a phenomenon both of the generalization of business management systems and of their orientation toward cultural and tourist consumption, as well as the "cloning" of museography and exhibit strategies.

It is not surprising then, that there is such a widely held belief that the presentation of local cultures – particularly through a selection of their specific material cultures – is sufficient on its own to counteract the general tendency toward cultural homogenization. Certainly, the local is shown as the different, but it is rarely acknowledged that the same systems of representation are being used to show the different. This achieves exactly the opposite of the desired effect; that is, the imitation of systems of representation in local museums is precisely the main reason that they all seem the same. Thus, all local cultures, which are in fact territorially distant and have very diverse historical and sociocultural dynamics, appear as if they all share a "family resemblance." Rural cultures, local histories, the thematics, the structuring of discourses and narratives all seem to correspond to the same pattern. But this pattern is not the consequence of sociocultural parallels – either real or forced – but the effect of homogenization as a result of the use of the same types of exhibition discourses and narratives. Therefore, a hidden danger of the initiatives for local museum networks lies in the uncritical acceptance that sharing the same systems of representation only refers to a mere exchange of exhibition resources and techniques. Yet, it is reasonable to

think that, if local museums want to share resources while safeguarding their local and thematic specificity, adopting a "uniform" museography should not be part of that agenda of collaboration.

Contrary to what intuitively seems obvious, what makes local museums distinctive is not so much the exclusiveness of their collections, which is undoubtedly relevant, but their capacity to show those collections in a unique way and by extension, the imprint that they can incorporate into their own museography. If one of the goals of museum networks is to encourage pluralism in territorial and thematic museum offerings, they must value and promote local museographical cultures. Along that line, the imposition of a "universalist" museography would only accentuate cultural mimicry. To the contrary, there is no reason for local museums to remain limited to presenting the territorially unique according to what is globally appreciated and demanded – especially by the tourist industry – but rather to show the global from perspectives that are locally and culturally significant. In this way it is possible for local museums to not end up being mere simulacrum for tourists, to which natives also visit as tourists, but institutions that tourists go to because they are important for locals.

Finally, in debates about museum networks, the contribution that they can make to policies for standardization and the exchange of information about resources and collections is undoubtedly a matter of the utmost importance. Although some of those that have advanced in that field have already shown some "perverse" effects of the standardization of data, the majority of museums in our sociocultural context have not even seriously considered joining processes of standardizing information on resources and collections.

In this area, not having a shared system of exchange of information on resources and collections continues to prevent museums from having access to more optimal and efficient management systems and, at the same time, diminishes their mission of providing the public with all the relevant information about their cultural heritage. Networks of local museums, and by extension all the institutions connected to cultural heritage, would clearly benefit from establishing the necessary consensus to be able to share protocols for standardizing and exchanging information. Diverse initiatives for establishing these agreements have already shown the advantages of adopting metadata systems for managing the collections of museums and institutions of cultural heritage (Callery, 2004). But, for reasons similar to those considered above, this objective should not be translated into the implementation of an equally uniform system for managing collections. Here, generally, we always think of computer programs that supposedly provide answers to all the problems that arise in the management of all types of museums, the whole variety of collections, and to all cataloging needs. Also on this point, the survival of different museographical "cultures" is not merely a question of respect, but a strategy for guaranteeing pluralism and creativity in museums. Put in more blunt terms, it is not about imposing the same computer programs, but establishing the necessary platforms so that, regardless of the management systems used by each museum, there can be an exchange of information between museums and they can be used by the public.

In addition, apart from its technical-documentary benefits, the initiatives of standardization and exchange of information between museums can effectively contribute to the real dissemination and public enjoyment of collections. The most named, but rarely implemented, resources for the

social control of the management of the cultural heritage guarded by museums would thus be an important advance. Along this line, therefore, the consensus on metadata systems related to museum collections is not strictly a demand for better management and publicity, but a tool for democratizing the social uses of heritage as well as for their public financing. In conclusion, on the terrain of collaboration between museums, it is necessary to unravel so that networks can effectively establish connections.

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Politics, Art History, and Museums: An Anamorphic Perspective

Politics, Art History, and Museums: An Anamorphic Perspective

In the peripheral landscapes of the Canary Islands, politics and art history appear to compose a painting that, when viewed head on, provides us with an eloquent representation of the everlasting dissociation between politicians and art historians and critics in the management of culture. Museums stand in the background as an expression of the already old disagreements about their orientation and management. In this painting, seen from the front – we must insist – politicians represent the native, the Canary Islander, while the art critics and historians are seen to be declaring their distance from the local, brandishing the universal character of art. This is, of course, an "official" image, one of those that, by being contemplated over and over again, has ended up turning into an incontrovertible truth. Thus, politicians conform to their role – defending their own, our particularities, although to do so they must suffer some impertinence from art critics and historians –; in turn, those critics

and historians are shown as taking on the role of intellectuals who are independent from public powers.

Always presented as good, this interpretation has been reinforced in recent decades in the Canary Islands by the fact that the islands are governed by "nationalists," since it is presupposed that their intentions would be – according to their political ideology – to create and maintain museums with the sole goal of exalting local history and culture. And the opinion that the nationalists, who are short-sighted about high culture when not openly despising it, would only have reluctantly created and maintained art museums is assumed to be true. Art history itself, and with it the self-defined "cosmopolitan" intelligentsia, has never failed to point out that the local political class's lack of sensitivity and education has been the main obstacle to cultural development on the Islands. This has been, and everyone agrees, the frontal view of this painting of politics, art history, and museums. In the same way as we have been taught that looking something "in the eyes" is a moral virtue, so we have been trained that to correctly see a painting you also have look at it head on.

Even as a mere exploratory exercise, this composition could be seen from another angle. And so, indeed, if viewed from an anamorphic perspective, from an oblique perspective, the image looks rather different, and perhaps is unexpectedly revealing. Unlike the frontal view, which creates the illusion that the image being viewed *represents* some aspect of reality, but that, ultimately, we already know, was modernly constituted as one of the principle apparatuses of political legitimization and ethics of Modernity – especially through museums –, the anamorphic perspective, to the contrary, escapes the control and discipline of the aesthetic orthodoxy. From this latter perspective, the painting provides another image that

stayed out of focus due to the inertia of the frontal gaze. Through this focus, we can observe how politics needs museums, and it needs them to be blessed by art history, to equip itself with a mark of "modernity," at the same time as art history claims for itself the task of providing content to museums in order to socially materialize its intellectual power. Here it is important to note that those museums are no other than the art museums – and specifically the museums of modern and contemporary art. In opposition to what is presented to us as obvious, against what has been sanctioned even by the academy, local elites obtain their cultural and political leadership among the local population not so much through archaeological, historical, ethnographic museums, but through the establishment of art museums.

It is precisely art history, speaking of art in the Canary Islands, turning it into its particular and delimited object of study, that naturalizes "Canary Islands art." It is the universalist discipline of art history that establishes the existence of a "Canary Islands art," not the political proclamation of such. In this way, art history becomes – a role that it plays around the world – one of the main bastions of the construction of the nation; in this case, if one has to speak with legal precision, of Canary Islander "nationality." But, and this is of paramount importance, for art history to fulfill this strategic function, it must always be presented as a cosmopolitan discipline, not tied down by local constraints. Paradoxical as it may appear, the existence of a "Canary Islands art" always depends on its history being analyzed, periodized, and evaluated according to "international" art history.

Certainly, museums originated as one of the most effective apparatuses of propaganda and legitimization of the nation in Modernity, and they

were exported to the rest of the world as such, in the same package that contained the Western model of the state and civil society. In particular, archaeological, history, ethnographic, etc. museums played the strategic role of providing the heroic narratives of the nation's origins and collective memory. But, despite this importance, all of them were subsidiary in respect to art museums, which were called upon to endow the nation with its true personality. Their proliferation, even outside of capitals and large cities, only historically reinforced the centrality of art museums as the main indicators of national prestige and wealth. This mechanism has also operated on the Canary Islands despite the often strident promotion of museums of local culture sponsored by nationalist politics. But on the Canary Islands, of course in what seems counter-intuitive, natural history, archaeological, history, and ethnographic museums originated and are maintained essentially as tourist resources – both for foreigners and for locals themselves, in addition to being an obligatory visit for the captive school population –. In fact, in comparison with art museums, these museums continue to be sometimes grotesque combinations of tourist souvenirs and children's toys. Hence, for this reason, only art museums provide the necessary mark of cultural legitimacy to local elites, especially when they adopt a nationalist political ideology. Now, to say it once again, it is art history that provides said legitimacy and not mere political will. In such a way that, if one does not fall into the trap of looking at the painting head on and instead adopts that other, anamorphic perspective, one can appreciate that the image that it shows is one of local politics and art history mutually and symbiotically maintaining one another and their positions of power in the insular society.

Additionally, that anamorphic point of view offers one last nuance. In its narcissism, art history – international, cosmopolitan, modern – thinks it

sees a palpable show of chauvinistic localism in the insular political elites, a consequence of the cultural immaturity that they also assumed to have. However, everything points to the contrary. With their contemporary art museums, their auditoriums, and other apparatuses of "high culture," the political elite of the Islands legitimize themselves within the country and win approval outside; with their archaeological, history, and ethnographic museums they fill the local population with nostalgia while they exoticize local culture for tourist consumption. Then in accordance with the current times, the Canary Islands political elite, rationing out high and low culture, but not believing in either one of them, seem resolutely and intelligently installed in the postmodern moment. To the contrary, art history – still modern in the midst of postmodernity – and self-absorbed in its academic battles, has lost a great deal of its critical potential. And thus, looking obliquely at this painting, in which politics and art history appear, with museums as a backdrop, we can see the political class laughing deservedly after having managed to make, as the historian Elías Serra expressed many decades ago, the formal cosmopolitanism of island intellectuals into nothing more than another element of local color.

The Tourist Gaze and the Given to be Seen in Museums

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We live in a tourist world, a world to be seen, felt, questioned, traveled. Today we are all tourists and, under the "tourist syndrome," we are also all abducted by the desire to consume places and things of the past. Nostalgia for the old times, for ancient things, which used to only affect the upper classes, today extends throughout society as a whole. This desire – for many, the tourist's primary motivation – is based on the belief that, in modern society, all authentic things have been lost, so that now they can only be found in other distant places and in the authentic objects produced by other peoples. Thus, all tourism seems to swing between, on one hand, the premise that the routine of everyday life in Modernity is such that people want to or need to escape from it, with spaces and times of tourism offering those desired extraordinary experiences as compensation for that routine, and, on the other hand, a desperate quest for authenticity.

We also think that tourism is a consequence of profound structures of the human condition, something that in other eras manifested in pilgrimages, or that expresses, in contemporary terms, ancient dichotomies and radical discontinuities between the ordinary and the extraordinary and the sacred and the profane. However, tourism is a distinctively modern phenomenon, despite the many similarities that it may have with other earlier cultures of traveling. And it is such because it constitutes a new ordering of the world, and thus a new form of seeing it and consuming it. But the issue of how this global system of traveling was constituted, that is, what made cultures that were previously generally sedentary become cultures of travel and how did the desire to know other places spread, remains unknown and, as a result of cliches, full of repeated errors. Was it because everyday life had become very boring or was it caused by an expanding world?

Contrary to what is generally accepted, this whole assemblage of tourists, travel agencies, trains, ships, planes, hotels, beaches, images, cameras, postcards, souvenirs, desires, experiences... this new ordering of the tourist world, was not born from the tedium and alienation of everyday life with the advent of modern life under capitalism. Curiously, the beginnings of this dream of tourism coincide, not to say are co-substantial with, the important period of the formation of modern nations; not before, despite the easy comparisons that are established with journeys in traditional societies, or more topically with the Grand Tour.

Before Modernity, the idea that a national community of the rich and poor as equal citizens was simply inconceivable. In general, the lower classes remained illiterate, sedentary, and constrained to the space of the village or the region, while in the high culture, the aristocracy cultivated arts,

sciences, and contemplated travel and Latin as part of their education and training. Until the 19th century, people's mobility was segmented and hierarchical. Only the elite was very mobile, making long seasonal migrations, trips for leisure, commerce, and exploration. Therefore, the accepted continuity and transition between the Grand Tour of the elites during the Ancient Regime and modern tourism, in terms of emulation or social imitation is a clear sociological error. The Grand Tour and tourism were two separate, different "worlds." The Grand Tour was strictly a form of traveling that was "exclusive" to the governing classes, which formed part of their education and training. Travel among the lower classes was an unimaginable activity until the 19th century, when travel was democratized for the first time.

