

What is a museum – a collection of objects or a network of social relationships?¹

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To begin with, I want to tell the story of a basket. Its name is Hatari Basket – Super Modern Freely Basket, as it is called on the label. I found the basket in an exhibition in the Airport Gallery. This is a place in the airport of Frankfurt am Main. This gallery organizes open exhibitions under different topics on a regular basis. In 2002 Fraport, the company which runs the airport, had a cooperation with the Schirn, a well known art exhibition hall in Frankfurt. The topic of this Schirn exhibition was "Shopping".



left: my basket on its label²; right: plastic objects in the exhibition "1 Euro market. Shop till you fly" (Airport Gallery)³



Max Hollein, the director of the Schirn, explained the topic like this, "SHOPPING is the first exhibition which thoroughly explores the correlation between consumer culture and modern as well as contemporary art. Throughout the 20th century, artists have been fascinated by department stores as the af-

fluent society's cathedrals and the subtle forms of presenting commodities. 'SHOPPING' invites the visitor to roam the vast realm between appearance and reality."⁴

In several places in the city SHOPPING was shown from the 28th of September until the 1st of December 2002. One of the shows took place in the Airport Gallery⁵ – which is where I found the basket.

Here, the Thai artist Surasi Kusolwong made an installation. He was inspired by the volatile character of the floating markets in his native country. In his installation in the airport he offered a huge collection of cheap plastic objects from ordinary life – like my basket⁶ – and plastic toothpicks, plastic animals, plastic puppets, plastic masks, and many more items usually found in Thai markets. More than 4000 objects were arranged on huge tables within 500 sqm much like a presentation in a supermarket. All these arrangements were characterized by the variety of colors in which each product was available.

On the 26th of September, 2002 the opening ceremony started in the late afternoon at 5pm with the artist and Wilhelm Bender, the director of the Airport Frankfurt. After the welcome speeches the visitors were invited to choose and buy all the plastic items for only 1 € each. As soon as the official request: "The floor is yours" was uttered, the visitors immediately changed their roles from being visitors of an art exhibition into consumers and collectors, running to get the best buy in the Airport Gallery.

"1 Euro market. Shop till you fly" was the slogan of the presentation. Surasi Kusolwong wanted to show a possibility of consumption of commodities which could be afforded by everyone because of the low price. With this installation he wanted to boycott the common price hierarchies which usually dominate the market places. His presentation was a big success – within minutes, the tables were emptied by the customers and everybody was happy to bring very reasonably priced items back home – some were even exotic indeed!

I myself bought one basket and took it into my former office in the Museum of World Cultures. The next day I had an appointment with my boss in his office. The following evening the big opening ceremony in the Schirn of the exhibition "Shopping" would happen. I planned mischievously to use the yellow basket on both occasions.

That morning, I told the story of the opening ceremony in the Airport Gallery to Hans-Bernhard Nordhoff, the Head of the Department of Culture and Leisure of the City Frankfurt. He used to be the top manager for all cultural events. As a proof for the success of the event, I showed him the basket in which I had transported my papers in preparation for our appointment.

In the evening, my plastic basket was enriched with another role again: it was now a material witness of the art presentation of a previous day. At the same time that evening, the basket became also part of the whole exhibition project in the city – although it had already changed its owner. In the beginning of the opening ceremony, this knowledge of the basket's complex role in the art project was an unknown one – nobody knew that special background besides me and my political manager. However, he liked the whole story so much that he, in his official opening speech, told the director of the Schirn, Max Hollein, about my little yellow basket from Thailand. In that very moment, the basket played a publicly acknowledged part within the wider art context – just for the short time until the evening ceremony was finished.



The place for the basket in my former office in the Museum of World Cultures in October 2008, © Rein 2008

The next day I took the basket into my office. There I arranged it on the yellow wardrobe behind an orange flower in a red vase (being a birthday present from a good friend). Furthermore, the yellow basket was used as an adequate storage place for red Coca Cola plastic cups – waiting for use at another event in my office. For the years to come I continued to love this aesthetical

and at the same time functional arrangement and many visitors wanted to hear its story.

