

# One object – many stories: The Museum is no “neutral” place

## The tangible and intangible dimensions of reality

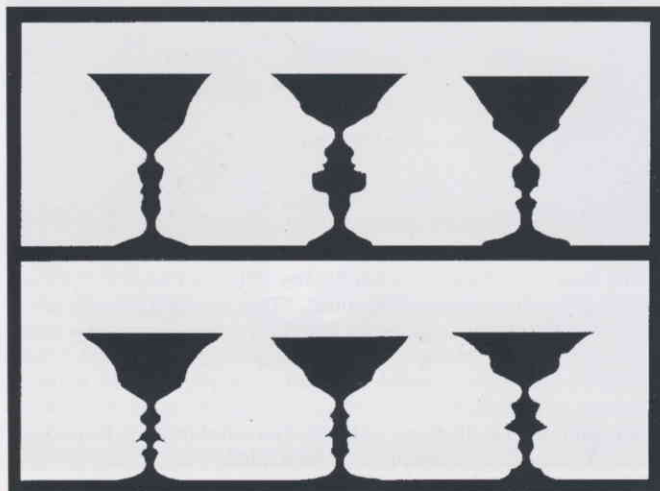
In the Seoul conference (see bold final remark), we were talking less about political programs and hybrid theoretical approaches. As people with museums backgrounds, our bases for any argumentation are the material objects from our collections. What this means is that the material world forms the central reference point for our theoretical reflections. However, these material things are in themselves incomplete and cannot stand independently.

Knowledge embraces much more than just tangible articles. Objects, things or items constitute the material or tangible world. However, when we look at an object, the intangible world is immediately activated in our reflections. We think about objects and we talk about things – we tell stories independently of the actual presence of the articles we refer to.

We store images of artefacts in our memory. Images play an important role in cultural memory because they represent reference centres for human reflections on the world.

In relation to world heritage policy, it took several years for the interconnectedness between the material and immaterial worlds surrounding objects to be officially accepted. International rules have now (2003) been published by UNESCO-Conventions<sup>1</sup>.

Whilst until some years ago, museums primarily collected material objects as sole testimonials to human civilization<sup>2</sup>, we now know that in addition we must also save immaterial world heritage in order to increase knowledge about mankind and its cultural diversity.



Faces or vases? The answer depends on what you perceive as the background – the black spaces or the white. Photographer Zeke Bermann has created this intriguing collage using the silhouettes of real people.

Source: “Goblet Portraits” by Zeke Bermann (c) 1978

Anette Rein



Foto: Adelheid Straten

It was in fact Asia that influenced Europe and the Western World in this way. Seoul is thus the right place to be talking about these issues, here at this conference.

With the left shown image I want to exemplify differing perspectives on the material and immaterial world, which together form the two dimensions of reality. The two different colours of the picture stand for the material (black) and the immaterial (white) spheres of reality. While looking at the cutting site, it becomes clear that both colour dimensions exist together and at the same moment, simultaneously. The different shapes of the vases come into being as a result of the different forms of the profiles and vice versa.

Because of the intensity of the black colour, people usually see the black vases first.

After a second glance, combined with a wilful change of looking and the cognition of two differing perspectives to be discovered in the graphic, people are able to perceive both dimensions of it.

Now they discover that they are free to decide what they want to see in any object and from any situation they experience. There is never only one vase and one profile – there exists a multitude of material forms analogous to “vases”, with their corresponding immaterial dimensions, or “profiles”. It is the curator’s and the spectator’s choice to decide which sort of vase they want to see.

This awareness of the two existing dimensions of the whole reality holds significant consequences for the debate on material objects and the immaterial voices surrounding them. Referring to this knowledge, I will present you with three different perspectives on objects.

- A short historical introduction to the changing politics of collecting.
- Drawing on examples of “best practice”, I will show you ways out of the “desert of data”.
- The third point shows possible ways of working in ethnographical museums with a self-reflective image of not being a “neutral place”.

## Multifarious pathways in museum collections ways into museum collections<sup>3</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe, collecting became an obsession of rulers, aristocrats, churches and later for academics. The natural sciences had not yet been developed and people worldwide collected exciting and exotic things for their

curio galleries (Kuriositätenkabinette). Such collections were intended to prove that the objects therein were examples for the varieties of the creational act. The unusual and the rare were the criteria for collected pieces. Ethnographic objects were seen as equal to European ones and all artefacts were presented according to their material conditions and functions. Neither the provenience nor their traditional context was of interest to the collectors.

The owners of these galleries invited one another to private soirees where together they enjoyed the contemplation of items characterized by curiosity and marvel. The emotional reactions of the visitors can be described as between defence and longing. The combination of the object's presentation was dictated by the personal inclinations of their owners. The collection of artefacts was, on the one hand, regarded as a demonstration of the owner's power, wealth and knowledge and simultaneously as a representation of the cosmos.

A possible explanation for this passion for collecting and amassing artefacts is that Europeans slowly started to recognize that Europe had to be seen and understood in a wider context. As a consequence of the rise of worldwide travel in every direction<sup>4</sup>, all theories formally used to understand the world were put to the test.

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the natural sciences were born and the politics of collecting changed. The great expeditions of James Cook to the South Seas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought for the first time masses of ethnographic objects to the European market.

