Interruptions: Challenges and Innovations in Exhibition-Making

The Second World Museologies Workshop, National Museum
of Ethnology (MINPAKU), Osaka, December 2019

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■ **ABSTRACT:** Anthropology and its institutions have come under increased pressure to focus critical attention on the way they produce, steward, and manage cultural knowledge. However, in spite of the discipline's reflexive turn, many museums remain encumbered by Enlightenment-derived legitimating conventions. Although anthropological critiques and critical museology have not sufficiently disrupted the majority paradigm, certain exhibitionary projects have served to break with established theory and practice. The workshop described in this article takes these nonconforming "interruptions" as a point of departure to consider how paradigm shifts and local museologies can galvanize the museum sector to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue in the context of right-wing populism, systemic racism, and neoliberal culture wars.

■ **KEYWORDS:** comparative museology, critical museology, decolonizing methodologies, exhibitionary projects, museum anthropology, neoliberalism, racism

The history of museology, museums, and galleries has, at least in the Anglophone world, been largely written and taught as the product of a linear rational succession of ideas and practices, which has been mediated by naturalized common human passions and proclivities. Following critiques of their colonial legacies, anthropology and its institutions have, since the 1970s, come under increased pressure to refocus critical attention on the way they and the practices they produce negotiate and manage cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, in spite of the discipline's reflexive turn (Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Rabinow 2006), many museums remain encumbered by core Enlightenment-derived legitimating conventions (Lyotard 1984). While many scholars in critical museology and other branches of the social sciences and humanities acknowledge that knowledge is neither transcendental nor universal, but carefully controlled, ideologically contingent, variably disseminated and intolerant of alternative intellectual systems, the museum's operational logic remains largely intact. Furthermore, and relevant to the 2019 Second World Museologies Workshop, entitled *Interruptions: Challenges and Innovations in Exhibition-Making*, these logics have spread globally to create a powerful and integrated ideological apparatus. While some

institutions have adopted new critical perspectives, the older and mainstream paradigm remains dominant.

If anthropological critiques and critical museology have not sufficiently disrupted the majority paradigm, certain exhibitionary projects have served to break with established theory and practice. The workshop described in this article takes these nonconforming “interruptions” as a point of departure to consider how paradigm shifts and local museologies can galvanize the museum sector, especially when it is confronted by the rise of right-wing populism, systemic racism, and neoliberal culture wars, intercultural understanding and dialogue are increasingly important.

Overall Perspectives

The Workshop followed on from its forerunner on the concept of “borders,” held in Mexico City in 2017, in which the participants presented case studies from museums that interrogated how regional and global interests collide or unite around ideas about cultural diversity, the movement of people, and disciplinary frameworks (see Isaac et al. 2019). The first World Museologies Workshop was expressly planned for Mexico City to acknowledge the city’s significance as the site of North America’s first university as well as to recognize the early pioneering work of the city’s Museo de Arte Popular and its collaborations with Indigenous Peoples. These movements that mark the country’s intellectual and political openness contrast starkly with the heightened restrictions at the United-States–Mexico border and the ramifications of the 2016 United States elections. Both workshops, theorized and organized within this series, were instigated to acknowledge and facilitate dialogue among different scholarly and museological traditions on specific core themes, and to promote the exchange of different perspectives between them and between Anglophone scholars and practitioners. While we recognize that there have been acknowledgments of alternative or parallel museologies (e.g., Ames 2003; Bennett et al. 2017; Collison and Steedman 2011; Estévez González 2004; Gonseth et al. 2005; Henríquez and De Santa Ana 2019; Isaac 2007; Karp et al. 2006; Kreps 2003; Lorente 2015; McCarthy 2016, 2018; Phillips 2011; Shelton 2009, 2016, 2018b; Tapsell 1997; Yoshida and Mack 1997), museum anthropology in the English-speaking world has been dominated by discourses constructed within the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. As such, the intention of the 2019 workshop was not to focus on the history of museums, or their heterogeneous critiques, but to encourage a global dialogue dedicated to sharing knowledge of projects that have interrupted differing institutionally normative narratives. We examined the possibilities of redrawing disciplinary lines and object-based categories in an effort to generate innovative museum or gallery-based practices. The “Interruptions” workshop took a comparative approach to understand the factors affecting changes in museums and their critical responses in both hemispheres, while catalyzing the intellectual exchange between Euro-American, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese thinkers and practitioners.

Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), proposed that museums, no less than other knowledge institutions, legitimate themselves through one of two metanarratives derived from Enlightenment philosophy: (1) the belief that because of their supposed universal significance and indispensability for human progress, science and the institutions dedicated to its pursuit and dissemination should be supported as a universal public good; and (2) the belief that art and its related institutions, by imparting aesthetic experience, contribute to the development of human sensibility, well-being, and the sense of worldly transcendence. Our group invited participants to pinpoint temporary interruptions within museum

Figure 1. Participants at the Second World Museologies Workshop at the site of the former 1970 Osaka Expo near the National Museum of Ethnology, MINPAKU, Osaka, Japan, December 2019.

discourses and operations that have given rise to exceptional, critical exhibitions that might be exemplars for new exhibitionary, disciplinary, and narrative practices.