At the same time, national histories, the natural histories of nations, and the histories of the people – especially folklore as an authentic expression of national legitimacy –, national architecture, music, arts, archaeology, and national heritages in general are all born with the emergence of modern European nations. And, what is often forgotten: national "places" and "travel" through the nation also begin. Nationalist enthusiasm interpellated the now citizens toward new objects and discourses and new spectacles of the nation, that is, capital cities, national monuments, national exhibitions – those giant glass display cases to exhibit national arts and industries –, national parks to show the national landscapes and nature, national museums to host the nation's objects and treasures and to display its international power and influence.

This was also the beginning of what we now know as the "society of the spectacle," where this is presented as the embodiment of society itself. Then, tourism appeared as part of Modernity, not as a compensation for

it. Nationalism and modernity did not reinforce the contrast between the world of everyday life and a world beyond it, an "extra-ordinary" world. The tourist's searches were based on the false belief that tradition and authenticity are the antithesis of the modern, when in reality they are nothing more than its own creations. But tourism, obviously, is not limited to national borders. Forming part of Western expansion, soon the world created by European colonialism began to touristize, looking in exotic places and ethnic traditions of the "others" for what had been lost at home. And thus, since its beginnings, the pioneers of tourist travel, such as Thomas Cook, did not limit themselves to organizing the trip, but rather, their mission was much more ambitious: to create and articulate the desire to travel. Their business was that of persuasion, opening up the world, interpreting and translating places, producing maps, guides, and information.

Finally, the tourist became someone who travels, not to see a place, but to see themselves seeing that place. However, already convinced of having lost authentic life and things, and seduced by the expectation of finding it in other sites, tourists do not want to know anything about the impacts of tourism; they want to enjoy the peoples and things of the sites to which they travel exactly as they were before the arrival of tourism. To achieve this, for their nostalgia to be satisfied, everything has to be reduced to fiction. But now that all of these desired places are no longer what they were previously, precisely because of tourist demand, capitalist nostalgia rebukes the natives for not having preserved their cultures in pristine conditions before its arrival.

In their eagerness to consume images, the tourist gaze ended up appropriating everything given to be seen in the places of destination.

Among the many and very different types of images consumed, the contemplation of objects in museums is perhaps one of the most common and complex.

But if the tourist is a modern subject, the tourist gaze was, in itself, a new way of seeing, which belonged to Modernity. And, at the same time, that new way of seeing corresponds with new forms of exhibition and exposition, shaping a particular "regime of curiosity" that allows for describing how subject-object relations are constituted in a determined era and place, and enabling the cultural comprehension of what is seen, who is seeing, and how they see it. In our culture, these regimes of curiosity have evolved from the Renaissance palaces and the quasi scientific cabinets of the Baroque to the 19th century museums, those sites of exhibition that introduce the subject in a space with pretensions of totality, such as universal art museums (the Louvre, the British Museum, the Prado, the Metropolitan Museum of Art), those of geology and natural history, of decorative art, and ethnology. In comparison with all earlier ones, new ways of exhibiting objects were introduced in Modernity, but this characteristic was not exclusive to museums. In a broad sense, this new "exhibitionary complex" is shared by two other spaces that are important for Modernity: commerce – especially large stores – and the domestic interior – in particular, the bourgeois lounge. And the nexus of the union between these three spaces is none other than that created by the commodity fetishism in capitalist society, by the phantasmagoria at the origin of the society of the spectacle.

Armed with new technologies of vision and supported by rigid systems of classification, modern museums became powerful machines of representation, in their dual role of educating the masses while also

providing entertainment. And here, the modern citizen's desire to know a nation's past coincided with the tourist's desire to know the present of the "others" – a present, properly stated, that was only understood as the living expression of the West's own disappeared past.

Certainly, we cannot return to the past, but we can recreate it. Museums emerged with the goal of reconstructing history. By arranging objects and artifacts in an orderly manner, museums showed the history of Earth, of life, of humanity, of civilization. But objects, taken as witnesses of the past, do not say anything on their own, they must be interpreted. Subject to interpretation, we can only build discourses with them, not about their original meaning, but about their meaning to us.

Separated from their context, stripped of their vital connection to human happiness and suffering, objects in museums acquire a sacred aura. They end up being adored in their glass cases, on their pedestals, in their often luxurious installations. Exhibitions, even those created with rigor and honesty, are not presentations of the past as it really was, but representations in light of the present.

Museums and their exhibits play a clear role in the production of social knowledge. Exhibitions are social and historical acts involving what artifacts have to be collected, where, by whom, when, and how they should be displayed. And these decisions are not only intellectually or scientifically oriented, but are also ideologically and politically motivated. Knowledge and power are, then, inseparable.

Undoubtedly, this power is being relativized or nuanced in recent years by museums themselves that try to transmit to the public the relativity of

their own discourses and, thus to minimize the power of their authority over visitors. However, this recognition of multiple voices, of reflexivity, of the existence of interpretations that differ from those of the museum, while being an important change from traditional ways of communicating social knowledge through exhibitions, continues to be, in many cases, an act of purification of that symbolic power, whose candor leaves the institutional power they represent hidden from the public.

It is true that museums originated as one of the most effective apparatuses of propaganda for and legitimization of the nation in Modernity; and as such they were exported to the rest of the world in the same packet that contained the model of the Western state and civil society. In particular, archaeological, history, and ethnographic museums played a strategic role in providing the nation's heroic origin stories and collective memory. But despite that importance, they were all subsidiary to art museums, which were called upon to give the nation its true personality. Interestingly, in the peripheries, such as the Canary Islands, and only as an apparent contradiction, natural history, archaeology, history, and ethnography museums were created and are maintained fundamentally as tourist resources – both for foreigners and locals themselves, since now everyone is turned into a tourist in their own land –.

In any case, seen from the center as well as from the periphery, museums, accumulating the remains of the past, are spaces for the exhibition of objects that have abandoned their status as commodity; they are, in that sense, containers of the market's waste. Holding what were originally market goods and singling them out as artifacts, the museum creates a static and ossified understanding of history. And thus, social relations, such as those that are represented in museums, are not revealed only by

what is there, but also through the "presence" – as absence – of what is not there.

The museum has been associated with the development of modern forms of collecting, managing, and classifying, which are assumed to be intrinsic to scientific practices of exhibition. However, how things are arranged and seen in an exhibit is inevitably linked to modern market culture.

It is not the artifact in itself that is on display in the museum; to the contrary, what is displayed are its associations with exchange value on the market. In the museum, commodities ultimately reach a status of "priceless" artifacts or works of art. Although, all things considered, at the bottom, all objects in museums have a price, only one that is "very high." But, like other spaces of phantasmagoria in the society of the spectacle, the role of the museum is, nonetheless, more creative and ambiguous than what arises from its condition as part of the society of the spectacle. The museum, that heterotopia, that place in which multiple spaces are juxtaposed, both affirms and rejects consumer society, a place where the bourgeois sense of monumental time is constructed over those ruins, over the waste of consumer society.

Walter Benjamin provided us with a clear-sighted commentary on this conundrum of modern culture in which museums appeared and are developed.

> There is a Klee painting (1920) – Benjamin says – entitled *Angelus Novus*. In it one sees an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth open, and his wings are spread. The

> Angel of History must have that aspect. His face is turned to the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them… The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

We could consider that, in Benjamin's terms, that what the angel sees in the ruins, in the waste in front of him is "a museum." Thus, what is given to be seen in museums is the waste of commodities, that which has been removed from market circulation. We use them to make representations of the world and its history and we turn their contemplation into one of the most ingenious resources for tourism and the society of the spectacle. But, under the phantasmagoria of capitalism, the fiction that it offers us – that of the spectacle, the movie theater, the museum – is not a false image of reality but rather, what we have is a real image, only of a reality that is entirely false. We live in tourist world and in a world of images, both manifestly real, ubiquitous, and omnipresent; so much so that "reality" is becoming that strange country to which we only go on vacation.

Paul Klee
Angelus Novus (1920)

Phantasmagoria, Fetishism, Waste, and the Given to be Seen in the Museum

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Challenges to the classification and exhibition procedures from cultural and historical sciences, which have been a fundamental pillar of curatorial practices in the West, have become widespread due to postcolonial theory and indigenous critiques, as well as those from other fields of knowledge. Undoubtedly, as Tony Bennett indicates, those challenges are most noticeable in the arrangement of relations between objects and people within the museum space. Indeed, there is already little disagreement, at least publicly, with the opinion that those relations should be reordered with attention paid to the reconfiguration of the social in forms with more cultural plurality. But, at the same time, that shared commitment is translated into a variety of practices and effects insofar as museums are understood in different ways as "contact zones," spaces of dialogic encounter between different cultures, instruments for

encouraging cultural tolerance, or as means for promoting and managing the identities of differentiated communities.

It is a well-established position in philosophy and art history that ways of seeing are historically and culturally constructed and that they are linked to the constitution of subjectivity and objectivity. All forms of exhibition and exposition are implicated in what Stephen Bann calls "regimes of curiosity": objects must be considered in a social and epistemological context if we want to understand how people see them (Bann, 1995). The regime of curiosity allows for describing how subject-object relations are constituted in a certain era and place, and it enables cultural comprehension of what was seen and who was seeing. A regime of curiosity thus confers the subjects' incorporated orientation toward the world of objects. Bann reconstructed the evolution of these regimes of curiosity, from Renaissance palaces and the Baroque quasi-scientific cabinets to the 19th century's forms of exhibition, which introduce the subject in a space with pretensions of totality: the universal museums of art, geology, natural history, decorative arts, ethnology. But only in recent years have systematic efforts been carried out to highlight the parallel development of museums and modern consumer culture. Starting primarily from a rereading of Walter Benjamin's work, we can note Tony Bennett's work on the "exhibitionary complex" (Bennett, 1996), Didier Maleuvre on the dialectic between museums and the interior of the bourgeois home – building on Balzac's work – (Maleuvre, 1999), and Jonathan Crary's work on the modern spectacle (Crary, 1999).

But in the framework of consumer cultures, and particularly in capitalism, commodities appear to acquire a phantasmagorical character, concealing their true nature that is, precisely, the cause of their fetishization.

Considering that the modern museum is part of those same exposition-exhibition complexes, perhaps the concept of fetishism is useful for better explaining what is given to be seen in the museum, a basic element of what, based on Guy Debord, we know as the society of the spectacle.

The term fetish emerged in an unstable, paradoxical space, derived from trade in the 16th century between Portuguese explorers and the peoples of the Western coast of Africa. The Portuguese saw that the people of those territories had objects that they adored and that they considered to have divine powers. Some of them seemed to have religious value, others were talisman, others had erotic or aesthetic value, others served to makes promises in commercial contracts, and yet others had economic-commercial value. Thus they were a hybrid mixture of objects and values that the Portuguese saw as a *puzzle* and they supposed that for the Africans any artifact could be transfigured and assume the status of a fetish through their relation with it. They saw the fetish then as an expression of an unexplained arbitrariness in the assignation of value to objects.

This paradoxical status of the fetish continued with the northern Europe traders who started to displace the Portuguese beginning in the 17th century. The northern traders, who were Protestants and more sensitive to the critique of idolatry, started to see the fetishes as something similar to the Catholic's idols that they so hated. Incapable of situating those objects within the Christian discourse of idolatry or of finding the meaning within the natives' own logic, they started to see them as expressions of the Africans' irrationality and absurdity and their incapacity to systematically attribute power and value to things. From here, fetishism was understood as a source of causal error associated with the simplistic and primary

attribution of giving agency to things, in particular, giving them magical powers or other qualities that they do not possess in themselves. Since then, and throughout its different phases (Pietz, 1985-88), this concept of fetishism has been one of the main elements of racist discourse about the African "other."

Marx started from the assumptions of the Enlightenment, in particular those of De Brosses in his *Cult of the Divine Fetishes*, accepting that the fetish demonstrates the Africans' error when it comes to understanding the principles of causality, which explains why they give it magical powers. However, Marx made a novel interpretative turn by also seeing fetishism in association with the fantastic and monstrous spectacle of the alienation of the world of objects, of the commodities conjured by capitalism. Much contemporary reflection, both Marxist and post-Marxist, on consumer society has been based on this illusory character that capitalism uses to create value, including the works of Debord and Baudrillard, and also previously in authors such as Adorno and Benjamin himself. Here, fetishism is seen in how subjects and objects (commodities) are positioned in such a way as to create an illusory representation of the world of production, submerging the consumer in the worship of deceptive qualities of material objects.