At this point in time, specialized collecting politics emerged with a new way of systematizing objects. The former universalism vanished and an ambiguity regarding the way in which ethnographic objects should be categorised arose.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of large national museums and some of the ethnographic museums were founded.<sup>5</sup> Step by step these collections were opened to the interested civil public: bourgeois, women, men, workers and children.<sup>6</sup> Compared to the former practice of exclusive events for a selected public, the process of the democratization of knowledge began.



Cleveland Natural Museum of Natural History (USA)  
"Sears Hall of Human Ecology"<sup>8</sup> © Rein 2006

After the closure of the curio cabinets and the handing over of collections to the new museums [such as natural history museums or historical museums<sup>7</sup>], primitive people were regarded institutionally as being part of nature, comparable to flora and fauna. Ethnographic items were now organized according to a

natural science system: they were ordered according to their geographical provenience and similarity of their forms and classified according to an imagined stage of civilization.

Questions arose as to how far these objects represented an original primitive world, the bottom of a pyramid of human evolution, which culminated in the white Anglo-Saxon male.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museum display labels foregrounded the predominance of the "white man" and his cultural and industrial achievements.

Hence without any comprehensive concept, inestimable numbers of objects entered the collections of museums. In the best examples, contextual knowledge about the artefacts' origins was acquired and presented, such as time, place and ethnic group.

The attitude of collectors at this time, vis-à-vis those they took items from, can be exemplified by the way in which human remains were merchandised all over the world. The remains were not treated like human belongings, but rather as objects serving the scientific purpose of gaining knowledge about human races.<sup>9</sup> Individual personality and respect for the other were totally disregarded.

In case, collectors gathered information about objects by only interviewing the chiefs (or their translators) about specific issues. Their motto was: "One tribe – one chief – one voice". Interviews with people of different generations or addressing gender issues are largely missing.

Up until the 1930s, many exhibitions in Europe and the USA included people from overseas, especially imported for the shows, under the title: "Wild people – wild animals". They were primarily put on display in zoological gardens and the world exhibitions. At the time, the museums world wanted to represent the power of the colonial states opposed to the colonized.



The New York State Museum Albany: "Native Peoples of New York: The three Sisters Diorama". "This diorama depicts the type of agriculture the Iroquois practiced when Europeans came to what is now Upstate New York, beginning about 1600. This exhibit strives to be authentic in all respects, from the major setting to the small details. The plants and animals displayed are accurate replications of those that inhabited the Iroquois world."<sup>10</sup> © Rein 2006

A big step forward in changing discriminatory perspectives of the Other was the disentanglement of artefacts from the evolutionary system and the establishment of a new way of evaluation according to cultural criteria. The height of the dio-



ramas was reached after their introduction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and museums began to reconstruct scenes that offered insight into cultural background, such as scenes of ordinary daily and religious life.

Despite these attempts to restage the cultural meanings of collection items, the reconstructed "native point of view" remained subordinated to the dominant Western perspective. Up until the present day, the voices of the Others have been excluded from the majority of museum presentations. Although there have been year long debates about this difficult issue, many museums are still missing key concepts of collecting and documentation for working with, at times vast, 'unknown' collections.

Up until the present day, museum artefacts have been presented under a Eurocentric measure of value in two principle ways.



"Rockefeller Wing" Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
© Rein 2006

Firstly, they can be exhibited as art objects: they may be displayed singularly or in groups, sometimes in a showcase supplemented with technical information.

The second method is to show objects as they are used in everyday life, so they will be presented in panorama situations or together with other articles and medias from the original context.



Museum der Weltkulturen: „Reisen und Entdecken. Vom Sepik an den Main“, „Welt der Frauen“ © Rein 2009

In a few cases, the people who produced the items were invited to talk about their life, how they used the objects and what

the items mean to them.

A combination of the two methods, of presenting the traditional way of life and of displaying the items as art objects, was utilised in the exhibition „Reisen und Entdecken. Vom Sepik an den Main“ in Frankfurt am Main.

Starting with the documented life situation of the people living in the Sepik-Area in Papua New Guinea in the 1960s, the exhibition showed the collecting process and the transport of items into the museum. The difficult work of the curators, with regards to their questions around the (primarily non-documented) objects and the different storage methods, was made visible.



Museum der Weltkulturen: „Reisen und Entdecken. Vom Sepik an den Main“ © Rein 2009<sup>12</sup>

The exhibition concluded with an art gallery, where the objects were exposed as "art objects", independent of any information relating them to their functional context.

The message of this exhibition was to demonstrate that objects must be understood within their original contexts.

However, items can also be exciting in and of themselves, in the absence of any background knowledge about them, e.g. regarding their traditional use. Visitors can be impressed simply by the technical and aesthetic qualities of artifacts, according to their own individual evaluation system. But this is the point of shifting.

In the absence of any given context, objects are interpreted by visitors on an individual basis, grounded in personal experience and knowledge. It is clear that in an ethnographical museum, the presentation of items as pure "art works" is a valuation according to European / Western perspectives. Furthermore, it is a limitation of the acknowledgment of the Other as an intellec-

tual contemporary with their own item centered view.