Let me summarize the short life story of the basket until that moment:

1. Being produced for a daily life experience in Thailand, the basket – shown in an exhibition in Frankfurt – became a short-term art object.
While calling the basket an art object I refer to the Fountain of Marcel Duchamp who declared 1917 objects of mass production so called "Ready mades" as being art objects⁷
2. Then the basket became a commodity and a collector's choice.
3. The next day it was already a historical artifact because of its participation in an event which already happened in the past.
4. In between it was a transport media for my papers.
5. On my wardrobe, for six years the basket again became an art object by the way of its presentation in a semi-public place. At least the basket had two roles on my wardrobe: being an art object and an exclusive storage place.
6. Actually, this plastic basket became an illustrative material in conferences or at universities.

Within a few days, the basket met dozens of people who produced, touched, transported, sold, exhibited, admired, and learned through it.

With my introduction, I want to demonstrate some of the possible multidimensional social and relational⁸ perspectives connected with one object only. Following the definition of Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff objects are biographical agents and therefore they are valued because of the associations they have acquired throughout time. This approach posits a fundamentally dynamic understanding of objects as Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips emphasize in their book on 'Sensible Objects'. "In a biographical model, objects cannot be understood in terms of a single, unchanging identity (such as 'museum object'), but rather by tracing the succession of meanings attached to them as they move across space and time. This model emerged from a perceived need to develop methodologies which 'redirected the unit of analysis [...] to multisided ethnographies.'⁹

Furthermore, it addresses the inherent instability of the meanings attached to objects as they had become elided through their placement in the disembodied and thus limiting spaces of museums¹⁰. The real importance of the objects does not lie in the objects themselves but in the way these objects embody the physical manifestation of social relations. The whole idea is that objects matter because they have agency and efficacy, and as such become a kind of identity unto themselves remark authors Alfred Gell and Marilyn Strathern.¹¹

By framing an object in a social network throughout its life cycle – according to Jeremy Pilcher and Saskia Vermeyelen – we can avoid the recurrent pitfalls of judging objects in terms of their 'primitive' or 'traditional' (aesthetic) qualities and mystifying the identity of Indigenous People as 'noble savages'. "Focusing more on the social network that surrounds a particular object opens up new avenues of enquiry as to how, and to what extent, museums can become more inclusive vis-à-vis Indigenous people. It allows moving beyond the current discourse that approaches the history of the (ethnographic)

museum from only one dominant perspective...it allows us to show a more complex narrative of the object itself. It gives us the space to counterweight some of the discourses that have steeped Indigenous artworks in a 'postcolonial' framework of sacredness and mythical meaning."¹²

Insofar, museums might be reconceived as a collection of social relationships – rather than as a collection of objects. A mass of human relations lie behind these collections like the original makers and users of objects, those involved in their trades and circulation, missionaries, collectors, curators, directors, conservators, lecturers, administrators and visitors. All together they comprise the museum's human community.¹³

Chris Gosden, who together with Mike O'Hanlon directed the "Relational Museum" project in the Pitt Rivers Museum (Oxford) from 2002 to 2006 explicated that museums emerge through thousands of relationships like those already mentioned. These experiences have always been mediated and transformed by the material world as in the past by: letters, boxes, trains, ships; and in the present by: furniture, computers, showcases etc.¹⁴ The main aim in the project in the Pitt Rivers Museum was to investigate the sets of relationships between people and things in a museum. According to Gosden, museum collections represent a privileged form of historical source composed of the objects themselves and the various links to other material backgrounds they have enjoyed, written and oral histories, archival materials, photographs and films.¹⁵

A museum has multiple authors, who need not be aware of their role nor even necessarily act as willing contributors. "It is objects that have drawn people together, helped to define their interactions, and made them relevant to the museum".¹⁶ Or is it people who are at the heart of a museum?¹⁷ At this point we have to ask again: What is a museum? Museums seem to be institutions of collected objects by an interconnected group of people (assemblage of social relations¹⁸) – or do objects draw people into the Museum through various attractions of form, value and function (assemblage of objects)? Both positions are right. When we think about some art museums with a special collection – it is foremost this collection which animates people to come to the museum.