Since the 1980s, museums and galleries have been confronted by new political and intellectual realities that contradict the assumptions outlined by Lyotard, including broad social and political changes and Indigenous intellectual critiques (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2007; Isaac 2007; Message 2019; Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2003; Shannon 2014; Shelton 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). While some institutional attempts were made to respond to these objections—for instance by art institutions and their embrace of anti-aesthetic movements—their effects have often been deradicalized by either their institutionalization and/or their incorporation into a rapacious neoliberal art market. Furthermore, calls by scholars and activists to decolonize museums are increasingly echoed in the public sphere in, for example, the mainstream media and in subversive noninstitutional educational campaigns like Andrea Fraser’s performances, Alice Procter’s Uncomfortable Art Tours (see Procter 2020) and protests (such as “BP or not BP”). Recent museological literature, in turn, has critiqued supposedly decolonizing methodologies for inadequate solutions (Boast 2011; Boast and Enote 2013; Fouseki 2010) and critical inertia (Geismar 2015; Shelton 2018a), asking, among other things, for attention to be given to institutional politics, economic interests, and regional realignments of power structures that may underlie shifts in practices including strategies aimed at increasing collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

The 2019 World Museologies Workshop took place over three days (11–13 December) at the National Museum of Ethnology (MINPAKU), Osaka, Japan. Organized by Anthony Shelton,

Kenji Yoshida, Motoi Suzuki, and Laura Osorio Sunnucks, there were 18 participants (12 nationalities), consisting of both museum professionals and scholars, who gathered to debate the topic of challenges and innovations in exhibition-making (Figure 1). Following registration, a tour of the museum galleries, a welcome by MINPAKU's director, Dr. Kenji Yoshida, a workshop orientation, and lightning introductions, the program unfolded. It was organized into a series of four roundtable discussions: Paradigms and Interruptions; Museums as Heterotopias; Internationalizing Museums; and Experiments—Artists, Curators, Museums. Participants were preorganized into these roundtable sessions and were invited to respond to their allocated theme, using case studies from their own practice, in a 20-minute paper. Following the presentations in each roundtable, the speakers received questions from the group. Afterward, half a day was allocated for a concluding discussion and business meeting to decide on the focus of the next workshop.

Roundtable One: Paradigms and Interruptions

In the first session, which was chaired by Anthony Shelton, the speakers were Shelton himself, Boris Wastiau, Kenji Yoshida, and Jisgang Nika Collison. Critical museologies (Shelton 2013, 2016) and anthropology (Asad 1973; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Hymes 1974) have consistently reiterated the need for museums to move away from an objective knowledge reinforced by their overarching institutional authority in order to experiment in the representation of interpretational subjectivity. These new genres of exhibition (see Estévez González 2004; Gonseth et al. 2005; Henríquez and De Santa Ana 2019; Porto 2007; and Shelton 2008, 2013) diversify the arguments in support of the democratization of knowledge production and management. The decolonization debate (Henriques et al. 2017; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; Sousa Santos 2018; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999) has become central to this discussion, and the neutral narrative that anthropology museums have embraced has in some cases been disrupted in order to communicate concepts of the pluriverse and multiverse in cross-cultural displays (Alvares 2001; Wangoola 2000, 2012). Furthermore, in response to critiques of disciplinary institutionalizations, the attribution of certain peoples and their material/visual culture to either “anthropology” or “art” museums continues to be pointedly debated (Deliss 2012; Geismar 2015; Vogel 1991, 2004; Yoshida and Mack 1997).

Different nondominant paradigms in museum practice have competed to disturb what are considered to be wider hegemonic practices. For example, collaborations with Indigenous Peoples by non-Indigenous institutions raise questions on whether, in order to preserve their operational hegemony, some museums and curatorial practitioners are simply supplanting one heterodoxy with another. Arguably, research needs to focus more on how practitioners choose which communities and who in those communities to collaborate with and the power relations between and among them. There are also questions, in light of debates on cultural essentialism versus hybrid identities, on the relevance of terms like “source community” in providing attributions for certain materials, including those designated by some archeologists as “belongings.” Digital projects have been posited (Geismar 2012; Wellington and Oliver 2015; Were 2014) as holding the potential to widen audiences both in terms of age and socioeconomic background—although importantly this does not apply to people with little or no digital access or literacy.

Shelton introduced the work of the late Fernando Estévez González, linking recurrent themes in his theoretical writings to the specific exhibitions he curated. Estévez González's work was influenced by Karl Marx, and Jacques Hainard and Marc-Olivier Gonseth at the Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel (MEN), who helped him envisage museums as places where powerful deconstructive metaphors could be curated to decloak commonly accepted classifications and

truths. One such example is his theorization of the relationship between tourism, consumerism, and anthropology museums (Estévez González 2019), in which both tourism and consumerism construct a system where societal progress results in the loss of authenticity, leading people to locate authenticity in other cultures or in the past (Estévez González 2019). Tourism and touristic interests are predicated on the enjoyment of “untouched” or pristine surroundings that negate the impact of tourism itself, so that cultures and the past are reduced to fiction. Estévez González (2019) links this logic to that which underpins post-Enlightenment exploration and the building by scientific researchers of natural history and ethnographic collections. These theories were explored metaphorically in various exhibitions he curated, such as *El Pasado en el Presente* (2003, Museo de Antropología de Tenerife) and *Souvenir, Souvenir, La Colección de (los) Turistas* (2009, Museo de Antropología de Tenerife). The latter exhibition engaged in various critical deconstructions relating to the alienation engendered by the “modern” condition and late-stage capitalism, as well as to image/object/art production and the contemporary role of museums (Henríquez and De Santa Ana 2019). Shelton’s presentation of Estévez González and the Museo de Antropología de Tenerife demonstrates how exhibitions, through the creation of visual metaphors, can express different layers of critical analysis of mainstream paradigms.