At least since the 1970s, with new educational programmes and new political challenges, museums put more effort into working and engaging with public expectations. Visitors demanded to know more about people from other countries: how they lived, how they worked and their thoughts and opinions about life. New technical media, such as photography and video, were introduced into museum exhibitions. In the 1980s, academic discussions started regarding the relationship between the aura of an object and the use of technical equipment.

Ethnographical exhibitions which tried to meet this need, invited people from abroad (as seen from Germany) to share information about their way of life, for example, the exhibition "Indian Times. Nachrichten aus dem roten Amerika" in Frankfurt am Main (9.11.2002–31.11.2004).

In 2002, the MDW held an exhibition about the history and contemporary life of North America's Native people. A part of the show was a co-operation with the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Different aspects of daily life (such as fishing and the wood industry) were shown. Mr. Foster Kalama (Wasco) and his sons stayed in Frankfurt am Main for some days in order to explain more about the lifestyles in the reservation and describe Indian concepts of identity to visitors of the exhibition.

The enthusiastic reaction of visitors to the novel dialogical presentation of another culture opened new avenues for possible interactions and co-operations. I am aware that other ethnographical museums have also used such forms of mediation and communication for some time.

Since gender and postmodern theories have penetrated museum praxis, we now know more about different voices and perspectives of items. Not only can gender related perspectives on the world be very different but there are also great variations in perspectives from different generations. Every person has his or her own individual story to tell.

Ethnographical museums have a special mission within the museum scene: their collections are generally a mixture, which includes archaeological items, high-art objects (also from the perspective of their producers), items from daily life and religious objects. One principal duty of an ethnographical museum is the presentation and translation of the concepts of different traditions and cultures, and it is the human that lives his/her culture. This means that human beings themselves should be the focus of research and mediation, for example, producer, user, dealer, collector, curator and visitor. Every person can tell his or her own story about the objects they interact with.

In the following, I will show you some examples of ways in which different voices can be integrated into a museum exhibition. The chosen examples are organized according the following:

- Historical facts and voices Royal Ontario Museum Canada (ROM),
- Historical facts and mixed voices (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Canada),
- Historical objects and contemporary voices (ROM),
- Historical objects and different meanings Museum der Weltkulturen Frankfurt am Main, Germany (MDW),
- Historical objects and contemporary religious leaders (MDW),
- Historical personalities, contemporary art and artists (MDW).

## 1. Historical facts and voices Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

The ROM is dedicated to showing the "cultural contact for Canada's earliest societies and revealing the economic and social forces that influenced Native Art"<sup>13</sup>.



Royal Ontario Museum: "World Culture Galleries; Daphne Cookell Gallery of Canada: First People"<sup>14</sup> © Rein 2007

The ROM presentation was characterized by the use of different media within a single showcase: historic individuals were described through portraits, textual citations from him or her, citations from Europeans who had first contact experiences and the inclusion of personal worn items. Whilst the mixing of media may confuse, the idea behind this method opens up a process of interpreting to more than just seeing an object in its material, technical dimensions.

## 2. Historical facts and mixed voices (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg)

The situation in Canada, between the Canadians and the Native People, is a special one compared to other nations and their minority, ethnic groups. Whilst there are some inter-group conflicts, the inclusion and participation of the First Nation People in Canada's cultural arena has been widely and popularly accepted. The Canadians, as a nation, are very aware of the necessity of a dialogue between its Native People and the ethnographical museums which own traditional items. In addition, the First Nation People are dedicated to their fight for official acceptance as equals in all cultural spheres. They insist on demonstrating the different possible perspectives of historical interpretation.

In the cultural centre of the Algonquin First Nation, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, the First Nation People showed the exhibition



“Wounded Knee from different perspectives”. The special effect of the show were the three different voices tipped on white papers under each item. The first was the official voice of the government, the second came from historical First Nation People who joined the fight and the third were contemporary young people’s voices asking questions about the war and expressing their opinions about it.



Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Canada:  
„Wounded Knee from different Perspectives“; © Rein 2007

### 3. Historical objects and contemporary voices (ROM)

In the entrance area of the Gallery of the First People of Canada at the ROM, the exhibition begins with a showcase of historical collection objects combined with living voices of well-known personalities from the First Nation People. Under the title “Our Choices”, the museum invited six Native advisors from communities across Canada to select and explore artefacts from its First People collections. In the showcase, the visitor finds information on several levels in addition to the factual, technical data.



Omushkegowak elder, historian and storyteller; from Peawanuck, Winisk River, Ontario comments: “In the Omushkego territory the snowshoe is the most important item for hunting and survival in winter. These items show snowshoe frames in the process of construction and one pair finished. The Omushkegowak constructed all of their own equipment and were self-sufficient. However, with the new equipment, like snow machines, traditional knowledge is being lost.”<sup>15</sup>  
ROM “World Culture Galleries; Daphne Cookell Gallery of Canada: First People” © Rein 2007.