Marx's analysis is based on the idea of visual obfuscation or concealment within a simple and recognizable image. Thus, fetishism emerges when the value of a commodity appears as something independent from the labor that produced it. Exchange value is shown as being derived from the thing in itself rather than from the social relations that made its production possible. Marx then turned to religion as a good analogy for understanding the power of the commodity fetishism in capitalism, as a

false and primitive form of understanding the world. Marx himself saw this commodity fetishism as a phantasmal form of visual entertainment, therefore it is not a coincidence that he would use the trope of the phantasmagoria to explain that illusory character of the commodity. The phantasmagoria was a popular spectacle in the beginning of the 19th century, heir to the magic lantern and Chinese shadows, associated with the presentation of the figure of the phantom. It consisted of a rear-projection of phantasmal images on a screen, sometimes with smoke, placed in the middle of a dark room around which the audience would sit. That technique, the phantasmagoria, whose invention is commonly attributed to Etienne-Gaspar Robertson, managed to project images that, with the projector hidden, appeared to be taking life separate from any mechanical device. Thus the phantasmagoria was one of the first articulations of a new set of subject-object relations (Hetherington, 2007). It constituted a new space, of illusion, of image and spectacle, in which it seems like the ghost was speaking to us; that is, a world in which the image has a voice, an image therefore very different from that of speech.

Museums soon became part of that world of the visual spectacle and of phantasmagoria and, thus of the new ways of seeing in modernity. But what is given to be seen in museums, both for the education of the locals and for tourist consumption, is a particular type of object and artifact whose common denominator is that they have been separated from the flow of ordinary life. Arranging commodities through their singularities (Kopytoff, 1986), the museum generates an immovable sense of history as a monument. With this, the museum seeks to negate the possibility of the uncertain flow of time that is, precisely, that which operates in the capitalist market. And it is through this operation of separation from

the flow of the market that the museum's objects lose their condition as a commodity, their exchange value. The museum's objects thus become the market's waste. However, what is discarded from the commodity remains, latent, as an "absent-presence," as the presence of an absence (Hetherington, 2007).

But social relations, such as those represented by museum objects, are not only demonstrations of what is, through what is exhibited, but also by the *presence* of what is not there, what is not seen among the displayed. What there is in a museum is a large quantity of artifacts; what is absent *but as a presence* is a large quantity of commodities. A museum thus complements other exhibition spaces, spaces of commerce – particularly, large stores – and the bourgeois household – especially the lounge – in the conformation of the full dynamic of consumer society. But it is important to indicate that museum objects, as market waste, do not refer to the storage of artifacts that are not wanted or for which there is not space but rather, to the contrary, to those that are in glass cases and well-illuminated. We must not forget that to discard, to dispose of something, is to put it in view, not to separate from it.

The museum, on the other hand, is associated with the development of modern forms of seeing linked to collecting, ordering, managing, and classifying, understood as central in the scientific practices of visual exhibition and exposition. But the way in which things are placed on display and how they are seen, their regime of curiosity, cannot be separated from their spatial distribution, techniques of exposition, visitors' trajectories, the distinction between exhibition rooms, stores and study areas, the sense of authenticity and naturalism in the exhibition of objects. Several authors, especially Susan Pearce, have demonstrated that

in the 17th century there was a radical change of orientation from the strange, the curious, the heteroclite – that had characterized the cabinets of curiosities – to the presentation of the normal and the regular (Pearce, 1995). For her part, Hooper-Greenhill, proposed, based on the work of Michel Foucault, that this was a period of transition from the Renaissance episteme to the classical one, in which knowledge began to depend on classification through observation and measurement. Museums, in any case, in their public form in the 18th and 19th centuries, ended up becoming one of the most archetypal modern institutions. In this process, as Benedict Anderson showed, modern states utilized three technologies to control their subjects: the census, the map, and the museum.

Just as maps seek to trace strange and foreign territories, determine ownership of the earth at home, and naturalize the colonial project, museums legitimized colonization, while they contributed to placing limits on the nation-states of the 19th century in that strange country, as David Lowenthal characterized it, that we call the past. Museums were deposits of the very materials that justified the possession of territory for each nation, and that legitimized the exploitation of the others through the explicit and implicit narratives of their collections and expositions.

In the apogee of collecting between 1850 and 1950, the systems of classification, based on the evolutionary principle developed in natural history came to be applied to all aspects of history and human relations. The principles of evolution were extrapolated to society, and with archaeology and the discovery of stratigraphy through geology, the dimension of time was added to classification systems. In this period, Pearce argues, the "large collections [...] demonstrated the central fact that organized material is knowledge and knowledge is organized

material. Thus, the belief that the visualization of material, that the exhibited material both creates knowledge and favors the establishment of adequate social relations became a fundamental aspect of European mentality" (Pearce, 1995).

In other words, the museum was a core institution in the modern period because its notion of knowledge was based on material "evidence" and was systematically precisely in order to legitimize the social system that developed it. The encyclopedic nature of collecting (along with the objective of completeness and the rhetoric of filling empty spaces, of establishing lost bonds) was essential, while the "total collection" was a fundamental element of the grand narrative for explaining European supremacy. It is no coincidence that state museums and their collections emerged at the same time as mature capitalism. One of the important functions of the museum in capitalism is the role that it plays as a sacred territory for objects that, otherwise, would be mere products of the market: "For them to be valuable – Pearce says – they must be established as a recognized reference point, as representative of a type of thing or artifact, that can be used, through comparison, to evaluate other materials. But, at the same time, it is necessary that this reference, as a touchstone, be maintained curiously separate from the market dynamic and thus be saved from the threats and shifts that it imposes on commodities and that would fatally suffocate the whole system of value" (Pearce, 1995).

This notion of a separated territory, a sacred place, along with objectivity, exhaustive classification, encyclopedic zeal, and the conservation of collections in trust for posterity, remind us again about the concerns over removing items from collections. Policies of letting go, of disposing of

objects from the collection, started to be considered an important factor within strategies for achieving sustainable collections. In retrospect, as Merriman has pointed out, the traditional and well-established attitude against eliminating objects from collections was developed from the original idea that museums host material forms of collective memories and that those provide an objective record in which the identities of particular communities are materialized, whether those are global, national, or local. But if recent focuses of the histories of collections, or perspectives such as the anthropology of memory, are taken into account, we can see that collections only represent a partial or idiosyncratic record; even in the natural sciences, where collections aspire to completeness but, in fact, have largely been formed based on the individual interests of preservers.

It seems, then, that to better understand what is given to be seen in museums, we must first pay attention to the processes through which culture was produced as an autonomous realm, leaving out the economic and the social, so that it could act as a force of discipline, education, and moral improvement (Bennett, 2005). As Patrick Joyce has shown, these processes had a clear architectural translation in the transition from the "city to be seen" of the 17th century to the "moral" city of the 19th century, in which the new cultural institutions – art galleries, libraries, museums, concert halls – were separated from commercial zones and marginal neighborhoods with the goal of civilizing, moralizing, and ordering the circulation of bodies within the city. The perspective of museums as "civic laboratories," as Tony Bennett considers them, similarly points to how, through the organization of distinct forms of objectiveness, different cultural entities were separated from other social practices in a lasting way, but only to later be connected to the social in varied programs of

management and social reform. This can be seen with total clarity in the traditional separation between the market and the museum.

Commerce and museum have always been presented as two separate spheres of social life. However, they are closely united in the use of the same apparatus for presenting and representing the things of the world. Contemplating things behind the glass links consumption and visual pleasure under the same origin of modern forms of seeing. In the shop windows and in the museum's glass cases we see objects reclaiming our attention, awakening our curiosity. The glass is, certainly, a barrier that stops us from touching, but even so we think that the object that we see is there in its entirety, complete in all its meaning. But, are the museum's glass cases and the store's windows really transparent? Both are full of objects but also, as "absent presences," full of all our passions, aspirations, and memories.

The glass, precisely because it is transparent but simultaneously hard and solid, operates as an apparatus that mediates our relation with the objects. In the store window, objects appear to us seductively, attracting us with their form, style, color… and, in that spectacle, commodities appear to magically acquire their value. Hidden behind the glass is the fact that all commodities are materialized human labor and that, therefore, their value is given by the social time invested in their production. In turn, in the museum's glass case, objects are presented as testimonies of the past, as monuments of history. But here what remains hidden is that, indeed, in another time they were also commodities. Thus, behind the glass, the store window and the showcase are full of "absent presences": in one, the provenance of a thing's value; in the other, that what is displayed as culture was, in its moment, a commodity.

But we project passions and memories onto the window displays and showcases, saturated with these absent presences, while the objects themselves, when we view them, interpellate us into their desires and memories. Contemplating things behind the glass and seeing ourselves reflected in it, is how, since the beginning, commerce and the museum were intertwined with modern ways seeing, in the most basic place of unification where our curiosity is educated, directed, and satisfied. Against all appearances, commerce and the museum have not been antagonistic worlds – the market and culture – but rather the best expression of the continuous flow of the social life of things. But it is not the artifact in itself that is displayed in the museum; to the contrary, it is its associations with exchange value. It is the commodity status of the artifact that is apparently displayed, through the museum's mediation, in an imaginary realm, preserving it in a place of pristine memory, more as culture than as a product of the capitalist market. In the end, in the museum, commodities acquire a status of "priceless" artifacts or they become works of art. But like other spaces of phantasmagoria and fetish, the museum's role is more creative and ambiguous than the theory of the commodity fetish would suggest. The museum, that heterotopia – as Foucault saw it –, that place in which multiple spaces are juxtaposed, both affirms and denies consumer society. The museum, that place where the bourgeois sense of monumental time is constructed over those ruins, over that waste of consumer society, is also the site of the continuity of the life, the lives, of things.

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Local Knowledge, Multiculturalism, and Cultural Heritage

Local Knowledge, Multiculturalism, and Cultural Heritage

Within the institutionally accepted categorization of immaterial heritage, as UNESCO conceives it, the field denominated "Knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe" is, if possible, the one with the most ambiguous definition and that groups the most varied types of cultural records. This is perhaps the most obvious reasons for explaining the relative delay of its compilation and categorization in comparison to other areas of intangible heritage, as it also frequently called. There are many difficulties to delimiting the composition and reach of this field related to knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe. With a little flexibility in its demarcation, it would not be difficult to make practically everything that we normally refer to as immaterial heritage fit into that sphere that is supposedly specific and distinguishable, if it includes, as tends to be required, the knowledges, techniques, competences, practices, and representations

that communities develop in their interaction with the "natural" environment. Even more so if the ways of thinking about the universe expressed in language and oral tradition, the feeling of attachment to a place, memory, spirituality, and worldview are also considered to belong to this field; as well as, traditional ecological knowledges, knowledge about local flora and fauna, traditional medicine, eating practices and gastronomy, rituals, beliefs, initiation rites, and cosmologies. Clearly, all of these are intimately linked or related to a greater or lesser extent with the other terrains of intangible heritage.

It is due to these problems of delimitation then that, in the Canary Islands as well, this field has been the last to be approached by institutional initiatives for its incorporation into cultural heritage records. At the same time, similar to what has occurred in other places, given its enormous range and varied dimensions, it has also had unequal luck in regards to efforts for its investigation and documentation. However, following the determination of the Directorate of Historical Heritage of the Canary Islands Government to elaborate an Atlas of Immaterial Cultural Heritage, a set of records grouped in this category of "Knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe" has been incorporated into the final phase. It is certainly a sample, although with a bias toward elements of culinary culture, popular medicine, knowledge of the environment and cosmovision, but, in any case, beyond the issue of its level of completeness, due to the complexity of this field, in order to study it, it is necessary to adopt criteria and theoretical proposals in relation to cultural heritage as a whole and, more specifically, to immaterial heritage. Along that line, these pages represent a first approach to that problematic that may contribute to a more critical and reflexive conception of nature and the role of cultural heritage in our communities.

Despite the acceptable differences in quality and depth, in the Canary Islands we possess a large repertoire of studies about knowledge of the environment, agricultural practices, gastronomy, traditional medicine, etc. carried out by different disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. However, few of these fields of investigation have been analyzed from the perspective of immaterial heritage. Therefore, within the academic literature, it is difficult to find specific analyses of the immaterial dimensions of the social and cultural practices that have been studied. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that the intangible aspects of social practices are not included in the theoretical agenda of academic disciplines or approaches or because, even when they are taken into account, they start from a static and essentialist conception of cultural heritage. Then the first problem when approaching the study of knowledge about the environment, cosmovisions, popular medicine, or any of the areas in which one wants to subdivide immaterial heritage, consists of being aware, more broadly, of the conceptions of what is understood by cultural heritage in general.

Currently, in contrast to what occurred a few decades ago, there is a proliferation of very diverse types of heritage. Historic heritage, artistic heritage, ethnological heritage, ethnographic heritage, cultural heritage, natural heritage, immovable heritage, material heritage, immaterial heritage, industrial heritage, paleontological heritage, genetic heritage. Today there is no segment or parcel of social activity that is not treated as a form of heritage. But the first thing that is noticed about this expansion of heritages in contemporary society is the arbitrariness of their classification. UNESCO conventionally manages three lists: tangible heritage – monuments, buildings, or places with historical, artistic, archaeological, scientific, or anthropological value –; natural heritage – the most outstanding physical, biological, or geological manifestations,

habits of endangered animal and plants species, and areas with scientific value –; and intangible heritage, which was formerly denominated, often in pejorative way, as folklore. Starting a few decades ago, it has no longer only been about including master works, but also including the masters. The old model of folklore supported scholars and institutions to document and preserve a record of disappearing traditions; now, it seeks to sustain traditions that are still living, although in danger, supporting the necessary conditions for their cultural reproduction. Both the cultural and the tangible and the living and the natural, intangible heritage seeks to keep cultural entities alive and not only record them.