Similarly, Yoshida discussed the binary opposition that has traditionally separated art and anthropology institutions and exhibitions. He described three exhibitions that he curated at MINPAKU, which subsequently traveled elsewhere: *Images of Other Cultures* (1997); *Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe* (2008–2011); and *The Power of Images: The National Museum of Ethnology Collection* (2014). *Images of Other Cultures*, co-curated with John Mack at the British Museum, traced the entanglement of gazes engendered by museum displays in modernity; focussing on how the “West,” Africa, Oceania, and Japan have viewed one another. In this exhibition he reproduced the British Museum’s ethnographic gallery as it was in 1910, using artifacts from Africa, Oceania and Japan. The project aimed to review the history of ethnographic museums, as well as to reflect on the permanent display at MINPAKU. *Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe* was an adventurous attempt to hold two exhibitions with the same title simultaneously at distinct venues: an art museum and an ethnological or historical museum. Yoshida’s most recent project, *The Power of Images*, exhibited MINPAKU’s collection at the National Art Center in Tokyo, an art museum, after which the whole set of objects was then transferred back to MINPAKU and exhibited there. Yoshida remarked that anthropologists have ignored questions regarding the universality of images, which are important if the discipline seeks to foster mutual understanding across cultures. He proposed that the word “image,” a term that embraces the diversity and commonality of “art,” be employed in its place. Through these projects, Yoshida has tried to highlight the issue of the distinction between art and ethnological museums so that this distinction might be eliminated. Like Estévez González, Yoshida deploys a criticality in his curatorial practice that disturbs the naturalized conventions associated with museums, exposing the agency and conceits of images. Furthermore, this critical lens is shared with visitors, who are invited to reflect on their own cultural assumptions.

The subject of Wastiau’s presentation was the comprehensive strategic plan that will be implemented at the Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève (MEG). He described this project as a move from “brutality to equality; from holding to sharing; from conservation to conversation [see Snoep 2020], from information-giving to information exchange; from authority to plurality; from action to interaction.” With this in place, the MEG seeks to widen the constituency of audiences, introduce a diversity of languages, expand its digital infrastructure, and catalyze creativity and initiative. It hopes to be able to pay more attention to intercultural themes, adopt translocal perspectives, increase international voices, question the role of ethnographic collections, reorganize its staffing, and, finally, minimize the impact of exhibitions on the environment.

Broadly, Wastiau considers the implementation of this strategy as a contribution to the decolonizing movement in museums. In the MEG's focus on audience expansion and digital programs, this paradigmatic shift can be seen as a necessary deintellectualization of the museum space. Rather than creating metaphors that deconstruct the knowledge systems that have been put in place by the scientific community through successive academic turns, the MEG will allow the space to develop in accordance with the interests of its visitors.

Collison described Saahlinda Naay ("Saving Things House"), also known as the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay (Sea Lion Town), and the work that her people, the Haida Nation, have been doing since the 1990s to repatriate their ancestors from institutions and private collections in Canada and abroad. She described how the Haida have repatriated more than five hundred ancestors to date and how these have been ceremonially honored and reburied in accordance with Haida law and the protocols of Yahguudangang, which means both to pay respect and make things right (see Collison and Levell 2018; and Collison and Steedman 2011). Collison acknowledged that Indigenous Peoples have long been represented in museums using narratives and imagery fabricated from and for colonial purposes and that these portrayals have dominated and softened popular understandings of the past. Following centuries of violence, genocide, and repression, in the 1950s the Haida began to strengthen their silenced voices by restoring their art and focusing on its social purposes. This work has relied on access to mainstream museum collections, and Collison sees these resources of diasporic cultural art as a form of writing or repository of Haida history. Collison quoted the French writer and art historian André Malraux: "Art is a revolt, a protest against extinction." (1951: 138) This is a position echoed in the words of her cousin, Clayton Gladstone, who said: "It brought the rest back out, that is how important the art is." Haida ancestors, through their art, have bound their descendants to something that transcends the preservation of history, culture, and identity, enabling people today to heal and redefine their relationships with each other and the world, and thereby move forward together. In this way, Collison asserted that Saahlinda Naay neither challenges nor changes the past: it simply reveals it, providing a strong foundation on which to reframe current and future paradigms. Her examples show that they can provide inspiration and encourage activism, resulting in the enactment of positive public policies. Saahlinda Naay is in a constant state of creating interruptions between the colonial legacy and the Indigenous present, engendering a sustained process of self-criticism that maintains its relevance for Haida and non-Haida alike.

Roundtable Two: Museums as Heterotopias

The second roundtable panel was led by Laura Osorio Sunnucks with participants Marc-Olivier Gonseth, Yuriko Yamanaka, Nuno Porto, and Greta de León. The framework for the panel considered "museums as heterotopias," following Michel Foucault's definition and use of the concept in "Different Spaces" (1998), in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1989), and in other works. Foucault's ascription of "heterotopia" to museums exposes the mechanisms attached to state power in which gloomy storehouses of objects from varied times provided the resources for yet another eighteenth-century drive to classify and totalize the world. Foucault's concept also suggests that museum heterotopias can undermine the relationship between words and things, and lay open an interpretative space or what he describes as the "space of representation" (1989: 130). From this perspective, museums can arguably be autonomous and critical, and can use this condition to question and overthrow the power relations that have historically underpinned them (Lord 2006).

In a different theoretical modeling, the diagrams of assemblage proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) describe an exterior space of imagination, which challenges the designation of the subject as author of imagination. When envisaged as heterotopias, museums can also be agents in the mediation of creativity and imagination. In Gary Shapiro's (2003) reading of Foucault's interpretation of Claude Manet's paintings, Manet was conscious of the museum/gallery environment in which his works would hang, and so chose to destabilize the critical position of the subject. For example, according to perspectival rendering (Panofsky 1991), the person looking at the Folies-Bergère barmaid (the artist or viewer) is not shown in the mirror behind her, and is therefore absent. In this way, viewers are challenged to understand their position in the nexus created by the painting in the space. It is arguably the discursive relationship between objects that constructs the viewer as subject, and so museums construct subjects who think they are using their own imagination to receive what is on display (Hetherington 2011). Museums reveal the visibility of the process of imagination that is created outside of the object or subject. Thus, they do not exert total power, and they are not spaces of pure resistance. Rather, they are places where imagination is mediated (Hetherington 2011).