A relational approach does not work with categories of objects as fixed ones; but in that intellectual approach "categories are temporary entities arising out of a network of connections between entities"¹⁹. Referring to my basket, the entities: art object, commodity, and historical object changed within a few days depending on the people I met and the contexts in which the basket was moved around. The relational perspective offers the chance for looking at the mix of intellectual, biographical and social motives for collection.

Following Gosden's explanations, this approach of mapping communities, colonial and institutional connections of various kinds helps us to understand the past in a more concrete, vivid and personalized way. It will help to gain insights into the conditions which gave rise to collections and connections, "so that these can be used as sets of raw materials in the present for making new sets of relationships between all parties in a post-colonial world."²⁰

After having introduced the life-cycle story of my yellow basket together with the theoretical approach of the relational analysis, I continue with the third part of my paper.²¹ The following examples of exhibitions illustrate different ways of ethnograph-

ic (art-) exhibitions – starting from a classical presentation up to methods of inclusion of non-museum people in the discussions on ethnographic artifacts.²²

When we talk about social inclusion we have to keep the three pillars of it in mind: access, representation and participation²³. In this context I will explain some enriching aspects of a relational approach.

Classic ways – limited voices

In a very classic and still contemporary form of presentation, ethnographic items are systematized according to their official tribal societies and geographical regions.²⁴



Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden: „Amazonien – Indianer der Regenwälder und Savannen“ (29.04.2009-31.12.2010)
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On 800 m² the Museum for Ethnography in Dresden presents an overview on different cultural areas of Amazonia. The green florescent pillars show the visitors which area of 'Amazonia' is being represented and which tribes live there – being exhibited

through their artifacts in the surrounding showcases. The color green shall give an impression to walk in the Amazon jungle. The European view of the area with the focus on the historic collection (objects dates from 19th century until today) shows the ecological system, the language varieties and the pre-Columbian history.

It is a classic ethnographic exhibition which mirrors the traditional western scientific way how to bring a systematical order into the world with objects, languages and with clear borders for the living areas of tribal societies. You will not find any interviews with people about their view on their cultural environment nor their ways of organizing their life styles. Nothing is written about what Native Americans think about the use of their ancestors objects in this museum's exhibition.

Another way to present ethnographic artifacts chooses all-embracing categories like 'the world of women' and 'the world of men'. In such a case typical items and their different use of both sexes are shown. Tribal borders are of less interest. According to the chosen topics, suitable artifacts from different tribes are used to exemplify gender roles in society.²⁵ Following such a functionalistic approach, which became fashionable in the museum's praxis since the 1950s, objects are shown as being part of a holistic cultural concept. They are interpreted as tangible illustrations of abstract, non-material and cognitive correlations representing social organization and also used as an expression of religious rituals. In this approach the 'indigenous point of view' is not simulated²⁶, but the cultural context of the objects is explained and interpreted e.g. in texts and displays.²⁷

However, in societies with 'defined' differentiated living spheres for men and women it would be extremely interesting to collect people's voices about the use of and their knowledge about the objects in the museum collection. I am sure one would be very surprised how the flow of information between items and the officially defined separated worlds of the gender would start to open up. Taboos, which were documented by early anthropologists as fixed rules, could be illustrated in a new way – e.g. the holy flutes in the Sepik area which are forbidden to be seen by women and being played only by men. The focus is to represent different voices of individual, living people (from both sexes and all generations) around those flutes (not only mythological voices²⁸) in such an exhibition displaying these artifacts together with their creators in new perspectives.²⁹

A further classic concept presents ethnographic artifacts as 'pure' art objects following a formal, aesthetic viewpoint. I coined the word art-party to describe the influential group of the curators; the one preferring the implementation of art concepts. This group defends the high aesthetic and technical quality of the artifacts made by tribal societies. They present these artifacts in the same way as Western art is usually shown in Art Museums or Art Galleries. In these exhibitions, the object itself and its composition are in the focus together with the individual artist (the 'culture' where it comes from became of less interest)³⁰. The art objects are presented isolated for aesthetic contemplation completely removed from its cultural context or suggestion of an original functional use. As an example for such a presentation see the picture below taken in the 'art gallery', being part of a former exhibition in the Museum of World Cultures in Frankfurt am Main.