Here, portraits of the advisors together with an image of their chosen object are displayed. As the object is individually chosen, their comments about the artefacts have very personal and specific meanings. “The advisor points to how these objects resonate through time and represent more than the physical materials from which they are made. Like the collection in this gallery, these objects embody traditions, economic strategies, world views and complex relationships”.<sup>16</sup>



Iris O'Watch, Nakoda (Assiniboine) educator and language specialist from Carry the Kettle Reserve, Saskatchewan: “Historically, the Dakota cradle is a traditional teaching tool. The cradleboard enabled infants to observe, listen and learn from their environment. The bundling of infants gave them the same security as the womb. The youngsters were taught that through observation and listening it helped them to experience and learn from their surroundings. Thus great care and love went into the making of the cradle boards, which were beaded with significant symbols and colours meant to enrich their child’s learning.”<sup>17</sup> Royal Ontario Museum, Canada “World Culture Galleries; Daphne Coowell Gallery of Canada: First People” © Rein 2007

### 4. Historical objects and different meanings Museum der Weltkulturen Frankfurt (MDW)

Founded in 1904, the MDW produced a special show to celebrate its 100th birthday. On the one hand, the exhibition provided insight into the history of the museum whilst simultaneously breaking away from the linear concept of showing a stringent, objective performance of the collection. Breaking with convention, the curators were asked to make personal choices about collection items from the area that they were responsible for. Secondly, the curators had to conduct research from multiple perspectives in order to find answers. They were asked to address the following questions:

- How does the ethnographical background of the chosen object relate to the producers, the dealers, the meaning and the function of the object?

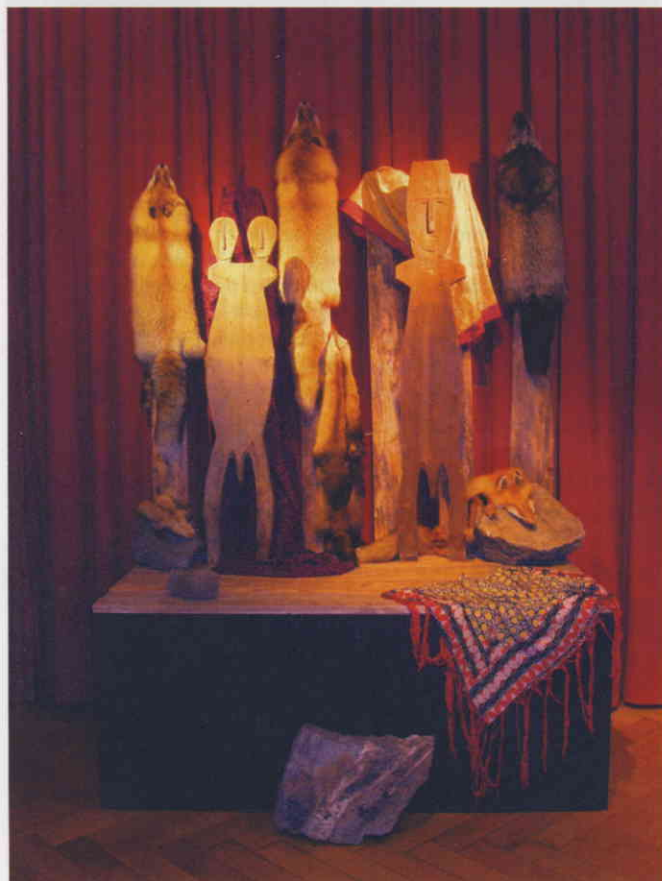
- Who were the collectors?
- What do we know about different values of the items (personal value, bargain value, actual value on the art market)?
- In which anthropologists' theories were the items used to develop paradigmatic, scientific examples?
- Why did the curator select this particular item from his/her collection?
- Why should a visitor come into the museum to see this particular object?

To give an example of the choice made by one curator: the curator of the Oceanic Department, decided to include a boat from Papua New Guinea in the exhibition because of the positive personal experience she had when she traveled on a boat in the research area as a student, in the 1980s.<sup>19</sup>

Collectors and curators usually feel emotionally attached to the collection objects and the area the items come from. In many cases, this close personal relationship to the work is the reason why the curator collects data from a particular item, whilst paying less attention to others. Usually such personal information is excluded in the story of a museum exhibition in order to give the impression of objectivity, however, it should be kept in mind that they are a vital basis of the museum's work and constitute an important element of the stories surrounding artifacts.

## 5. Historical objects and contemporary religious leaders (MDW)

In a co-operation with three Siberian museums, the MDW invited traditional religious leaders to the opening ceremony. The installations of the historical shamanistic objects were arranged in a somewhat poetic contemporary reconstruction of mythical stories and contemporary altars made by artists.



Museum der Weltkulturen: Beckers 2004; © MDW

However, the shamanic people who attended the opening ceremony were excited about the objects, which belonged to the former people of the Chanten and Mansen. As officially accepted representatives of their traditional religion (shamanism), they initiated and conducted a ritual in the midst of the exhibition to welcome the spiritual beings, incorporated in the exhibited ritual items. Although the museum's director protested against the staging of an authentic religious ritual in the museum, she was unsuccessful in opposition to the shaman who, within minutes, had set up an altar and brought with her all the necessary ritual paraphernalia from Siberia.



Museum der Weltkulturen: Opening Ceremony; © MDW

"Who owns traditional culture?" and who has the right to decide what should or should not happen within an exhibition on the Other? For the shaman the objects in the exhibition were not museum pieces but items endowed with vital strength which had to be respected and to be welcomed within a special ritual.