Gonseth described his "museumology of rupture," which he developed between 1976 and 2016 in collaboration with Jacques Hainard and others at the MEN. An extensive series of exhibitions questioned the role of ethnographic museums, asking whether they were not the most perverse of (all) museums (Hainard 1985). The MEN's project considered the recreation of cultural microcosms through narrative-based exhibition formats to be deceptive both in their representation of "pristine" and tidily geographically designated cultures, and in their attempt to make their fields of representation contemporary, given that, as soon as ethnographic material is collated and exhibited, it belongs by definition to the past. Hainard and Gonseth's project broke with the legitimating conventions traditionally associated with ethnographic collections and asked: "In the face of museum-cemeteries, how (can we) reinvest the museum space, energize it and question it?" Their answer was, by practicing a museumology of rupture. For a full manifesto on, with detailed characteristics of, the museumology of rupture, see the work of Gonseth and colleagues (2005).

Gonseth discussed various of the MEN's "unfashionable" exhibitionary projects, and assured us that, in spite of his and Hainard's retirement, the new directorial team does not intend to break with the movement. The exhibitions will remain expographic workshops, which do not seek to create a narrative of truth on any given subject, but examine the ways contemporary societies think and act. These museological experiments will strengthen links with current ethnographic research, developing a practice of micro-fieldwork that also involves exhibition designers. Finally, the directors are committed to maintaining the disciplinary transversality that characterizes the MEN, and to continue to explore new relationships between objects and collections through exhibitions and other media.

Yamanaka presented her most recent exhibition, *Regnum Imaginarium: Realm of the Marvelous and the Uncanny* (MINPAKU, 2019). This project explored the intersection between the creatures and "things" that fall under the category of the uncanny, how they have been classified and displayed by museums, and the human imaginations that conceived them (Yamanaka 2019). One section of the exhibition presented a typology of historic, ethnographic, and contemporary images of creatures whose interpretation, following Stanley Kubrick's assertion that the human brain "cannot imagine the unimaginable," (Chiason 2018) were based on the results of a process of what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) famously described as bricolage, where the brain reshuffles different parts of "reality" to create hybrid or liminal creatures. The second part of the exhibition traced cultural histories of how these marvels or wonders have been understood and represented by artists, researchers, and knowledge-based institutions. In her presentation, Yamanaka spoke

of the curator as shaman or installation artist. Her approach repositions earlier museological interests in classification, conservation, and intellectual totalization with a predilection for the realm of creative fantasy. For her, exhibition spaces are places where the imagination mediates objects and viewers through a lens manipulated through curatorial choices. She thus reenvisages the museum as a reenchanting forest that can be further evoked through a soundscape installation that can amplify the senses and unleash the imagination.

Porto's presentation used musical composition techniques as metaphors with which to interrogate the interplay between museum agency and relational ethics. He chose John Coltrane's album *Both Directions at Once* (1963) as a metaphor for the predicament of curating. Porto described Coltrane's music, in which a standard melody is used as the basis for a series of cycles—or repetitions—that transform it using major or minor modulations, as a useful way to imagine curatorial thought. The original melodic structure is eventually completely undermined until the modulation cycle falls back into the original melody. To the listener, this original melody has become charged with all the possibilities the music has explored. Porto then gave three examples of his museum-as-process methodology, in which museums are not a place but, as Bruno Latour (2004) has argued, a node in ever-shifting networks that is animated by dissociated, often conflicting, histories, presents, and futures. Such a methodology seeks to establish a participative and relationship-centered practice to infuse the ethnographic with social justice and make the world a more livable place. As in *Both Directions at Once*, these small interruptions are attributed the potential to transform the whole. One example given by Porto was the acquisition and the display of objects made using Brazilian nut shells in his exhibition *Amazonia, the Rights of Nature* (University of British Columbia's [UBC] Museum of Anthropology [MOA], 2017–2018). These works materialize the public identity of Maroon communities of African descent in the Amazon Rainforest, a population that is frequently unrepresented due to a lack of public awareness. The acquisition was made possible thanks to institutional relationships developed between the MOA, UBC, and the Folklore Museum of Rio de Janeiro, which acted as intermediaries with members of a Maroon community in Oriximiná, Brazil. This curatorial choice exposes the personal and political relationships involved in solidarity-based museum projects, which Porto suggests have the potential to transform museum agency.

The final presentation in this roundtable was given by De León, who screened a short video and gave an overview of the projects supported by the Americas Research Network (Arenet) across the region, including its endangered language revitalization and cultural heritage programs. She focused on “Bordando mis Derechos,” (Embroidering my Rights) which was organized by a group of Nahuatl-speaking women embroiderers in Coyomeapan, Mexico. There are high rates of violence against women in Coyomeapan, as well as low employment and literacy. Moreover, in part because of male migration, many of the women in the area are single mothers who find it difficult to support their children through the school system. Embroidery is a practice that is handed down through the generations, and so can be an effective medium for expressing and sharing intergenerational knowledge and experiences. The aim of the project is to foster a support and learning framework that relates to human rights using local practices. The embroidery work made by the women in this group expresses subjects such as the politics of food and gender discrimination. This project provides an example of the relational ethics discussed by Porto, in that embroidery culture as local heritage is associated with a sociopolitical and human rights agenda that museums could embrace more widely.

Gonseth's and Yamanka's presentations exemplify later readings of Foucault's concept of heterotopia, inasmuch as they expose and subvert the traditional ways in which museums link objects with concepts. The projects described by Porto and De León, in contrast, respond more to Foucault's idea of heterotopias as extensions of state power, which challenge museums to

redploy their collections and interpretations to create explicit political counternarratives in defense of marginalized peoples and cultures.