The development of immaterial heritage occurred in parallel with the appearance of neologisms, particularly "first nations" (substituting Third World peoples) and "first arts" (substituting primitive art), new terms that maintain the old notions of cultural hierarchy with which the West has measured and valued other, non-white, non-European, and non-Christian cultures. These same movements fully coincided with the reorganization of museums in metropolitan cities to adapt them to their new postcolonial situation. Undoubtedly, the most significant example has been what happened to museums in Paris: the dissolution of the Museum of African and Oceanic Arts and the Museum of Popular Art and Traditions, as well as, very importantly, the redistribution of the collections of the *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Man) to the Quai Branly Museum – dedicated to the arts and civilizations of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania –. And, in parallel, the creation of the Museum of the Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean, in Marseilles.

All of these movements coincided with UNESCO's efforts to safeguard intangible heritage. The paradoxical effect of intangible heritage, that

is, safeguarding something that is alive, was indeed the construction of something new, which included an international agreement about the very concept of intangible heritage, the development of new cultural policies, the encouragement of inventories of that immaterial heritage, the collection of documentation, the constitution of archives and research centers, etc. In other words, safeguarding requires a large degree of qualification and specialization that differs from the equally specialized qualifications required for performing a song or a dance by the actors who represent it. The development of all these international conventions and agreements has given rise to an extensive legislative apparatus, declarations on rights and obligations, and a growing number of regulatory instruments. Experts and committees are those who now make recommendations, distribute resources, make inventories, examine and approve inclusion on heritage records lists, in short, they are the ones responsible for the management of that heritage.

This raises one of the main questions about the role of heritage in contemporary society. UNESCO suggests that heritage, as such, exists before being defined or inventoried; that is, it exists before and not as a consequence, precisely, of being defined as such by UNESCO itself. However, heritage is a particular mode of cultural production that gives a second life to what is in danger or out of fashion, but this time as an exposition, as a representation of itself. One of the criteria used for designating a cultural heritage masterpiece is the vitality of the phenomenon in question. This constitutes one of the paradoxes of heritage policies: if something is truly living, then saving it is not necessary, and if it is next to disappear, safeguarding it will not help it to survive. This is closely related to what some have called the clock of "retro-consumption." Today pasts are closer to the present than they were a few decades ago. This makes it so that

life, as accelerated as it is today, turns into heritage almost at the same time as it is experienced. Thus, life, the present, rapidly becomes the past, now transformed into heritage. In that operation, modern citizens (those who were considered as such because they had broken with tradition, since they had no past) have become contemporary (those who in the present relate with their past by identifying it as heritage).

As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett very eloquently showed, all patrimonial intervention, like the pressures of globalization that they attempt to counteract, transforms relationships between people. It changes how people understand culture and themselves and, therefore, transforms the fundamental conditions for cultural production. Thus, the measures initiated to preserve, conserve, safeguard, and sustain particular cultural practices are trapped between freezing and directing those practices or accepting the inherently processual and changing nature of culture. Heritage then produces a unique paradox: the possession of a heritage, something that has already disappeared or that is on the path to disappearance, has been constituted in a framework of modernity, that is precisely the condition of possibility for the global heritage industry. We generally think of heritage as always at risk of disappearance; what does not appear to be in danger, in the name of its conservation, is the study and management of heritage. And it is here where the distinction between the tangible and the intangible, between the material and the immaterial, interrupts patrimonial management. Taking its existence as *a priori*, as natural, this distinction now justifies the consideration of immaterial heritage as a specific domain and therefore with its own dynamics of study, recording, conservation, and dissemination.

Many social practices – speech, rituals – seem to not have a material substrate, but no social behavior is possible, in fact, without its concurrence with things and artifacts. Only in the world of objects do human relations make sense. In turn, objects lack meaning if they are separated from their changing historical, social, and cultural uses. Undoubtedly, we give meaning to the things with which we live, but it is the things with which we live that give meaning to our life. Culture, even the most imaginary aspects, is inconceivable without the active presence of objects, things, gadgets, and the knowledges for their use. Objects do not merely support the intangible; their very existence modulates and conditions all social life. By presenting social behaviors without the objects that make them possible, we thingify social relations; by showing objects without their uses, we idealize things. Culture is not split between the tangible and the intangible. Objects, knowledges, and practices interact and always appear as intertwined in the development of social activities. It seems then, that the division between tangible, natural, and intangible heritage and the consequent creation of lists for each one of those relies on a series of conventions, when it is not just arbitrary.

"Intangible cultural heritage," according to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, from 2003, is understood as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural

diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development."

But this intangible cultural heritage is subdivided, in turn, into different areas that are understood as more or less discrete sets of social practices and phenomenon: a) oral expressions and traditions, including language as a vehicle of intangible culture; b) performing arts; c) social uses, rituals, and festive acts; d) knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe; e) traditional craftmanship techniques. In the Canary Islands, "musical traditions and experiences" has been added, which in fact would fall under the category of "oral expressions and traditions" according to UNESCO. We have, therefore, a classification of intangible heritage that we take for granted and consequently apply to its study and management. However, we do not question the naturalness of that classification nor do we consider the extent of its consequences. But, as with any type of classification, that of immaterial heritage is equally problematic.

Human life is full of systems of classification. Humans are classifying beings, as Levi-Strauss showed us some time ago. Generally, we do not think about the classifications that make up everyday life; the categories of classification then appear to us as natural, or even magical; we simply use them, but we never ask ourselves about or question where they come from or who established them. Foucault proposed first conducting an archaeology to find the origin of these classification systems if we want to understand social categories and their central role in the constitution of social order. The first question here is: How are categories created

and how are they kept "invisible"? How, in Durkheim's terms, do social acts take on material force? The second issue is that all classification systems contain an ethical and moral agenda. Thus, each standard, each normalization, values some point of view and, consequently, negates or silences others. This is not bad in principle; but we have to be conscious of the fact that it always supposes an ethical, and therefore potentially dangerous, choice.

Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, who were among the first to study classification systems from the perspective of the social sciences, already put forth the conclusion that classification systems are not only inexorable and inescapable, but also inevitably hierarchical. Thus, in anthropology the use of classification systems has been recurrent as a device to understand other cultures, whose categories have been fundamental in the structuring principle of the West's colonial conception of the culture of "others." Among many others, the distinctions between cold and hot societies, primitive and civilized societies, hunter-gatherers, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. And, especially, racial systems of classification.

On the terrain of cultural heritage then, and applying certain criteria of classification, not all heritages are valued equally. As a political and economic resource, some are regulated, legislated, and conserved and others are excluded, marginalized, and abandoned. In consequence, the law only protects what has been previously classified as authentic heritage. In such a way that, ultimately, it is not the people who decide what their heritage is and who conserve their past; it is increasingly the experts who, classifying and managing it, establish what is a people's heritage. But, in a more basic way, how we classify heritage depends on our ideas about what we understand as culture.

Space and territory, time and memory, and culture and identity; which have been, respectively, the fields of study of geography, history, and anthropology, now appear as concepts that flow from other disciplines. This amalgam not only affects the problems and the objects of study but, significantly, is noteworthy for the exchanges of methodologies and investigation techniques. One result that stands out from those exchanges has been the renewal of cultural theory. Thus, for example, in Cultural Studies, they began analyzing different forms of representation and the dynamics of social power, refusing to understand culture as a mere reflection of economic structures. These new perspectives remained, however, trapped in thinking of culture as a substance, something that one has and thus as something that can be described and studied in more or less precise fields.

But if we recognize that culture is always continuously transforming, as a result of its inevitable adaptation to the changing conditions of social life, we have to speak more in terms of cultural processes instead of more or less fixed cultural features. In other terms, cultural processes cannot be analyzed starting from a static and essentialist conception of culture. Contrary to what is commonly accepted, we do not have a culture, but rather we give a cultural dimension to our social practices. At its heart, what we call culture consists of establishing a situated difference in time and space in respect to other peoples or communities. And those differences are socially created in the local conditions and circumstances of space, time, and memory. Cultural heritage inevitably also refers to those processes in which the past, history, and memory are locally significant. To that extent, local knowledge, its nature and social uses, has to be considered one of the most significant components of the study of cultural heritage.

There is a certain convergence in the most recent anthropological approaches related to local knowledge, which treat it as "a practical activity, that is spatially and temporally situated, constituted by a history of past and changing practices." That is, local knowledge operates more through a set of practices than depending on a formal system of shared wisdom regardless of the social context in which it operates. Oriented toward practice, this conception of local knowledge has been raised from different theoretical orientations and authors ranging from Pierre Bourdieu to Anthony Giddens. Tim Ingold, on the other hand, has been one of those who has contributed the most to these new perspectives, affirming that we live in a world that is not separate from us, but rather one in which we are always immersed. Our knowledge of the world, then, can be described as a process of training or apprenticeship, always involved in the environment. Human beings, from this point are view, are rooted in nature and immersed in localized practical acts. From this focus, local agricultural knowledge, for example, consists of a series of capacities for improvisation, specific to a context and time, rather than forming part of a system of knowledge about the management of plants, animals, and environmental factors as a whole that was held by the natives as something abstract, precise, and permanent.

Depending on the context of the interaction, local knowledges are historical. Furthermore, they are not isolated, but connected to the rest of the world through relations of resistance, adaptation, and domination. This has important implications for the study of local knowledges as an integral part of communities' cultural heritages. Thus, local knowledge is always influenced and modulated by broader regional or international socioeconomic systems, by cultural and political borders, and by processes of cultural hybridization. And, of course, they are also now subjected to

to the influence of new technologies. In consequence, the study of local knowledges has to take into account not only internal dynamics but also the changes that are produced in specific territories as a consequence of globalization. In addition, we must also study what new ways of thinking and living, and what changes in cosmovisions are produced from the confluence of the local and the global. The question that is raised here is then how to study that cluster of local knowledges and how they are maintained, while changing, in those more global contexts.

Ethnographic research techniques are the preferred tools among scholars of heritage, especially of immaterial heritage. Ethnography appears as the most appropriate method when describing and analyzing those local knowledges, which are generally non-written and thus fundamentally transferred by oral traditional, that are seen as highly idiosyncratic and as having to be collected in the most varied situations of everyday life. But, since we do not want to enter into other controversies here, and to state it more clearly, research on cultural heritage should not only be ethnographically oriented, but also anthropologically informed. It is a major error to think that merely refining our ethnographic techniques would be enough to understand local knowledge, to be able to understand it as the axis of cultural heritage. It is not a matter of simply avoiding what every ethnographer knows, but not all recognize, about the difficulties, errors, lack of skill, bad faith, manipulation, lies, and other bad arts that frequently cloud the relationship between the ethnographer and the native, at the expense of our field work and corrupt our descriptions of local cultures. More than this, it is undoubtedly a question of serious problems, of being conscious of the conceptions from which we study or interpret those local knowledges. It is not merely an epistemological issue – how we study the world –, but ontological – how the world is

formed. In our case, we are not faced with ethnographic issues, but with anthropological problems.

A good indicator of the errors that are derived from not considering the anthropological dimension in studies of heritage privileging the ethnographic perspective is the tendency toward the "allochronism" masterfully described by Johannes Fabian. The principle problem of cultural understanding – Fabian affirms – has been an inclination to constitute the "other" as a scientific object through the negation of their contemporaneity. Always seeing the "other" as living not in the present but in some past time, inevitably taking their knowledges, cultures, cosmovisions as the past, as mere reflections of what we were in other times. Denying them the present has been until now the necessary condition for constituting an object of study and the body of modern knowledges that we call anthropology. A body of knowledges nourished by ethnographic descriptions that have always started from considering that they, the "others," are what we once were and that, consequently, only we are in the privileged position of being able to evaluate their cultures and knowledges. Not interested in their lives in the present, denying it, we treat them, in fact, as the living dead. We do not consider them as they are, our contemporaries, but rather we force them to continue living in the past, to be, therefore, out of time. That tendency toward allochronism explains the unconscious interests of many scholars of popular culture. For example, the concern for gathering the memories of old peasants, faced with the fear of losing them forever, is usually not due to a concern for their living culture, but motivated by the desire for them to remind us of ourselves, based on our own theoretical and ideological conceptions, which we estimate as historically noteworthy and culturally significant.