## 6. Historical personalities, contemporary art and artists (MDW)

In this painting, Hassan Musa makes reference to a historical person, Saartjie Baartman (ca. 1789 in South-Africa Khoi San – 18.1.1816 in Paris). The woman was exported first to London and later to Paris. From 1810, her body was publicly exposed, clothed in a skintight dress. She was announced as "The Hottentot Venus, just arrived from the interior of Africa; the greatest phenomenon ever exhibited in this country".<sup>22</sup> During her naked presentation in front of scientists, she was painted by Léon de Wailly in 1815<sup>23</sup>. Hassan Musa (born 1951, Sudan), who lives in Marseille/France since the 1970s, was intrigued by Saartjie Baartman, her life story and the fact that after her death scientists made a plaster cast of her whole body, conserved her genitals, skeleton and head and placed her human remains in the Musée de l'Homme. The title of Hassan Musa's painting „Vous êtes la plus belle ici mais Blanche Neige qui est dans le bocaux du Musée de l'Homme est plus belle" refers to the stored pieces of Saartjie Baartman, reminding us of her tragic story and the role of museums in artistic interpretation.

The project of the MDW covered three aspects: the exhibition, the acquisition of the painting and a filmed interview with the artist who describes his personal relationship to the artwork. For the first time, the video documentation was officially financed by the city of Frankfurt as being an intangible part of the whole artwork.



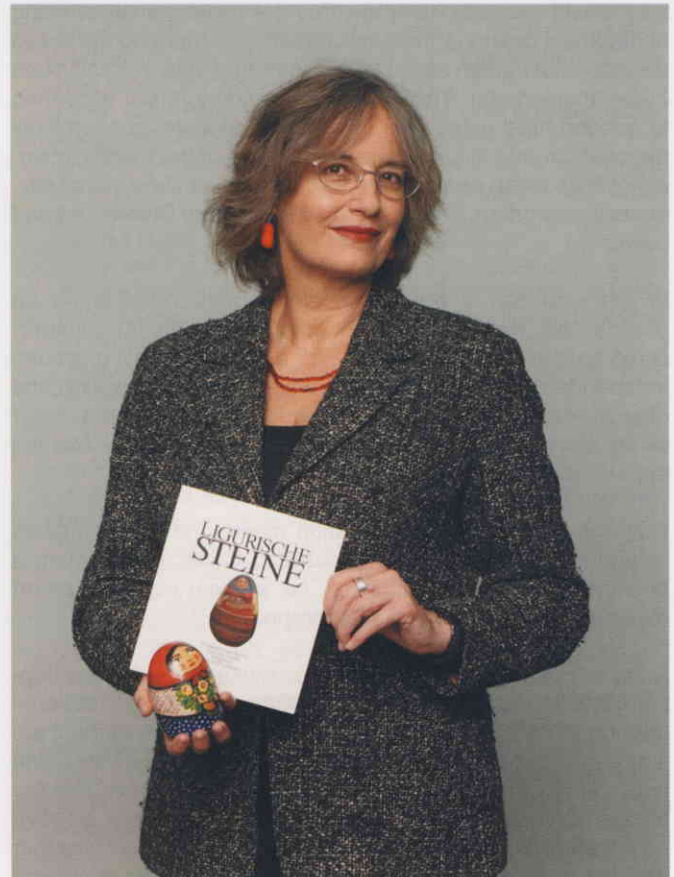
The paradigm of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “from heritage to society”, was reversed to “from society to heritage” or “from outside to inside”.<sup>28</sup>

In November 1976, at UNESCO's General Conference in Nairobi, official recommendations were made concerning “adult education” that “persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behavior in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development”<sup>29</sup>.

Consequently, the shift from “collection based” organizations to “function based” organizations demanded participation in the collecting for and co-curatorship of an exhibition. There has been a paradigmatic shift from the “passive visitor” to the “active user” of the museum.

Whereas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the main task of museums was individual enjoyment, the museums' programs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed radically according to public expectations, both individual and collective. The museum was seen as constituting a social space designed for communication, and its collections as having to be presented in a way which ensured the optimum conditions for transmitting meanings.

To celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt am Main invited everybody to contribute private “Jewish” objects to be shown in an exhibition (“Ein gewisses jüdisches Etwas” (3.2.–26.4.2009). Together with the collected objects,



Participants in this project were portrayed with their objects. In the catalogue this portrait is shown together with the personal object-story.

„Geschenkte Geschichten zum 20-Jahresjubiläum des Jüdischen Museums Frankfurt am Main“. Frankfurt/M. 2009, S. 182-183. Foto: Axel Stephan Fotodesign



Saartjie Baatmann by Hassan Musa 2003<sup>20</sup>, © Rein 2007<sup>21</sup>

## One object – many stories. Ethnographic Museums take their opportunity

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museums critically questioned themselves and their motives for the first time: “Who are we?”, “What are our tasks?” As a result, in the following years, museology was established as a science in its own right.<sup>24</sup>