Roundtable Three: Internationalizing Museums

The third panel, chaired by Motoi Suzuki, focused on complicating and pluralizing the idea of museum and curatorial practices. The speakers were Christina Kreps, Choi Eunsoo, Chao-Chieh Wu, Conal McCarthy, and Jill Baird. A common thread shared by these presentations was the idea of local museology, or a body of knowledge about museum practices, shared by a unique cultural group, whether it be an Indigenous People, an ethnic minority, or a particular museum, which was mobilized to interrupt the notion of a dominant mainstream museology and its pretense of universalism.

Kreps began by focusing on curatorial practices that were largely ignored by Anglophone museology. She described and contrasted the Provincial Museum of Kalimantan in Indonesia with Buddhist monastery museums in Thailand, where the former exhibits Dayak religious objects and the latter holds a variety of offerings donated by devotees. A shared trait of these museums, however, is that objects on display retain magical powers and hence are revered by museum staff and local community members alike. The museum staff have to respect the “curatorial authority” of *basirs* (religious practitioners) in Indonesia, and in Thailand devotees periodically return to the museum to restore or renew Buddhist images they have donated. Kreps argued that these local museologies were shaped by vernacularizing the museum concept to make it fit into the local cultural context.

Continuing the focus on Asia, Eunsoo described two exhibitions held at the National Folk Museum of Korea. The first, *Forever Fabulous* (2009), showed the tradition and innovation of *Hanbok* (Korean dress) by placing contemporary works of the *Hanbok* designer Lee Rheeza against a backdrop of traditional paper screens with suffused lighting. The second, *Wedding Rituals* (2012–2013), demonstrated the similarities and distinctiveness of Korean wedding rituals, juxtaposing Korean materials with those from China, Vietnam, Nepal, and Japan. The two exhibitions share the structuralist approach of placing exhibits in a spatiotemporal context in order to expose characteristics of Korean culture.

Focusing on collaborative museology, Wu described how Taiwanese source communities were developing new relations with museums. The Museum of Anthropology at Taiwan University has a collection of Kaviyangan carved wooden posts with human figures and the Wanjia double-sided carved stone pillar, both of which were designated as National Treasures in 2015. The Museum celebrated a personified wedding ceremony between itself and a Kaviyangan post, which represents Muakai, the first female ancestor of the Kaviyangan. The Museum also held an alliance ceremony with the chief Wanjia family, which facilitated not only the donation of replicas of the posts to the source communities, but an ongoing collaboration and efforts to revitalize traditional cultures. Wu used the metaphor of the museum as a knot to describe the way in which the museum is a complex social entity that connects various communities through its collections and spaces, and actually reaches out and participates in community events.

McCarthy picked up the theme of local museology to couple it with liberation. He distinguished three periods in the history of Māori museum and exhibition-based practices that began in 1923 and have continued to the present. His critical timeline examined museums, related institutions, and shifting protocols and practices, with Māori people increasingly taking the lead on the local and international stage to assert their rights to sovereignty, self-representation, and their *taonga* (“treasures”). He acknowledged exhibitionary pluralism by comparing

the current trend to profile digital technologies and contemporary and/or urban Māori artists with other temporary exhibitions that present historical images using a “primitivist” aesthetic. McCarthy’s, Kreps’s, and Eunsoo’s emphasis on the contribution of local museologies provides a powerful refutation and suggestive reformation of dominant universal museologies. Like Estévez González’s defense of local museologies against the transnationalizing influence of UNESCO and national museum associations and Shelton’s warnings against the establishment of new orthodoxies, McCarthy’s and Kreps’s focus on pluralistic museological practices questions disciplinary cohesion.

Like McCarthy and Wu, Baird looked at the changing relations between museums and Indigenous Peoples, focusing on an exhibition, *Culture at the Centre: Honouring Indigenous Culture, History and Language* (MOA, UBC 2018), which brought together five First Nations museums and cultural centers in British Columbia, each with different protocols, responsibilities, and relationships to uphold. She described how the seven co-curators (five of whom were Indigenous) collaborated and negotiated the kind of knowledge individuals and communities wanted (or did not want) to be exhibited. Referring to actual exhibition elements, such as territorial maps, the making of material for the media passage, and acknowledgment panels, Baird provided useful insights with respect to coordinating different local museologies in one exhibition.

Interestingly, this section did not so much approach the issues of internationalizing museums in terms of destabilizing intellectual boundaries between national systems, as it highlighted how different national museological traditions and practices have been unsettled and interrupted by Indigenous Peoples.

Roundtable Four: Experiments—Artists, Curators, Museums

The final panel was chaired by Yuriko Yamanaka with speakers Fuyubi Nakamura, Nicola Levell, Laura Osorio Sunnucks, Motoi Suzuki, and Nanette Snoep. The discussion departed from the increasingly common use of contemporary art as juxtaposition and intervention in anthropology collections (Levell 2015, 2016), to examine the way its inclusion can interrupt expectations and offer alternative narratives and ways of experiencing, knowing, and engaging past, present, and future concerns. This orientation aligns with earlier projects that subverted the authority of the institution and/or curator by introducing contradiction and multivocality into the space of representation. The championing of multisensorial (Meyer 2009; Morgan 2012) or participatory (Bishop 2012) art practices also expands perspectives and destabilizes the traditional role of museum material culture. Nevertheless, the critical or dialectical value of contemporary art projects has also been questioned, especially given the problematic relationship between elite or “Western” artists and the neoliberal art market. Haidy Geismar (2015), in her discussion of two major art interventions with ethnographic collections, *Object Atlas: Fieldwork in the Museum* (Deliss 2012) curated by Clémentine Deliss at the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, and *Pasifika Styles* co-curated by artists Rosanna Raymond and Amiria Salmond at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (Raymond and Salmond 2008), for example, concluded that using contemporary art to break the binary art–artifact division constitutes a new totalizing epistemology all of its own. She stated that the vantage point of the artist might not always be as “outside” of the museum as is assumed. Geismar prefers Tony Bennett’s semiotic materiality theory—built on Latour’s descriptions of assemblage—to render different kinds of knowledge equivalent, thus dissolving the categorizations related to the art–artifact divide. While many anthropologists of art have concluded that the divisions between Indigenous/contemporary/popular arts are no longer useful (Morphy 2007), the use of popular or local art can expose and

critique the socioeconomic and political dimension of their practice, as well as the museum collections that they respond to (see García Canclini 1990; and Power and Escobar 2012).