But where the scope of the problem of cultural comprehension can be appreciated with special notoriety is in how the nature-culture dichotomy, so characteristic of Western modernity, has mediated the vision of other cultures, has impeded the comprehension of cultural differences, and, ultimately, has been an obstacle to intercultural dialogue. Additionally, our conceptions of nature and culture have made a mark on all research and policies related to heritage. Particularly, the sphere that we are concerned with of "knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe."

As indicated in the beginning, this section on intangible heritage, encompasses an enormous variety of social practices and multiple cultural dimensions, from knowledges of the environment to agricultural know-hows and cosmovisions. But in a more generic sense, all of these knowledges and practices refer to particular conceptions of the world of each culture. That is, to how different cultures establish the elements, parts, agents, etc. that make up the world and how they resolve that relationship between those elements, parts, and agents. The ways of resolving the distinctions between the human and the non-human and between nature and culture are central to this problematic. Given that this is determinant when it comes to signaling cultural particularities on this terrain of immaterial heritage, it is essential to have a reference framework for the different cosmovisions and conceptions of the world. But, above all, this is fundamental for knowing how different cultures define human and non-human "others." The anthropologist Philippe Descola has contributed a suggestive theoretical framework that could be highly useful for the study of this field of knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe. According to Descola,

we can distinguish four principle types of ontologies that, in turn, shape the cosmologies, the models of social relations, and, finally, structure alterity, relationships with the "other." From an analytical point of view, first considering their variants and combinations on the ethnographic terrain, those four principle types of ontologies would be: totemism, animism, analogism, and naturalism. It is not possible to conduct a detailed presentation of this model here, despite its relevance for current debates in anthropological theory. But, drawing on Descola, it is worth at least making a brief exposition with the goal of showing its certain interest to this sphere of immaterial heritage.

Totemism is based on a classification system that that draws on the clear differences between plants and animals to structure the distinctions between human social groups. Starting with the differences that they display in form, color, behavior, etc., plants and animals are particularly useful for establishing and maintaining social organizations. In other words, differences in nature serve as a model for forming and explaining the human social structure based on an unequivocal representation of a totemic animal. Thus, individuals pertain to the clan of the jaguar, the bear, or the serpent... Unlike totemism, many cultures attribute a "spirit" of their own to plants and animals and, therefore, consider that they can establish relationships with them of the type that people maintain among themselves. Just as there are bonds of friendship, love, hate, exchange, enmity, etc. between people, relationships can be initiated with those other entities. In this way, plants and animals are endowed with attributes such as affection, will, emotion, and, also, with social characteristics such as hierarchy, kinship, or ethics, which allows for recognizing that anthropomorphism is significant in these societies.

In the opposite sense of totemism, which resorts to plants and animals to understand the human social order, in animism, it is the (human) social categories that allow for understanding the system of relations between humans and other beings of nature. There are some important implications in these differences between totemism and animism. In the former, a group's totem, usually a plant or an animal, but sometimes an object or a substance, confers the same physical and psychological properties and characteristics on all human and non-human beings, which are similar because they have the same origin. But it is important to point out that those properties are not those that characterize the totem animal as a species – jaguar, bear, or serpent – but rather the name of an abstract property attributed to the totem animal, such as being brave, just, or aggressive. In the latter, in animism, humans and non-humans share the same nature and spirit that animates them and allows them not only to communicate among themselves but, since they have that common essence, non-humans are given a social existence that is equal to that of humans. However, this equality is established by attributing the condition of humanity to all beings and not, and this nuance is important, taking humans as a species as a reference. In that measure, humans and non-humans, each have specific materialities (bodies) but, identical internal essences. Put in more simple terms, in animism, beings share the same "soul" even while having different bodies.

Analogism is the third type of ontology proposed by Descola. In this case, the assumption is that the properties and variations of certain entities in the world influence human behavior and destiny at a distance. Thus, for example, in some cultures it is believed that each human has an animal double and that the vicissitudes of that animal – if it suffers an illness, if it

is injured, etc. –, can physically and psychologically alter humans, without the mediation of any contact. There are, additionally, numerous examples of analogism in very different societies. Others include geomancy and Chinese systems of divination or, in Europe, the ancient medical theory that consisted of diagnosing medical illnesses based on the similarity between certain natural substances and symptoms or parts of the human body. Astrology could equally be considered a form of analogism.

Descola calls the fourth type of ontology naturalism, which is the one that characterizes modern Western culture. In naturalism, nature exists as such, regardless of chance or human will, and is subject to the laws of cause and effect. But naturalism is not exclusively based on the recognition of the existence of nature but rather, at the same time, it establishes the existence of a social world in which human creativity is developed, a creativity that, along with many other manifestations, is the basis of cultural diversity between human communities. Establishing the distinction between those two domains, that of nature and that of society and culture, the modern naturalist ontology in turn established a distinction between the knowledges of each domain, the conventionally accepted division between natural sciences and social sciences.

There are radical differences between naturalism and the other three types of ontology. Thus, naturalism can be seen as an inversion of animism in that instead of affirming an identity of souls and a difference of bodies, it is based on the similarity of bodies and a multiplicity of souls. What separates humans from non-humans is, precisely, having a soul (consciousness, language, etc.). To the point that, along that line, the distinguishing factor between human groups is frequently denominated the soul or spirit of a people. However, it is important to

note that despite this clear separation between the human and the non-human established by naturalism, for some time, but especially since Darwin, we accept, from the physical point of view, that humans form part of a biological continuum that connects them to other non-human beings. On the other hand, naturalism gives rise to a cosmology in which humans are grouped in differentiated collectives, which we commonly call cultures, which not only excludes non-humans but also marginalized others who, while human, throughout colonial history were considered to have limited spirituality or uncivilized customs, to be amoral and rudimentary. As a result, they were classified, along with animals and plants, as part of the domain of nature and not of culture. In this way, naturalism has been an essential element of the constitution of Western cosmology, as a mechanism for legitimizing Western supremacy. As Descola, among others, has also indicated, the principles governing such cosmology are basic, so simple in their luminous evidence that we tend to consider them as universal in scope. Thus, naturalism attempts to universally impose the idea that the borders and properties of human groups are established based on a radical discontinuity between humans and non-humans. In other words, in the language of modernity, that culture extracts its specificities from its difference from nature: culture is everything that nature is not. Ours is then an anthropocentric cosmology.

By considering modern assumptions of the separation of nature and culture as universal, all other conceptions, all other cosmologies, are evaluated according to that standard, in such a way that anything local is always marked with the prefix "ethno" – ethnobiology, ethnobotany, ethnozoology, ethnopharmacy, ethnomedicine – used to indicate its local and relative character. Thus, in fact, whether or not all other cultures

shared that conception of nature and culture was never studied, but instead we have simply assumed it to be universally valid. However, contemporary social theory has started questioning the ontological validity of that nature-culture dichotomy and criticizing its sociopolitical and ideological consequences.

For example, in a line of investigation that has much affinity with that of Descola, the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has also contributed to a radical overhaul of both the naturalist ontology and a new vision of Amerindian cosmologies that perhaps illustrates with special emphasis the problems of intercultural comprehension throughout the entire colonial and postcolonial period. For Viveiros de Castro, the Amerindian cosmology imagines a universe populated by different types of beings, humans and non-humans, each one endowed with the same type of soul, that is, the same set of cognitive capacities and wills. The possession of a similar soul implies the possession of similar concepts, which determines that all subjects see things the same way. Particularly, individuals of the same species see themselves as we humans see ourselves, that is, as beings endowed with the figure and habits of humans, seeing their corporeal and behavioral appearance in the same way as human culture. What changes when going from one species to another is only what Viveiros de Castro calls the material referent. For example, where a human sees a jaguar sipping the blood of its victim – Viveiros comments –, the jaguar sees itself drinking a tasty cassava beer; similarly, where a human sees a snake about to attack him, the snake sees a succulent tapir that it is ready to bite. Such difference of perspectives is not a plurality of viewpoints of a single world, but a singular point of view of different worlds. Hence, where our modern ontology starts from the unity of nature and a plurality of cultures

(multiculturalism), the Amerindian conception supposes spiritual unity and corporeal diversity. Or, in other words, one culture, multiple natures. In this sense, Amerindian cosmology is not cultural relativism, but an objective or natural relativism, multinaturalism. Our own ethno-anthropology is uninaturalist and multiculturalist; the Amerindian, to the contrary, is uniculturalist and multinaturalist.

The problem for the indigenous perspectivism – as Viveiros de Castro calls it – is not therefore the discovery of a common referent (for example, the planet Venus) out of two representations (for example, the "star of dawn" – morning light – and the "vespertine light" – evening start – or the "star," the "true sign," or the "planet," as it is called in the Canary Islands, especially on the Island of Fuerteventura). To the contrary, this makes it clear that it is a mistake to imagine that when the jaguar says "cassava beer" that he is referring to the same thing as us (a delicious and nutritious beverage). In other words, perspectivism supposes a constant epistemology and variable ontologies, the same representation and different objects, a single meaning and multiple referents.

Along with other epistemological and ontological questions, perspectivism places us squarely in the problem of cultural translation and, therefore, the issue of the comprehension of other cultures. When it comes to explaining the diversity of subjects, Amerindian perspectivism is situated on the plane of the body, while modern naturalism is situated on the plane of the spirit. For Europeans, the ontological diacritic is the soul (upon arriving to the Americas they asked: Are Indians humans or animals?). For the Indians, to the contrary, the diacritic is the body (their question was: Are Europeans humans or spirits?). Europeans never doubted that Indians had bodies; after all, all animals have them. On

the other hand, the Indians never doubted that the Europeans had a soul; for them, in fact, all animals and spirits also have one. Europeans' ethnocentrism consisted in doubting if other bodies had the same soul (and mind) as they did. The ethnocentrism of the Indians, on the other hand, consisted in doubting if other souls had the same bodies.

This brief exposition, based on Descola and Viveiros de Castro, does not seek to be a synthesis of current debates about different types of ontologies. Its less ambitious objective has been to emphasize the importance of the ontological presumptions on which studies of immaterial cultural heritage are based, that are decisive when it comes to documenting, analyzing, and valuing what has been considered culturally significant in local communities and, in this case, within the knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe. Success in these tasks depends on an accurate understanding of locally rooted ontologies that modulate relations between humans and non-humans in particular space-time coordinates. Currently, naturalism is being seriously questioned from different fronts and theoretical perspectives. We do not know what cosmovisions will prevail in the future, but in a world increasingly characterized by mixing and hybridization, the tendency seems to be oriented toward recomposition according to different spaces and local contexts.

In this field of knowledges and practices concerning nature and the universe, and, in general, in policies related to the research and management of heritage, if we do not want to convert popular culture into mere excrescence of the past, or if we do not want to appropriate popular culture so that it can be commercialized as a tourist product, and if what we want, on the contrary, is to recognize the creative

capacity and complex ways in which local communities adapt and resist tendencies toward the homogenization of culture, then our studies of popular culture and our classifications, must be ethnographically oriented and anthropologically informed. Perhaps that would also be a path for constructing perspectives on popular culture that are less arrogant and ethnocentric, and more socially and ethically committed.

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The Future Already Occurred and the Present is Yet to Come. Heterotopia and Paradoxical Modernity in Museums in the Canary Islands

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Despite being institutions dedicated to the past, museums have always been greatly concerned for their future. The past, logically, has nothing to do with what happened, but rather with how what happened constructs the present and the future. Museums are not there to preserve the past exactly as it was, but to present it as we see it in the present. After their glorious era of playing this role and being one of the most genuine institutions of modernity, museums have experienced a convulsive phase in regards to their social relevance. For some, they are already a relic, ossified in old cultural patterns, that no longer respond to the configuration of our current postmodern condition. For others, museums are taking on, as they always have, the new challenges of major contemporary economic and sociocultural transformations, and therefore

redirecting their role, orientation, and goals in this era of globalization. In any case, museums are in crisis, seeking new identities, new social commitments. However, today there are more museums than ever, all types of museums are opening everywhere, and, what is even more important, a large amount of culture and heritage is being systematically museumified. In other words, the past is everywhere in this era dedicated to the commercialization of nostalgia.

More recently, while some were been debating the promises that postmodernity would bring in regards to the future, Hermann Lübbe defined what he called "musealization" as a central aspect of the changing temporal sensibility of our era, and demonstrated that this phenomenon was no longer linked to the museum institution in its strict sense, but had infiltrated all spheres of daily life. Lübbe's argument is that the more prevalent the present of consumer capitalism and the more it absorbs past and future time, the weaker the grip provided by the present and the more fragile the stability and the identity that it offers to contemporary subjects. But, as Andreas Huyssen has shown, "the conservationist belief that cultural musealization can provide compensation for the ravages caused by the accelerated modernization in the social world is too simple and too ideological." In fact, one characteristic of contemporary culture is that the supposed security offered by the past is being permanently eroded by the cultural industry itself. In it, the very tendency to musealization is crisscrossed by the increasing and accelerated propagation of images, spectacles, and events. So that museums, despite their proliferation, cannot ensure the desired long-term culture stability.