In 1954, UNESCO formulated the “Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict”. This Convention had its origins in the ruins of the Second World War and in the international recognition that “war[s] to protect heritage were not enough to prevent the loss of irreplaceable cultural symbols...” and “...a country could maintain control of its history, and its cultural, scientific and economic development – in short, its identity in the concert of nations – only if the integrity of heritage could be safeguarded.”<sup>25</sup> Museums played a central, crucial role in this project of salvation of cultural heritage and 95% of contemporary museums worldwide were founded after this War. “Their initial objective was to carry out the systematic inventoring and identification work required to translate the renaissance political and cultural aspirations into the material reality of images and objects. This task, which was carried out in the places where the works were conserved, raised the question of the legitimacy of the possession of objects between the societies for which they had original value and the ones which were studying them.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1970s Latin-America, as part of the post-colonial discourse, the concept of the integrated museum emerged. Museums started to work in collaboration with the communities from which the collections they housed originated. “The dialogue created between the cultural communities and museum management would, in turn, change the significance, content and recipients of the different types of knowledge put in place by the museum. The museum was now resolutely turned towards its public, and paid close attention to social and cultural change. It was able to promote integration through its recognition of minority cultural values and reconciliation in the post-colonial context.”<sup>27</sup>

the museum also displayed the stories surrounding them – for example, why an object was regarded as being Jewish. The project motivated more than 100 people to participate and was a great success for the institution.

As we know, human beings react differently to situations they encounter in life and remember differently according to a variety of factors, including gender, age, descent and heritage.

It is the role of museums to promote the plurality of voices surrounding their collections, not only to meet public demand but also to document the richness and diversity of human cultural productions and self reflections on tangible and intangible world heritage.

Up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, ethnographic museums primarily put on exhibitions about historically 'recent' cultures that were 'far away' (in geographical and cultural relation to Europe and the West). One key aspect was the fact that objects were considered to be uncontaminated by "modern culture" contact. However, this successful working concept, which flourished for several dozen years, was put into question as a result of global developments. This paradigmatic change achieved clarity and is reflected in the fervent debates regarding new planned buildings for "old ethnographic museums". (e.g. Leipzig [Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig 2005], Paris [Musée du quai Branly 2006], Köln [Rautenstrauch-Jost Museum 2010?], Berlin [Ethnologisches Museum], Frankfurt am Main [Museum der Weltkulturen]).

It seems that ethnographic museums are in the position of having to make a decision. Do they want to be a type of a museum with historical or antique artifacts? In such an institution, they would primarily work towards the maintenance of world heritage according to the basic questions regarding the social conditions of human societies (Grundfragen des menschlichen Zusammenlebens). The common taxonomy is still according to geographical categories (such as continents, geographical regions), groups of objects (such as boats of the Pacific, cudgels of the Asmat) and general topics (such as life-cycle rituals, ancestry, kingdom, cannibalism, headhunting, China – art and power<sup>30</sup>).

In the example of presenting ethnographic objects as art objects, the "Pavillon des Session to the Palais du Louvre"<sup>31</sup> could be taken as a prototype for an ethnographic museum. Independent of geographical or cultural contextualization, the objects are presented here as singular art objects. If a visitor wants more information about the exhibits, he or she has the opportunity to search the digital data in a PC centre.

However, this form of presentation means the transformation of artifacts into art objects, according to Jacques Maquet: it became "art by metamorphosis", i.e. an item becomes an art object through the process of appropriation.<sup>32</sup>

Another option for an ethnographic museum is the development into an institution with a knowledge laboratory, "Wissens-Laboratorium". This laboratory would principally document the actual processes of transformations in global networks and how People from several regions of the world have reacted always adverse colonial dominance with their own creative potentials.<sup>33</sup> The so-called culture of disappearance<sup>34</sup> together with the "ethnographic presence" would no longer make any sense in the context of an ethnographic museum today.

In recent years, concepts of the "Other" and the "We" have changed from a somewhat homogenous category to a very heterogeneous one. "This means that the museum, once regarded as a container for long standing collections, is now

exposed to different interests and visions that require a new discourse."<sup>35</sup>

For ethnographic museums, central topics for future consideration should be those questions surrounding processes of appropriation and ways of producing cultural values and imaginations, which can be addressed by drawing on dialogues regarding tangible and intangible world heritage. Critical self-reflections about the European idea of representation and about the appointment of Europe as a "world interpretation centre"<sup>36</sup> are necessary conditions for a future ethnographic museum. Cultural diversity, participation and social inclusion (as opposed to integration) are the great challenges for our multi-ethnic societies. In Germany, we generally still prefer to discuss the concept of integration rather than that of participation. In my opinion, this needs to be changed in the near future in order to better work together – to quote the topic of our conference:

"for reconciliation and peace for values as mutual respect, trust and shared commitment to each other".

However, we should remember, the voices that will be represented in a museum's exhibitions will always depend upon scientific and political parameters. What this means is that there is no neutral place in any museum.

**This text was published in the conference reader of the ICOM-ICME conference 2009 in Seoul, Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> 2009, Day 3 (Wed), pp 191-209 [1-21] under the title: One object – Many stories: The Museum is no 'Neutral' Place. The text will be published in 2010 under the same title by the International Journal of Intangible Heritage (IJIH) National Folk Museum of Korea, vol. 5.**

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#### Zur Verfasserin:

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In Paris on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2003 the General Assembly of the UNESCO passed the Convention for the safe guarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). After 30 States had ratified the Convention became operative on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2006. Since then 104 countries joined the Convention (Status from October 2008). Until now, Germany has not ratified the Convention. <http://www.unesco.de/immaterielles-kulturerbe.html?&L=0> consulted 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002> consulted 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009

<sup>2</sup> Many museums have very good audio archives etc. But very few of them combined the tangible and the intangible aspects while documenting collected items.