Nakamura presented her exhibition, *Traces of Words: Art and Calligraphy from Asia* (MOA, UBC 2017), which used art installations from across Asia to demonstrate that written forms are an intrinsic part of the cultural, social, and spiritual beliefs of the region (Nakamura 2017). The works on display, which included multisensory and kinesthetic installations, transformed words into material and visual culture, encouraging visitors to experience and sense, rather than to read and translate, cultural knowledge. The project suggested that, in certain instances, art can be a more effective cultural transmitter than scholarship. Furthermore, Nakamura stated that the works encompassed Asian writing, words, materiality, and visibility to present something different, a new language that highlights the interaction between meaning and substance in artistic expression (Nakamura et al. 2013). The project upsets the logocentrism inherent in many traditional anthropology museums, and reveals the depth of the role of creative work in mobilizing narratives that disturb the traditional concept–image relationship.

The role of multisensorial exhibitions was also discussed by Levell, who presented her upcoming exhibition, *Dark Skies: Celestial Bodies, Art & Sounds*, at Saahlinda Naay (2020). Levell described her relations with artists, Indigenous knowledge-holders, and astrophysicists in the construction of the exhibition, and she introduced the work of the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud and his term “relational aesthetics” (2002: 5). She argued that relational aesthetics and relational art share a parallel history and similar characteristics with collaborative museology. Incubated in the 1990s, both practices rely on democratizing and decolonizing spaces or more specifically the sites of engagement; they are contingent on producers—the artists or curators—acting as facilitators; they both rely on producers relinquishing authorial power and a commitment to participatory engagement and conversation. In the same frame of reference, Levell spoke of recasting artworks and installations and imbuing them with multisensory elements as part of the ongoing move to disfigure and decolonize the underpinnings of the exhibition, which has historically privileged the eye and disciplined the body.

Osorio Sunnucks described her exhibition, *Arts of Resistance: Politics and the Past in Latin America* (MOA, UBC 2018), which displayed contemporary, predominantly Indigenous and popular, art that reappropriated and overtly politicized the pre-Columbian past and local knowledge. The project aimed to challenge how traditional arts and archeology from the Global South are commonly represented, showing that these arts are action and resistance against the “epistemologies of the north” (Sousa Santos 2018: 1-16). The project documented histories that have been repressed, often through state-sponsored violence (see Osorio Sunnucks et al. 2018), and showed how art that has been promoted for its picturesque qualities to conform with the interests associated with a folkloric art boom, such as Tigua paintings in Ecuador, can twist typical narratives to communicate contemporary political evolutions (Valiñas López 2008; Power and Escobar 2012). The exhibition also included a multisensory installation made by two members of an Amazonian (Shipibo Konibo) art collective, Olinda Silvano and Silvia Ricopa, that did not visually communicate political narratives, but instead acted as a testament to the role of ancestral creative culture as a tool in the face of marginalization. Finally, these artworks constitute reinventions, manipulations, or anachronizations of pre-Columbian or historical images and ideas. In this way, they are an abstraction and reappropriation of “archeology” or “cultural heritage.” In its overt political intervention, this exhibition marked a break from softer forms of exhibitions at the MOA.

The exhibition curated and presented by Motoi Suzuki, *Arte Popular: The Contemporary Expression of Mexican Craft* (MINPAKU, 2019), displayed popular arts for a mainly Japanese audience, most of whom know little about Mexican art and society. The exhibition explored

the difference between Indigenous and “*mestizo*” arts, showing their parallel but interactive development since the colonial period (see McEnroe 2012). Moreover, Suzuki emphasized that his curatorial choices put a subtle critical stress on the political issues underlying art production in Mexico (García Canclini 1990). Consequently, out of respect for MINPAKU audiences, he deliberately inserted Oaxacan street paintings that took radical or explicit political positions. Suzuki felt that the exhibition did communicate subtle nuances in the relationships binding culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic or political positions using the medium’s more common expressive themes of spirituality and religion, the natural environment, and links to pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican civilizations. In this way, Suzuki mobilized the dialectical relationship created by art to mediate intercultural understanding. Furthermore, Suzuki also emphasized the importance of multisensory installations and programming, and echoed Nakamura in feeling that these creative elements in the exhibition could communicate the language of Mexican culture sensorially rather than visually.

The final presentation was given by Nanette Snoep, who returned to the orientation of museums as places for humanistic and personal stories, which give as much attention to the local as they do to the global. Calling for the museum to move from conservation to conversation, Snoep passionately argued that museums must offer a cacophony of voices by creating networks between audiences, artists, curators, and objects that make it the focus of a relational aesthetic or praxis (Snoep 2020). She described various projects that have developed under her leadership in the last five years in Leipzig and in Cologne. One such example was a project devised at the Grassi Museum für Völkerkunde, Leipzig, entitled *Megalopolis: Voices from Kinshasa* (2018), which gave *carte blanche* to an artist collective to curate their own exhibition, with the museum’s curators acting as facilitators. In another example, *Die Baustelle* or *Under Construction* (Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, 2019) is a permanent feature of the museum lobby, where visitors can provide their feedback or feelings in a conversational (and physical) forum without even entering the museum’s galleries should they not wish to. While *Megalopolis: Voices from Kinshasa* experiments with sharing absolute authority with a “source community” that is not local, *Under Construction* privileges the local audience in devising the role and substance of museum displays. Furthermore, in this latter example it is not the artist, the curator, or the museum that are experimenters, but the visitors themselves.