Or rather, our museums are inserted into those dynamics of contemporary societies, traversed by adaptations, frictions, conflicts, and negotiations

between the tendencies toward cultural homogenization in social behaviors and consumption patterns, and local resistance to losing collective identities. Our museums are also, therefore, the result of the particular local realizations of what we could call international standard museology. But if we think that our museums are a mere application, which can be more or less successful, of that museology, I think we lose sight of many of the elements of analysis that would allow us to better understand what museums we have, why we have those museums and not others, and if we are so inclined, to also think about what museums we would like to have.

To achieve this objective, I think that first we would have to analyze some of the basic assumptions about the nature of museums and the cultural coordinates of modernity in places like the Canary Islands to, in turn, take a reflexive look at museums on the Islands and, for the optimists, take their perspectives seriously in the coming years.

Many have turned to Foucault to present a radical critique of museums insofar as, for Foucault, the museum is an institution, born with the Enlightenment, that embodies the power of the state, with the purpose of ordering the world according to universal rules based on a totalizing concept of history. But, at the same time, Foucault has also been a reference for those who see that that same museum is redirecting itself towards values of critique, polyvocality, and democracy with the goal of dismantling those old notions of historic totality and continuity, opting for non-linear visions of history and the past, and questioning the power relations with which it has been traditionally constructed. As a substantial part of the modern episteme, Foucault considered museums a particular type of space, as a space of difference, as a heterotopia.

For Foucault, a heterotopia is a space in which the relations between the elements of a culture are suspended, neutralized, or reversed. Heterotopias are real places in which the other real sites of society are represented, challenged, or inverted. Heterotopias are, in short, places that are outside of all other places and that are, however, real. Although Foucault aligns the museum with the cemetery, his vision is less funerary than that other, such hackneyed, image used by Adorno who equated museums with mausoleums, the museum as a sepulcher of dead objects, and also different from that of Merleau-Ponty, who saw museums as the expression of the historicity of death. It would seem, at first, that Foucault had a negative vision of museums since, like hospitals, prisons, and schools, they are instances of state power embodied in the built environment, in spaces and buildings that are significantly different from the rest. But museums in themselves are like encyclopedias and libraries, whose function has been to categorize, classify, and order the world in a universally reaching and universally intelligible totality. Thus, some of the most influential authors in museum studies – such as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Susan Pearce, Tony Bennett, and Douglas Crimp –, have characterized the museum as an institution born of the Enlightenment whose capacity for collecting and displaying objects has responded to the needs of capitalism and the society of the spectacle, and whose power over the education of individuals is exercised through careful and ordered knowledge within an institutionalized and publicly managed space.

However, there is another way of understanding museums based on Foucault. The museum's current questioning of its own historical and ideological basis has not been possible despite its roots in the Enlightenment, but rather the postmodern museum is now able to revise its original and continued function of legitimization thanks, precisely, to

that Enlightenment past. In other words, the museum tends to operate, in postmodernity, according to an *ethos* of permanent critique of its own history and its own foundational bases. But, according to Foucault, what is it that makes the museum a heterotopia?

"Heterotopia" is a term that comes from medicine, where it refers to organs, tissues, or parts of the body displaced from their normal position. Of course, etymologically it is related to the more popular term "utopia." But while utopias are unreal, fantastic, imaginary places where a perfect order reigns, heterotopias are real places, that exist in all societies as "counter-places," simultaneously representing, denouncing, or inverting all other conventional places. Foucault used the metaphor of the mirror to illustrate that duality and contradiction, the unreality of utopia and the reality of heterotopia. In a mirror, the image that you see in it does not exist, but, at the same time, the mirror is a real object that enables us to relate to our own image. If Foucault distinguished various types of heterotopias and referred to many in modern societies – such as asylums, clinics, or prisons –, we are especially interested in those that he thought were linked to "slices in time" and the principles that structure them.

Those heterotopias create a rupture, in an absolute way, with the ordinary experience of time and temporality. In them, time is indefinitely accumulated, like in museums and libraries, which are especially important heterotopias in modern Western culture, where time is stored with the purpose of "establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place."

Gathering distinct objects from different times in a single place, the museum involves a double paradox: it contains infinite times in a finite space; it is both a space of time as well as a timeless space seeking to liberate time through temporal cuts, organizing its materials in rooms according to time periods or in series of objects by eras. Therefore the museum is a palimpsest, a continuous accumulation of time, a heterotopia in which time never stops accumulating without ever reaching its end. Museums are, in short, heterotopias that present very different worlds, cultures, and times. But, what type of heterotopias do we find in the museums of the Canary Islands, so far from the metropolitan centers and so eager to be approved as modern?

If museums are born with modernity, the question here is what type of modernity have we had on the Islands. I take it as a fact that we have had a different modernity, since it would be naive to ignore that being modern here is different from being so in London, Paris, or New York, or even in Buenos Aires or Beijing. Today we are all moderns – or perhaps we have never been so, as Bruno Latour says –, but, of course, the clocks of modernity have never been synchronized. Each territory has had its particular "modern moment," if we can speak in the terms formulated by Habermas, that is, a unique and singular moment that created dramatic and unprecedented changes that gave rise to a rupture between the past and the present, between tradition and modernity. As that single moment did not take place, or, in any case, did not occur at the same time everywhere through European colonial expansion, what is certain is that the world in which we live, where modernity has clearly spread, is, however, a world that is irregularly perceived and unequally experienced. It is precisely those local coordinates that are important for understanding what type of heterotopias are presented by our local museums.

The exoticism fostered by remoteness and insularity, the numerous vestiges of an ancient population that resisted revealing the secrets of its origin, and a conquest that, while it shaped a new society, inaugurated the taking up of a European consciousness of the existence of the "other," placed the Canary Islands in the early stages of European colonial expansion. Disarticulated from the native population, the Islands were rapidly populated by new groups of immigrants in a new sociocultural and economic context that, similar to what occurred in the Caribbean, could be described as an abrupt entrance into Modernity. In the heat of successive products for export, a new creole, hybrid society was forming, the result of very diverse origins and cultural traditions. That demographic and sociocultural configuration was constituted in a chronotope, in a particular articulation of time and space, that ended up making, in the European perception, the Canary Islands into an ambiguous territory, between the ancient and modern worlds.

Having entered the modern era early, the new population of the Islands was not, however, ancient or exotic like the natives, but neither was it sufficiently modern as the metropolitan populations. The most notorious result of that vision of the new Canary Island society that emerged after the conquest was the fascination with the Island's nature, including the indigenous populations – for the Europeans, the indigenous of the whole world formed part of natural history – seen as both exotic and curious. But the attraction to the exotic was accompanied, in an inverse measure, by a lack of interest in the culture of the new colonists. In the European imaginary, the Islands materialized some of its principle origin and redemption myths – the Garden of Eden, the Fortunate Isles... – while they were also identified with the tropes of natural life and noble savages. European narratives about the Islands then were structured

to present them as a "natural" space, as opposed to the insufficiently modern "cultural" space of the new colonists.

This vision has historically conditioned not only the European and Canary Islands imaginaries but it has also been determinant in the traffic of specimens, objects, artifacts, and goods between Europe and the Islands. Colonists, merchants, and travelers were busy collecting and transferring all types of plants, animals, and artifacts, along with the remains of the Island's indigenous population – which were incorporated into collections, first in cabinets of curiosity and later into natural history and anthropology museums – and, obviously all of them were trafficked even more with the products derived from the new crops that were introduced. There are many valuable examples of natural history specimens and indigenous remains distributed in museums and collections throughout Europe and in the museums and private collections of the Canary Islands. However, the material culture of the new settlers and their successive generations was largely lost because it was neither exotic nor curious, but precisely because it was European yet backwards and not fully "modern." In short, the postcolonial Canary Islanders were not as primitive as the indigenous to be of interest to anthropology, but nor were we sufficiently civilized to form part of modern European history.

However, the scarcity of social history collections is not the main characteristic of the historic conformation of museums on the Canary Islands. What has been even more significant is the type of museums and their orientation. Following the imprint of colonial ideology, the first museums in the Canary Islands were not dedicated to history but, following modern academic specialization, to prehistory and natural history. As heterotopias, those museums were given the responsibility of

presenting what the Islands offered as more specific, more distinctive, in short, more exotic to the eyes of European moderns. That is, native plants, animals, landscapes, and of course, the Guanches, as another component of that conglomerate of landscapes, plants, and animals. But those museums were not only created to satisfy the exotic drive of the colonial gaze, but they also provided the basic elements with which the island population had to build its collective imaginaries, its history, and its identity. In those museums, in those heterotopias, there was not room for creole culture. Landscapes, plants, animals, and the Guanches represented the pristine and pure image of a territory to be conquered; the Creoles, however, were a hybrid that mixed too many origins, too many identities, and, of course, too much bad consciousness for having destroyed that immaculate nature of landscapes, plants, animals... and the Guanches. There were not museums, then, for the history of the descendants of the Guanches, nor of the settlers, nor of the Guanches mixed with settlers, nor of the settlers with other settlers. In short, there was no place or time for the history and memory of the postconquest, for those six centuries of hybrid and mestizo culture that had been, yes, genuinely modern. There was only the beginning and the end, the time before the conquest and the present. The remote and the now; nothing in between. This is another one of the paradoxes of the colonial heterotopia: the renunciation of addressing the history of what, in fact, made us into moderns early on, but of course, in our own way. Thus, we feel nostalgia for a pristine nature that we have destroyed and in which we make the Guanches wander as the ghosts of all our identitarian ideals. Undoubtedly, we are the result of all those landscapes, plants, animals, and natives, but we are also sugarcane, wine, bananas, potatoes, tomatoes, and hotels. And now, in full postmodernity, we are also those who celebrate Halloween while we drive cattle, those who

go to McDonald's and to the *guachinches*. In our current postmodern cultural landscape, we see Los Sabandeños dressed with the *manta esperancera* singing boleros, and rap groups with black leather jackets vindicating the Guanche race, or Los Alegres Colombinos, in a farm of La Gomera, dressed as Mexicans, singing mariachis. With these mixtures of such heteroclite elements, now yes, we are decidedly postmodern. In fact, we have gone from having lost a large portion of our traditions to having more traditions than ever. We live in a de-traditionalized society, as Anthony Giddens showed, but in which, paradoxically, all types of traditions proliferate. This world where tradition no longer structures society, is also the world where more traditions than ever are recuperated, recreated, or invented.

The situation changed in the last third of the 20th century, in the heat of a fledgling democracy, the *revival* of ethnic identities around the world, and the expansion of museums at the global scale. On the Canary Islands, old ones were remodeled and new museums were created. And now yes, there are also history and ethnography museums. Museums of history – to chronologically represent the Islands' past at the hands of their ruling classes – and of ethnography – to represent, non-chronologically, but completely without temporality, the past of the subaltern classes, of peasant culture, if anyone happens to know what that is –. In the former, the urban middle and upper classes appear with their events, monuments, historic milestones, that are narrated in a progressive time line. In the latter, the *magicians* (not the laborers or workers) are shown without history: they only have traditions, customs, curiosities that, submerged in timelessness, supposedly are lost in the night of time. And thus, magically, the essence of the Canary Islands is transmuted.

The fact is that our most modern museums continued legitimizing the old division between nature and culture: where nature was represented, there was no place for history and culture, and where those were the protagonists, nature was shown as a passive territory over which history and culture are erected. Nature, space; history, culture, time. There was never an option for showing the different articulations of time and space, the distinct chronotopes in which our past and our history have developed. These are our heterotopias: natural history and archaeology museums – where there is no room for explaining the postconquest – and history and ethnography museums – where plants, animals, and the Guanches stand out due to their absence –. However, all these absences are, in some way, present in all the museums, where the ghosts of one and the other swarm, trying to escape the spectral with the hope of some day (some night) being embodied in our exhibitions.