<sup>3</sup> Aspects of this text were part of my lecture at the Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main "Einführung in das Studium (im)materieller Kulturen" and of my paper "The Ethnographical Museum Today. A Personal Estimate" presented at the conference "Summer Seminar 2009 "Contemporary Art and the Global Age" organized by the ZKM (Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe).

<sup>4</sup> Christoph Columbus 1492 in America; Vasco da Gama 1496 way to India, Hernan Cortez 1519/21 conquered Mexico), James Cook 1768-1780 three expeditions into the South Seas.

<sup>5</sup> 1787: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Neapel; 1793 Muséum national d'histoires naturelle, Paris; 1800: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Den Haag; 1818: Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), Brasilia; Vlastenecké muzeum v Čechách, Prag; 1855 Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, München; 1866: Archäologisches Nationalmuseum, Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο, Athen; 1882: Nationales Historisches Museum, Εθνικό Ιστορικό Μουσείο, Athen; 1883: Isländische Nationalmuseum (isländ. *Þjóðminjasafn Íslands*); 1887: Museo Arqueológico Nacional de España, Madrid.

Ethnographical Museums: 1753: British Museum, London; 1837: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde 1864: Colonial Museum, Harlem; 1869: Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig; 1878: Königliches Zoologisches und Anthropologisches Ethnographisches Museum Dresden; 1882: Linden-Museum, Stuttgart; 1897: Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Voss „Der Betrachter im Ohr“. In: FAZ v. 22.8.2009, S. 31

<sup>7</sup> Until today it depends on the cities's cultural politics if they have

an own Ethnographical Museum or if one finds ethnographic collections in Historical Museums, in National Museums or in Natural History Museums (like in Cleveland).

<sup>8</sup> "See how humans have interacted with the natural world around them. Plants and animals and artifacts from 11 cultures from North and South America, Mesoamerica, Africa, Australia and New Guinea are represented here." <http://www.cmnh.org/site/AtTheMuseum/YourGalleryGuide/MainLevel.aspx#searchalloff> umaneecology consulted 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009

<sup>9</sup> This business with human remains ignores completely any ethic aspect. In some cultures like the Inuit, for vivid people it is forbidden to touch human bones of diseased people. Although skeletons or skins of them were found in museums. Only in 1993 the human remains of the family of the Inuit Mini had to be transferred from the American Museum of Natural History in New York to his country. [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minik\\_Wallace](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minik_Wallace) consulted 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2009. In 2002 the skeleton, her conserved brain and the genitals from Saartjie Baartman (+1816 in Paris) were transferred from the Musée de l'Homme back to South Africa where she originally was born. [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah\\_Baartman](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Baartman) consulted 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2009

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/IroquoisVillage/sistersone.html> consulted 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009

<sup>11</sup> The world of women

<sup>12</sup> As information was given: "Skulptur, Holz, Oberer Korewori, ohne Datierung" (Sculpture, wood, upper Korewori, without an age determination)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.rom.on.ca/exhibitions/wculture/firstpeoples.php> consulted 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2009

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.rom.on.ca/media/podcasts/display.php?id=71> consulted 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. This address shows you a video on the "Chief Sitting Bull's Headdress" from 2008

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from the text under the portrait 2007

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from a text in the exhibition 2006

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from the text under the portrait 2006

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from the text under the portrait 2007

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.mdw-frankfurt.de/Deutsch/Ausstellungen/Vergangene\\_Ausstellungen/Ansichtssachen\\_aus\\_100\\_Jahren./Booklets/index.phtml](http://www.mdw-frankfurt.de/Deutsch/Ausstellungen/Vergangene_Ausstellungen/Ansichtssachen_aus_100_Jahren./Booklets/index.phtml) consulted 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. Quoted from the homepage of the MDW; booklet p. 32, Eva Raabe: "Persönliche Beziehung" (Personal Relationship)

<sup>20</sup> MDW „Black Paris. Kunst und Geschichte einer schwarzen Diaspora 1906-2006" (16.3.-4.11.2007), 254 x 160 cm.

<sup>21</sup> This art-project was part of the proposal for a permanent exhibition in the new building planned for the MDW. During the exhibition in the MDW's Gallery37, "Black Paris" the museum decided to buy a painting by Hassan Musa.

A new building for the MDW was planned since the move into the villa Schaumainkai 29 in 1969. Already three times the plans were stopped because of financial problems of the city (last time on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2009).