Nakamura championed the idea of allowing art to speak for itself, since creativity is not only an intellectual tool with which to engender discourse, a sentiment echoed by Suzuki. Osorio Sunnucks and Suzuki emphasized that the use of art is necessarily political. However, while Suzuki privileged the communication of political particularities to audiences unfamiliar with their context, Osorio Sunnucks gave more weight to the necessity of exposing museums as political arenas and being explicit about the political positions of the curator. Levell, by contrast, suggested that multisensorial or relational art can be powerful in creating an engaged, socially conscious relationship with museum visitors. This position was supported by the case studies described by Snoep, whose projects demonstrate the vital role of audience participation in creating “art” or in carrying out experiments.

Discussion

The Workshop was electrified by memorable words and phrases. Porto described his hope that the gathering would be “a moment of freedom”; Collison rightly insisted that “you can’t make things right without telling the truth”; Gonseth described museology as “madness, poetry and politics”; Yamanaka referred to curators as a “shamans,” whereas Suzuki described his delight

when part of his museum became a bakery for making *pan de muerto* (“Day of the Dead bread”), and talked about his transformation from curator to baker. Bakers, impresarios, lunatics, moralists, and shamans! Gonseth anticipated at the beginning of the Workshop that, because of our diverse practices, it would be difficult to generalize whether as a movement museums had left one era of history to enter another. He was right.

Before summing up and identifying some of the threads that emerged from the two-and-half days of presentations and discussions, Shelton invoked John Berger’s (2001) idea of “pockets of resistance” and the radical museologist, Charles Hunt, to argue that museums and museumified spaces can be regarded as potentially disruptive enclaves, before returning to Gonseth’s question of what we might gain from comparative studies of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, whose practices are so diverse. He asked: “Are we decolonizing? Indigenizing?” or, echoing McCarthy, “is there a retrenchment?” The lively debate moved from interdisciplinary to intercultural narratives, from exhibitions as forms of liberation versus forms of entrenchment, while still recognizing that operational museology was never static but always seeking to incorporate critical museological insights. The Workshop raised questions as to whether vanguard museums continued to exist, whether museums were becoming multilingual, and why workshops such as this one privileged one language above others. Were there changes in the nature of ruptures? Can we talk about a decolonized museology? Is there a move from museums and curatorial practices based on objective knowledge to one founded on critical or deconstructive ways of knowing? And what should be the place of museums be in an increasingly politically polarized world?

Gonseth started the discussion by provocatively wrestling with the concept of rupture and the ruptures or interruptions that structured our individual papers and fractured our different museological experiences. In critiquing his own practice, he acknowledged that “rupture is not a mono-directional process. It’s multidirectional.” Based on the roundtables, he identified at least six distinct sites of rupture: (1) formal or aesthetic rupture: a reflection on the definition of collections, museum rhetoric, and staging; (2) reflexive rupture: critical reflection on the ways museums and exhibitions function; (3) cognitive rupture: from dioramas to showcase, virtual reality and new technologies, and new directions related to the history of museums; (4) ideological rupture: museums as critical spaces; (5) relational/social rupture: open to participatory ethnography, work with communities on repatriation and restitution; and (6) organizational rupture: changing ways of directing museums. He mischievously suggested that all these might be plotted on a map along positive and negative axes to position museums in relation to each other.

There followed an extended and animated discussion about the discourse of “decolonizing” museums. Kreps gave an insightful and critical overview of the etymology and history of the term, before noting that its meaning is contingent and constantly shifting depending on time and place. Wastiau picked up on her assertion to describe the decolonization master plan at his institution (the MEG). Interestingly, he related that academics had initially advised the museum not to use the term and that museum staff had also resisted using it due to its association with North American museology. Ultimately, there was, however, general acceptance and agreement that decolonization is part of mainstream discourse and practice. Expanding further, Kreps identified different strategies used to engage and destabilize colonial power structures, and invoked the politics of liberation rather than resistance. In response, Collison stressed that, speaking as a Haida, it is necessary to understand that Indigenous Peoples do live a “politics of resistance” to counter the pigeonholing and stereotyping of Indigenous Peoples: “It’s our responsibility to make ourselves visible. We also have a politics of refusal, we refuse . . . from a Haida worldview.”

McCarthy drew attention to the nominal form “decolonization,” with its problematic connotation of an activity that can reach a point of closure, as opposed to the verb “decolonizing,” which

captures the ongoing struggle to dismantle or rupture frameworks of oppression, particularly in the settler–Indigenous context. He referenced the Māori scholar Paul Tapsell’s concept of post- and pre-Indigenous positionalities and the connection between Indigenous movements and the ontological turn in the social sciences and the humanities, with an emphasis on infusing Māori values and ways of being into museology. Levell referenced the trans-Pacific cultural and knowledge exchange between Māori and First Nations peoples vis-à-vis “decolonizing” and/or indigenizing museums and museology. She also noted that in *Glass Boxes and Cannibal Tours: The Anthropology of Museums* (1992)—a precursor of critical museology—MOA director Michael Ames championed a radical pedagogy predicated on “decolonizing and democratizing” institutions and practices, and supportive of structural reform in favor of the liberation of the oppressed, a category not limited to Indigenous cultures and peoples alone.