In short, all our museums, separated in different buildings, maintain the vision that Europe imposed on the conquered territories in its colonial expansion and sanctioned by the division of academic knowledge, which has hidden precisely the ambiguous, contradictory, and paradoxical character of our modernity. As in the Caribbean and other colonial territories, cultivating sugarcane, exporting wine, collecting cochineal, planting bananas, tomatoes, and potatoes, and building hotels led the Canary Islands to very rapidly enter into global economic circuits and the dynamics of capitalism and imperialism. We became modern, even before many European territories. However, the island elites, who, by the way, always acted intelligently as delegations of metropolitan powers, kept the population controlled through delayed social relations, in many periods subjected them to poverty, and, until very recently, kept them immersed in illiteracy. Ours is then a paradoxical modernity. And this paradoxical modernity,

which is foundational to the contemporary history of the Canary Islands, is what is absent from the map of museums on the Islands. Our museums, then, are translated into heterotopias, worlds apart, disconnected spaces, disintegrated times. Heterotopias that alienate us from our own times. In this sense, I think that what lies ahead for museum policy, in regards to the contributions museums can make to social cohesion, to critical and reflexive identity construction, and to social emancipation, is to provide us with elements for not experiencing the present as a discontinuity, as an abyss between tradition and modernity, and for coming to terms with how and under what circumstances we became moderns. However, this is not a task that simply consists of remembering the past. We do not need to remember the past, the past must be thought about.

In this paradoxical modernity, in which the Islands' historical museums developed by avoiding it, whether museums of natural history, archaeology (prehistory), history, or ethnography, we also find art museums, especially those of contemporary art. If the former have, since their beginnings, been based on the Enlightenment, in the nature-culture dichotomy, art museums are established based on the elitist separation between high and low culture.

In the Canary Islands, the relationship between politics and art history appears as a dissociation in the management of culture. Politicians appear to be defending what is theirs, according to their role, while historians and art critics are presumed to be intellectuals that are independent from public powers.

However, contrary to that first impression, what is certain is that politics requires museums to be sanctioned by art history in order to be enveloped

in "modernity," and, at the same time, art history reserves for itself the tasks of authorizing what is considered art.

With their museums of contemporary art and other apparatuses of "high culture," the elites legitimize themselves within the country and win approval outside of it; with their museums of natural history, archaeology, history, anthropology, which are equally apparatuses of high culture, they cultivate, however, the population's nostalgia, while also exoticizing local culture for tourist consumption.

However, although in the Canary Islands that self-interested separation has been maintained, the worlds of art museums and social history, in contrast to what could be assumed, in the postcolonial era are not, in fact, so dissociated. Thus, it is noteworthy that there has been a recent appearance of neologisms like that of "first nations" (substituting that old and ugly "Third World peoples") and that of "first arts" (substituting the even older and very disrespectful "primitive art"), reissuing the old relationships between art and anthropology in new coordinates. The creation of the Quai Branly Museum in Paris – dedicated to the arts and civilizations of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania – has been very significant in this regard. Around that same time, the 1990s, when we were opening new museums under the premises of this paradoxical island modernity, the two Jacques, Jacques Chirac and his friend the African art dealer Jacques Kerchache, created one of the most important changes in museums of the postmodern period.

Ever since the namesakes Chirac and Kerchache established the new Parisian museum in Quai Branly, we have sanctified "first arts," the art of the "first nations." The postcolonial museum, converted into a new paradigm for exhibiting the "others," finally elevates the objects of

primitive culture – but only those that have aesthetic value for Westerners – to the category of art, while ostracizing the rest, the millions of pieces that until now were the pride of metropolitan colonial museums and are now politically and museumistically unpresentable. Without a doubt, we are not in Paris. We are in what is now called the European ultra-periphery, a sort of geopolitical limbo in which, being the periphery of the center, we are not, however, the center of the periphery. Thus in that paradoxical modernity, our artists are not metropolitan, but nor do they define themselves as "ethnic artists." The Canary Islands have always been situated in this curious crossroads: Breton, the Parisian surrealist, comes to the Islands, to his eyes they are exotic, different, and if not primitive then primary; Óscar Domínguez, the island surrealist, goes to metropolitan Paris, distancing himself from the exotic, the different, and the primary, to become a cosmopolitan artist.

The museums that started appearing in the 1980s and 1990s, like the Quai Branly, are postmodern museums. During that same era, the museums created and remodeled in the Canary Islands could be better categorized as modern, in the sense of being inspired, designed, and implemented according to the traditional modern conception, despite the oxymoron. They were responding to what Anthony Shelton defines as operational museology, that is, endowed with a body of knowledges, rules, protocols, collection policies, and exhibition systems that constitute the internationally standardized museology practice. But during that same period, the critique of the ideological foundations, the epistemological assumptions, and the narrative discourses of the modern museum also emerged, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, giving rise to the New Museology, the institutional critique, and what Shelton calls praxiological museology.

During those years, we read Peter Vergo – of the New Museology –; we studied the installations of artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Lothar Baumgarten, Andrea Fraser, and Hans Haacke; we read all that we could of the institutional critique; we also wanted to "mine the museum," as Fred Wilson put it. But, we primarily looked to Neuchâtel, we would go to Neuchâtel on pilgrimage, to learn from the exhibitions of Jacques Hainard and his team, yes his team, because besides his extraordinary exhibits, doing them as a team was one of his notable contributions to the new exhibition practices and he is now unanimously recognized as one of the most important innovators of contemporary museology. Visiting museums, seeing exhibitions, gorging ourselves on catalogs. Therefore here we started attempting to develop our own indigenous version of that whole wave of New Museology, cultural studies, poststructuralist anthropology, postcolonial studies. However, our exhibitions were seen by some as very postmodern, for others, contradictorily, they were too scientific. To others, in short, they seemed inconceivable because they saw them more as art exhibitions than as history or anthropology. This is somewhat amusing: it has always been considered acceptable for art to appropriate any resource, from the collections, even from the cultures of others, while it has never been acceptable for natural and social history museums to turn to art apparatuses to assemble their exhibitions and elaborate their narratives.

I have to say, contrary to what could be assumed, that we managed to carry them out thanks to the comprehension and generosity of some political leaders and with the detachment, or even rejection, of some museum colleagues. New Museology, critical museology, reflexive museology. Where were we going? Everything that we saw outside was the future for us, we were always waiting for it, it was always passing us

by without stopping. We almost ended up seeing it as if we were going to the movies, as a dazzling fiction. Well, that future has already occurred.

Of course, in the present moment we continue dragging out debates and controversies that started with that New Museology, but there is no doubt that new issues have opened up, which cannot be reduced to the changes that are being produced with the expansive use of new technologies. Here, on the Islands, we should not ignore all those questions that today fill the museology agenda, but at the same time I think we have the right to develop our own museum practice in a way that allows for the study, reflection, and pluralism to think collectively about our museums. But this is not a task for the future. The most innovative schools and tendencies that are currently being developed in museums around the world, once again, make it so that their present becomes our future. I do not think that we should attend to these new trends simply because it is convenient to know them so that the future will not find us unprepared; in a more urgent sense, we have to know them so that the present does not overwhelm us and, in this case, it no longer makes sense to talk about the future.

Therefore, and to finish, I am only going to raise a few questions, in no order of importance and without the pretense of being exhaustive in relation to the debates about the current practices and expanded present of our museums. For example, local museums cannot ignore the problems arising from disciplinary specialization, especially in places like the Canary Islands. Despite many declarations of principles about interdisciplinarity, the tendency to establish a more or less radical separation between art museums and the "rest" is maintained. Although slightly reductionist, this distinction refers to a "naturalization" of the structure of modern

academic knowledge, through which museum professionals accept *a priori* that the types of museums should correspond to the divisions between university disciplines. Taking these divisions of knowledge to be natural as the basic criteria for establishing museums might have been useful for the dissemination and social prestige of academic disciplines, but it has systematically impeded the presentation of the connections between nature, culture, and society, which are those that, precisely in their combination, explain the similarities and differences among territories, peoples, and cultures. Museums do not show life; they exhibit fragments of life as they are seen from each particular parcel of academic knowledge. In recent years, however, with the progressive collapse of modern naturalist ontology and the development of posthumanist theories in the sciences and social theory, significant changes in museology have been produced to accommodate more transdisciplinary approaches.

On the other hand, today many museums are developed under the theme park syndrome, according to the most general tendencies toward the Disneyfication of culture and leisure offerings. At the same time, there is an attempt to impose McDonaldized management systems, based on the specific end, as George Ritzer has shown, on irrationality in the guise of hyperrationalization. It continues to be symptomatic that, at the same time as they are required to serve as a platform for local identity, museums are evaluated according to their economic viability and by the "objective" criteria of the number of visitors. Furthermore, museums are being required to simultaneously form part of the leisure and tourism industry, to be economically viable, to serve as a mechanism for political-ideological legitimacy, to be depositories of communities' cultural heritage, and to continue to at least appear to be institutions of high culture.

The Disneyfication and McDonaldization of museums is, on the other hand, a phenomenon of both the generalization of business management systems in the cultural terrain and the "cloning" of museographical and exhibition strategies. It is not surprising then that there is such a widespread belief that the presentation of local cultures – particularly through a selection of their specific material cultures – is sufficient on its own to counteract the general tendency toward cultural homogenization. Certainly, the local is shown as what is different, but it does not take into account that it is shown as different through systems of representation that are the same everywhere in the world. Thus it achieves the opposite effect from what is sought; in other words, relying on standardized systems of representation in local museums is, precisely, the main reason that they all seem the same. Therefore, all local cultures, which in reality are territorially distant from one another and have very diverse historical and sociocultural dynamics, appear as if they shared a "family resemblance." If you have seen one, you have seen them all. Displaying the different by using the same museography and expography everywhere only manages to make everything that is different the same and to turn the similar into a redundancy.

Contrary to what intuitively seems obvious, what grants distinctiveness to local museums does not come from, what is still undoubtedly relevant, the exclusivity of their collections, but from their capacity to display those collections in a unique way, and by extension, the original imprint that they can incorporate into their own museography. If museums want making a contribution to pluralism in cultural, territorial, and thematic offerings to continue being one of their main objectives, they must value and promote their own museographic cultures. Along this line, the imposition of a universalist museography would only accentuate the

cultural mimicry to which they are supposedly opposed. Local museums have no reason to present the territorially peculiar according to what is globally appreciated and demanded – especially by the tourist industry – but rather, to show the global from perspectives that are locally and culturally important. In this way it would be possible for local museums to not end up being mere simulacra for tourists, which natives also visit as tourists, but rather institutions that tourists go to because they are culturally significant for locals.

There are many other questions that occupy the museumology agenda today, and as long as they remain unresolved, they will continue forming part of the debates about the immediate future of museums. One of them is the normalization of museum data and, by extension, data on cultural heritage. It is not about being up-to-date with the latest computer technology nor the mediocre debate about the benefits of this or that program or application for managing inventories and collection. The necessary consensus over metadata systems in relation to museum collections is not only a demand for better management and publicity, but also a tool for the democratization of the social uses of heritage and for its public financing. Another issue emerges from the drift of museums' didactic and outreach activities. The "performative turn," of which the humanities and social sciences have so often been accused in recent decades, seems to be reduced to mere theatrical performances of history and heritage in many museums. Moreover, the trend toward focusing on children in the core of didactic activities has only led to the accusation of a tendency toward infantalization in museums, and, of course, has made it so that the adult population perceives museums as places that one stops going to precisely when one becomes an adult.

On the other hand, one of the major concerns of all museum professionals has probably been institutional resistance to democratic and transparent management. Contrary to how it is usually represented, democratic and transparent management should not consist of an aspiration, an ideal to be reached, or that would be politically more presentable, but it should be exactly the point of departure. And this, of course, concerns all the social agents involved in museums. It is not a question of museum personnel demanding politicians and managers engage in their work according to democratic criteria. It is about politicians and managers guaranteeing that museum personnel carry out their work and their activities in such a way so as to contribute to cohesion, social inclusion, and cultural pluralism. I think that in public museums, the people in charge are not there to merely develop a political program and management plan. They are primarily there to guarantee the democratic management of those institutions.

This, which should be applied generally, is especially critical among us, who live in small territories, with a marked tendency toward social endogamy. Politics' major contribution to museums does not consist of opening new installations, nor of increasing the number of exhibitions and visitors, but of assuring their democratic and transparent management. Furthermore, this is what the museum personnel and visitors will remember of the political management, even when there is not a commemorative plaque at the museum entrance.

In this non-exhaustive list of concerns about management policies in today's museums, there is reference to the role of companies and professionals from the private sector, particularly in what is commonly called the externalization and privatization of museum services. Precisely

because we live in a complex society, the world of museums must attend to the plurality of agents, both public and private, which coincide in the field of cultural policy. Unlike what occurred until a few decades ago, when the public practically monopolized museum offerings, now private initiatives are increasingly appearing, diversifying this sector of cultural offering. However, the most significant of these new tendencies does not consist of the creation of new museums by private initiative, although of course we do have a few examples of this. What is happening, to the contrary, is that the public sector, hoping to maintain its control and monopoly over museum offerings, is progressively shifting sensitive areas of museum activity toward private professionals and companies. Thus in general, the management of public museums does not seem to consist of searching for funds from the private sector, but of redirecting its own resources toward private initiative. Additionally, it includes transferring the responsibility of labor management to private companies, usually giving them limited resources, one of the most visible consequences of which is, unfortunately, the precarization and labor instability of colleagues who work for private enterprises in the cultural industry.