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegelgeschichte/0,1518,484301,00.html> consulted 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2009

<sup>23</sup> see note 9

<sup>24</sup> The following text refers to the paper of Leontine Meijer-van Mensch, Amsterdam, „Vom Besucher zum Benutzer", presented on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 at the conference of the Deutscher Museumsbund in Stralsund

<sup>25</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=5068&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5068&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) consulted 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009

<sup>26</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=5068&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5068&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) consulted 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009

<sup>27</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=5068&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5068&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) consulted 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009

<sup>28</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=5068&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5068&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) consulted 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/NAIROB\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/NAIROB_E.PDF) consulted 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009

<sup>30</sup> Comparable titles were found in the exhibition "Anders zur Welt kommen. Das Humboldt-Forum im Schloß. Ein Wekstattblick" (09.7.2009-17.1.2010). Berlin 2009

<sup>31</sup> "Inaugurated in April 2000, the Pavillon des Sessions is located on the south side of the Palais du Louvre, between the Flore wing and the Denon wing, and exhibits 120 masterpieces of sculptu-

re from throughout the world in the heart of one of the world's greatest classical fine arts museums." <http://www.quaibrantly.fr/en/collections/pavillon-des-sessions.html> consulted 6.9.2009

32 Maquet 1979, p. 9

33 Filitz 2008, p. :20

34 Gruzinski 2007, p. 19ff

35 Weibel / Buddensieg 2007, p. 11

36 Kaschuba 2009, p. 146




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# MUSEUM AKTUELL

Die Zeitschrift für Ausstellungspraxis und Museologie im deutschsprachigen Raum  
B11684 ISSN 1433-3848 [www.museum-aktuell.de](http://www.museum-aktuell.de) Dez. 2009/Jan. 2010 Nr. 165

Globusuhr mit Himmelsglobus,  
Armillarsphäre und Erdglobus, von  
Georg Roll und Johann Reinhold.  
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.  
Derzeit zu sehen im  
Maximilianmuseum Augsburg.

Anzeige

Wissenschaftliche Instrumente







Wie sehr Wissenschaft und Sammeln zusammenhängen, zeigen einige Beiträge dieser Ausgabe. Wissenschaftliche Instrumente hatten von Anfang an ihren Platz in den Kunst- und Wunderkammern, waren nützliche Werkzeuge oder reine Schauobjekte und wurden in ihrer raffinierten Technik geschätzt und verstanden. Noch raffinierter gebaut waren die wissenschaftlichen Automaten, bei denen humorvolle Ideen und der Reiz von einsehbarer oder extra verborgener mechanischer Abläufe hinzukamen. Wißbegierde und Erkenntnisinteresse als Triebfeder früherer Sammelleidenschaft bestimmten das Verständnis von Natur und Kunst und Technik, des eigenen Lebens und fremder, exotischer Welten. Die so entstandenen Sammlungen in Wien, Dresden, Kassel oder Prag sind damit Belege der Technikentwicklung und auch Dokumente historischer Weltbilder, die in ihrer Bedeutung oft unterschätzt werden, selbst unter Museumsleuten.

Viele interessante Ausstellungen erwarten uns in diesem Jahr, der Überblick von Kornelia Stinn gibt eine kleine Auswahl. Der dahinter steckende Arbeits- und Kostenaufwand, die strategische Planung, auch die innovative Kreativität der Themenfindung und Inszenierung sind schnell vergessen, wenn die Besucherzahlen wieder einmal alle vorsichtigen Erwartungen übertreffen.

Daß die Begeisterung der Verantwortlichen auf die Besucher überspringt, Weiterbildung ganz nebenbei passiert und die einzelnen Ausstellungen noch lange in guter Erinnerung bleiben mögen, das jedenfalls ist den verantwortlichen Fach- und Verwaltungsleuten, ihren Finanziers und Sponsoren, aber auch ihren Besuchern zu wünschen.

Etwas scheint allerdings auch dieses Jahr wieder zu fehlen: Eine fächerübergreifende, kulturwissenschaftlich-naturwissenschaftliche Gemeinschaftsausstellung zum Thema „Astrologie – Astronomie“, welche die alten wissenschaftlichen Instrumente in ihrem Kontext zeigt, vielleicht auch auf Künstler und ihr astrologisches Weltbild verweist, beispielsweise auf Dürer, aber auch moderne Erkenntnisse über Astrologie und Astronomie miteinschließt.

Adelheid Straten

Themenvorschau  
Februar 2010: Geologische Sammlungen;  
Umgang mit Texten  
März 2010: Frauenmuseen; Münchner Museen

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Als TECHNOSEUM in die Zukunft. Das Landesmuseum für  
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nicht nur seinen Namen

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## Zum Titelbild:

### Himmelsglobusautomat

Augsburg, 1586. Georg Roll und Johannes Reinhold. Kupferschalen, Messing, graviert, punziert, vergoldet, Palisanderholz. Erworben 1586 von Kurfürst Christian I.

Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Inv. Nr. E II 2

Der Globusautomat verbindet einen Himmelsglobus mit Uhrwerk, eine bekrönende Armillarsphäre und einen kleinen Erdglobus als Darstellung des gesamten Kosmos. Neben den Tagen und Monaten des Iulianischen und Gregorianischen Kalenders lassen sich u. a. Sternbilder und die Bewegung von Sonne und Mond ablesen.

Signiert: „GEORG / ROLL ET / IOHANNES / REINHOLD / ELABORAB / ANT AVG / VSTAE / 1586 g.

Noch bis zum 14. Februar 2010 zu sehen in der Ausstellung **WELTENGLANZ. Der Mathematisch-Physikalische Salon Dresden zu Gast in Augsburg**

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### Maximilianmuseum

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