Insightfully, Wu explained that in Taiwan “decolonization” is not part of the museological discourse. Rather, in the heritage sector there is an accent on historical remembering and the restoration of buildings and structures of the Japanese period. Similarly, Yoshida commented that “decolonization” and “democratization” are not terms used in Japanese museums and museology. He opined that we cannot deny the colonial character of the museum, but it is important to realize that there is now a diversity of different forms of museum in different parts of the world, and it may be more constructive and creative to expand the decolonization debate. He noted that he favors the term “reutilizing” over “decolonizing” and “democratizing.” Suzuki further mused that the National Ainu Museum, which was scheduled to open in April 2020, will tackle the history of the hegemonic relationship between the Japanese nation/people and the Ainu. He stated that it was necessary to find a term to understand and articulate this new relationship, which is somewhat similar to, but distinct from, decolonization. There was the acknowledgment that “decolonizing” has sometimes been used by museologists in a “lazy” and ideologically reductive way. Shelton reminded participants of the Mexican political scientist Pablo González Casanova’s (1965) concept of “internal colonialism” that functions within, instead of between, states and impinges on a museum’s operations. From this perspective, Porto suggested that it is constructive to revisit Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy’s concept of “relational ethics” (Sarr and Savoy 2018).

Baird brought the discussion back to the museum visitor, asking: “How can we enact some of our ideas on the floor,” so publics are cognizant and part of this debate? Shelton added that there is a false dichotomy between theory and practice, between critical and collaborative museology, and that it is imperative to fold criticality into museological praxis. Porto observed that museums are arguably in a position to counter the “new forms of illiteracy”—engendered by digital technologies and the dirty and corrupt media of political tweets—offering a form of “digital detox” because they have the material for “enchantment.” Yamanaka supported Porto’s idea of digital detox but noted that museums are increasingly moving toward digitization. MINPAKU has a number of digital projects, and, as such, visitors are looking at fewer objects. Yamanaka conceptualized our present moment as “a cognitive rupture from the materiality of museum experience.” Osorio Sunnucks rejoined that museums cannot advocate a rejection of the digital simply because of its inherent connection to marketing and social media.

Reflecting on her experimental living room exhibition and the way in which visitors became sociable in that space, Snoep agreed that museums can become reinvigorated sites of public engagement. Referring to various projects such as *Megalopolis: Voices from Kinshasa*, Suzuki inquired: “What is the role of the curator?” Snoep replied that “it’s like cooking, with everything you have” and that, as a director, you have to adapt. She explained that museum staff found it difficult because of the loss of control: “It’s not easy but in the end it’s very interesting.” Picking up on the political and “cooking” with different constituents, Collison offered the example of the Haida Nation and non-Indigenous islanders rallying together—which was in part facilitated

by the museum in Haida Gwaii—to protest the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines project, revealing how a threat became an opportunity for collective empowerment and social cohesion. The political agency of museums was expounded on by Shelton, who mentioned that MOA had never assumed it could be a neutral space. Baird added that without the pretense of neutrality, museums/curators could become more like documentary filmmakers and storytellers. Osorio Sunnucks contemplated the interlacing of the politics of the institution and the politics of the individual, and added: “There’s no grand narrative, there’s no grand counternarrative: there are just a lot of different political positions.” Each contributor supported the same conclusion, but while we agreed that we cannot trace a movement of museums from a precritical stage to having become postcolonial or Indigenized, we came back with the feeling that we had identified a movement from a period when grand narratives circumscribed museum practice to a successive time of fragmentation in which our field has been reconstituted as a heterotopia. Extending the idea of decentering and fragmentation, Kreps pondered the greater constellations of institutions and individuals, multispecies and kin relations (Haraway 2016) that can be embraced by museums as part of a post-anthropocentric movement toward “making-with” all of the earth’s living beings and vibrant matter.

Futures: The Third World Museologies Workshop

Following earlier discussions with Isaac, Marsh, Levell, and Osorio, Shelton proposed that the Third World Museologies Workshop focus on museums and extinction. The Workshop discussion identified two dominant aspects of extinction. First, current existential crises require that we interrogate different cultural constructions of apocalypse and temporal end-points, a task initiated in Gonseth’s exhibition, *What Are You Doing after the Apocalypse?* (MEN, 2011–2012). Yoshida pointed out that many expos and international exhibitions have also delineated temporal cycles and projected future aspirations. Extending this observation to museums reopens questions about the nature of heterotopias and the interrelationships of the chronotopes they enshrine. Second, looming ecological crises, advances in bio and silicon technologies, the emergence of new collecting institutions—seed banks, DNA repositories, digital, archival, genealogical, and other deep-storage vaults—require us to rethink the museum’s established responsibilities and political, governance, and institutional alignments. It was agreed that museums and extinction will be the topic of the third workshop.

A small group, Shelton, Isaac, De León, Marsh, and Osorio Sunnucks, met in early March 2020 to further discuss how the theme could be developed, and agreed to adapt an interdisciplinary approach. Museums, it was argued, have been shaped by industrialist and postindustrial era fears of endangerment and loss, especially of losing previously “discovered” species and cultures to colonialism and/or social or environmental change. Loss of collections, and, therefore, a potential diminution of the social dynamics that in the first place set these cultures of exploration into motion, might sometimes be equated with a fear of the loss of civilization’s vitality. Each era of human history, Isaac and Marsh suggested, appears to follow a cycle of discovery and loss in which collecting vacillates between excitement over the novel and fear over the loss of the traditional. Moreover, each contradictory swing of the pendulum opens up an increasing field of collecting activity, expanding anxiety about a future without the security of an ordered or contained world.

The organizing committee agreed, given the increasing relevance (especially after the ensuing pandemic lockdown), breadth, quality, and implications of the contributions, and the originally unforeseen interconnections between the themes of borders (containments), interruptions

(ruptures), and extinctions (dissolutions), that future World Museologies workshops merited and required additional institutional support. We therefore welcomed the invitation from De León that future workshops become part of a new program within the Mexican-based Arenet.

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