In short, these are some of the many issues that museums face, both from the point of view of their management and from the perspective of the renovation of their contents and forms of representation. Many museums are making notable efforts to temper their traditional discourse of authority, encouraging new practices and narratives that are more sensitive to postcolonial sociocultural contexts and the appearance of new types of communities. Numerous initiatives are rethinking the forms of public access to collections and exhibitions, seeking to increase citizen participation and social commitment. Undoubtedly, all of these problems will condition the practices and ethics of museums in the future. Of

course, museums have always been concerned for "their" future, trying to adapt themselves to social, political, and technological changes. However, they have never considered the future itself as a relevant issue in their theoretical agenda or institutional practice. This has been due to the fact that museums, by definitions, are only interested in the past, history and memory. But the past, the inevitably different interpretations of history and the selective character of social memories are, deep down, no more than expressions of the social projects and aspirations of people and communities, that is, projections of the past and the present in the future. The future is not then mere speculation over what is to come, but rather, as Appadurai has shown us, a cultural event. If museums are to commit themselves to communities, the debate about the future of the museum must also be a debate about the future of the people. Imagining the future of museums will then not be a simple problem of what technologies to incorporate or what management systems are most efficient, it will not even be a matter that only concerns museum professionals. It should belong to the same field as those who contribute to plurality, inclusion, and democracy. I would also wager on, at the beginning of this era that we have recently baptized as the Anthropocene, museums making a contribution toward diminishing our domination over nature, our inveterate tendency to destroy it, and our arrogance as a species.

Annex
(Exhibitions)

Exhibition *Food and Culture,* Museum of Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa de Carta, Automous Organization of Museums, 1997.

Food and Culture was the first exhibition held under the direction of Fernando Estévez. It already demonstrated his unique expographic identity, both in how he treated its contents and in his proposals for staging the exhibit. The anthropologist opted for an approach that used everyday elements to display transdisciplinary content. Supports included grocery store shopping carts, fish tanks, dining tables with projections, and butchery tools, among other resources.

Eight shopping carts loaded with reproductions of food and painted in different colors show food consumption in the Canary Islands and Spain in such a way that each of them contains the real volume of food consumed per capita and per household in a year.

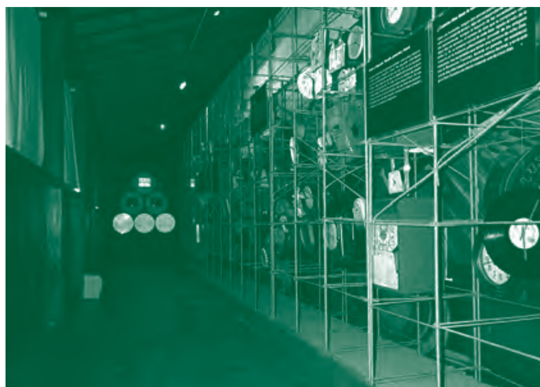
Going through a laminated curtain with the image of an open mouth, one reaches the room "Taste," one of the main characteristics of the world's different cuisines. Thus, curry is associated with India, soy with China, olive oil with the Mediterranean, etc. In the same way, there is a certain identity in the flavor of the cuisine of the Canary Islands, popularly associated with a unique sauce called *mojo*.

In all cultures, foods of animal origin are subject to prohibitions, rules, and norms that regulate their consumption. Restrictions against meat respond to complex phenomenon in which ecological factors, economic pressures, religious convictions, and moral principles interact. To explain these taboos, the exhibit uses a montage of cut out animal dies, which are screen printed and hung as if in a traditional butcher shop.

Sweet foods are always present in everyday life and in celebrations, people turn to them to express love, friendship, and recognition. The reproduction of the inside of a cake contains information about sugar, innate preferences for sweetness, and the "invisible" sugar that we consume in products in which it is difficult to recognize its presence.

Exhibition *The Past in the Present,* Museum of Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa de Carta, Autonomous Organization of Museums, 2001; and César Manrique Foundation, Lanzarote, 2003.

The pieces conserved and exhibited by museums represent and legitimize visions of the past. But those views are not immutable, they are transformed over time. The purpose of the exhibition *The Past in the Present* was to show how the past is elaborated according to the needs of each present. The visitor was interpellated through questions such as "Why is the past so important now? Why does it elicit so much passion? Who needs the past? What for?" The exhibit was staged with elements used in construction. As museographical pieces they constituted a metaphor for the fact that the past is socially constructed by each present.



The metallic structure of this room, similar to those used in construction for building foundations, provides the support for those notions of time that are the basis of how Western culture has conceptualized history for the past several centuries.

Props holding up an amalgam of ancient objects suggest that the weight of the past in the present can take on particularly subjugating forms that make it impossible to clearly advance toward the future.

The passion for the old in our culture makes it so that millions of objects are accumulated with the hope of protecting them for the future, but the criteria for what should be conserved change with time. What might be a treasure in one moment, becomes trash in another.

Exhibition *Aura, Veneration, Identity: Extraordinary Objects of the History of Tenerife*, Museum of History and Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa Lercaro, Autonomous Organization of Museums, 2008–2009.

The study of the expression of social and cultural identities through objects constituted one of Estévez's main lines of investigation. With the exhibition *Aura, Veneration, Identity*, he managed, exceptionally, to bring together a dozen objects that are particularly significant for the history of Tenerife. He used them to demonstrate his symbolic *modus operandi*, because all identity requires material references on which to base itself, in such a way that, incorporating them in the set of cultural diacritics, shows that, as Estévez says, "there is not one unique history, but rather history is and is made up of disconnected, even anachronistic, fragments that crisscross it in every way in countless interpretations."

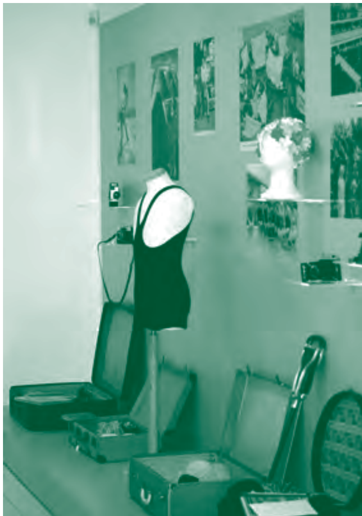
Costume of the 2007 Carnival Queen of Santa Cruz of Tenerife.
Leoncio Martínez González Collection.

Añepa and banot [traditional weapons] attributed to the possessions of the Mencey of Taoro, City Hall of La Orotava, Tenerife.

Traditional dress of a woman from Icod el Alto, according to the model from the Monteverde family of La Orotova, which gave rise to the typical dress mostly popularly used in Tenerife. Tomás Guardia Ascanio Collection.

Exhibition *Souvenir, Souvenir: The Collection of (the) Tourists,* Museum of History and Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa Lercaro, Autonomous Organization of Museums; and César Manrique Foundation, Lanzarote, 2009.

After carrying out *Aura, Veneration, Identity* with objects that were highly valued for their historical and symbolic significance, in *Souvenir, Souvenir* Estévez emphasized the treatment of objects that appeared to be the opposite: the tourist keepsake and the power concentrated behind its apparently vulgarity. Through analyzing these traveling objects and two idiosyncratic spaces of tourism – the museum and the hotel buffet – simultaneous exhibitions took place at the Museum of History and Anthropology in Tenerife and the César Manrique Foundation in Lanzarote. These sites could see one other in real time through the use of webcams.



The staging of both exhibits is inspired by two metaphors of tourist consumption: in the Museum of History and Anthropology in Tenerife, the installation recreates a buffet type hotel dining room, while in the César Manrique Foundation, the exhibition is based on three types of prototypical museum spaces: ethnographic recreation, natural history taxonomies, and the galleries of art museums.

Exhibition *Phantasmagorias, the Presence of the Absent,* Museum of History and Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa Lercaro, Autonomous Organization of Museums, 2013.

Phantasmagorias, the Presence of the Absent revealed, through distinct expository interventions, an invisible connections between objects of commerce and those of the museum, demonstrating how they are assigned different values in their transition from the condition of merchandise to that of a piece in a museum collection. To do so, it used shop windows and other resources from commerce, from the bourgeois lounge, and spaces of magic to show how they shared with the museum the same regime of curiosity that shaped the figure of the modern spectator.

The shop window in commerce and the glass case in the museum participate in the same regime of curiosity: both display objects to be contemplated and desired.

Emulating the old phantasmagoria spectacles, the project incorporates its own spectacle in which actors and the public participate in a singular tour of the exhibit.

Exhibition *The Materiality of the Intangible,* Museum of History and Anthropology of Tenerife, Casa Lercaro, Autonomous Organization of Museums, 2007.

Immaterial or intangible heritage, one of the last areas to be incorporated into heritage policies, is increasingly taken into account by experts and agencies. But the sociocultural policies that are the objects of its interest cannot be understood independently of the material culture with which they are inextricably linked. Social behaviors lose meaning without objects. As Fernando Estévez would say, "only in the world of objects do human relations become meaningful. In turn, objects lose their meaning if they are separated from their historical, social, and cultural uses."

This exhibition divides its staging into two parts. In one, material referents associated with the five senses are presented; in the other, images and sounds related to knowledges, expressions, and immaterial social practices that are produced and reproduced with the help of the objects are emitted.

Exhibition *Sea of Sea Sand,* Casa de los Coroneles, Fuerteventura, 2007.

To transfer an exhibition that would reveal the complexity of hybrid identities in Fuerteventura to the Casa de los Coroneles, the most common elements of the landscape and population of the Island were studied. The sea, the wind, the sand, and the constant coming and going of natives, immigrants, and tourists, converged in an installation whose discursive line was traced with images taken from Borges and Robert Smithson, and suggestive of Zygmunt Bauman's notion of liquid modernity. The result was a set of pieces reflecting the incessant flow of identity.

A beach spreads out in the Casa de los Coroneles, while an exhibition on a beach is projected. With the relocation of the museum, which is turned into a beach, and the beach turned into a museum, the exhibition seeks to abound in the malleability of identity and its places.

A frame from the filming of an experiment devised by Robert Smithson in his text, *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*, from 1967, that was carried out to incorporate into this exhibition.

Epilogue

Mayte Henríquez and
Mariano de Santa Ana (eds.)

Epilogue

In *Museopathy*, the essay whose title is recycled to name this compilation of texts by Fernando Estévez about museology and heritage, Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher define museopathy as the emotional effect that museums have on their visitors. However, in the edition that we have prepared, the choice of the term responds, based on its etymology, to the plan to identify the variety of illnesses that museums suffer today and the purpose of devising therapeutic plans to improve their health. At least that was the intention that Estévez expressed after reading the work of Drobnick and Fisher, to the point of making up a meta-museological exhibition about the pathologies that afflict museums, to which he would have applied treatment ranging from orthodox medicine to homeopathy, from naturopathy to folk medicine and healing. Like so many others, the idea remained in the archive of hibernating projects that accumulated throughout his professional trajectory.

Certainly, the perspective of the "affective turn" in reflections about museums and their audiences must be taken into account. But, to take it a step further, as Estévez tended to do – to those *effects on affects*, one would also have to study the effect, as a counterpoint, that visitors have on museum professionals and that, to a large extent, is the trigger for many of the critical reflections that are the starting points for these essays.

The texts that we have gathered here represent a part of Fernando Estévez's thought, which is difficult to compartmentalize in fixed categories, since the whole of his production is crossed by flows of ideas that emanate from his extraordinary propensity to perplexity.

Perhaps because of his ability to anticipate, more than two decades after his first reflections on these issues, his contributions remain relevant. This delayed contemporaneity of his ideas is not a good symptom: the ailments he pointed out in museums, such as, among others, the homogenization of exhibition cultures, Disneyfication or the treatment of material culture as contextual props, have still not been overcome. It is thus that, if at first it could seem that his diagnosis perished in the face of the formidable resistance accredited by these museopathies, whose spectrum continues to broaden while the number of museums does not cease to grow, it is not any less true that a second life can be conferred on his ideas, to give an opportunity to the posthumous (how much this appreciation would amuse him).

Therefore the selection of essays by this thinker, for whom tourism was one of his obsessions, aspires to be more than a sad souvenir. They address issues such as the mechanisms of heritage policies, the production of

time and its ideological uses, or the ontologies of material culture, that, along with other issues which he paid equal attention to in other essays, such as relations between humans and non-humans, the evanescence of the border between nature and culture, or the vitality and agency of all things, beat in the frantic heart of our late modernity. Unresolved and perhaps unresolvable problems that, for those same reasons, are, as Fernando Estévez himself would say, "good for thinking about."

Mayte Henríquez and Mariano de Santa Ana (eds.)

Origins of the texts

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