Museum of World Cultures: „Reisen und Entdecken. Vom Sepik an den Main“ (27.10.2007-30.08.2009) © Rein 2009³¹

It is obvious that in an ethnographical museum, the presentation of items as 'pure art works' without any "functional look"³² emphasizes an evaluation of the pieces according to European/Western perspectives – from the point of view of the art market or from a curator's point of view. Although in traditional societies the category 'art' does not exist, we know that The Others have a clear knowledge of their masters. As Susan Vogel points out "Though African languages do not have a word for art, they have many words that indicate artistry; words for embellished, decorated, beautified, out of the ordinary".³³

Because of their institutional history, ethnographic museums have a particular responsibility to document indigenous ideas and concepts of aesthetics³⁴ and how e.g. a mask is judged according to indigenous concepts of beauty – which can be the same ones as in Western societies – but which can be also very different resp. still unknown.³⁵

Contrary to the art-party, the curators of the context-party argue that these pure art installations can be compared to a neo-colonization. After having taken Their Objects without listening to Their Stories – now again, Western museums do not ask for Their Knowledge. The context-party insists on showing and telling the stories of the people. They were the first who started to experiment with the relational approach.³⁶ According to them, dialogues about art objects should become an inclusive discussion between the producers, their descendants, artists, the museum's staff etc. This relational way of looking at items means the acknowledgement of The Others as intellectual contemporaries with their own item centered view. Furthermore it includes many more people which can be connected with the artifacts as stated below.³⁷

Different Ways!

Since the 1970s, with new educational programs and new political challenges, the Western dominated museum's scene puts more effort into working and engaging with public expectations. On the one hand visitors demanded to know more about people from other countries: how they lived, how they worked and their thoughts and opinions about life. And on the other hand Aboriginal people from all over the world began to question the ways they were and still are represented in museum exhibitions.³⁸

The reactions to these requests of tribal people to participate in the museum's work with 'their artifacts' varied. Some museums experimented with several possibilities how to integrate original, individual voices into their 'scientific' concepts. To illustrate steps of this transformation process from a scientific approach to a relational one with members of a source community, I refer to the exhibition in the Kunsthal Rotterdam in 2003 "The World of the Blackfoot Indians" (De wereld van de Zwartvoet Indianen, 27.9.2003-11.1.2004).³⁹

In the entrance area, this exhibition started with a sign that welcomed the visitors with the following words:

„Hello, we call ourselves *nitsitapii*; real people, but we are also called Blackfoot.

This is our story. It is the story that was given to us by our ancestors. It is a story that we would like to share with you. It deals with our traditions, our beliefs, our culture and our history. It deals with our place in the universe and our ties with creation. Our story deals with the struggle to keep our identity, our beliefs, our language and our ways."⁴⁰

It is a very personal welcome, speaking in the first person, as if the Blackfoot people were actually talking with the visitors. According to Ester Sloof, the Blackfoot people were not only represented but also personally present in the show.⁴¹ By inviting the Blackfoot to participate in the creation of the exhibition the museum has returned some of the authority to the Blackfoot over their own heritage – and as an exchange – the museum has gained some expertise of the community.⁴²

However, the shown items were on loan from the Glenbow Museums in Calgary, not from the Blackfoots themselves. This showed the dilemma of the Native People: they were dependent on a western institution to tell the stories of their culture, using their objects, while it is those western institutions that have taken away the objects of their heritage. Good news is that the Blackfoot were invited to work together with the museum for the exhibition and they actively participated in the official events.⁴³

A relational perspective not only serves to rethink a museum's history but also depicts the museum's present social role and responsibilities. The actuality of this relational approach towards an object-analysis becomes more and more significant in the context of the acknowledgment of the 'intangible' heritage as being an inseparable part of the 'tangible' heritage by the museums.⁴⁴ While initiating this multi-dimensional discourse about objects, it suddenly became obvious how many different, unexpected opinions and relationships were – connected with one object.

According to Vogel, the experience of any given work of art created in Africa varied from person to person, and was closely tied to the circumstances in which it appeared. "For example, a men's society mask might be regarded as entertaining and possibly intimidating by uninitiated youths; initiated men would identify with it as an expression of their power and would understand its deeper spiritual and social meaning gradually as they rose through levels of initiation; women and members of different clans, courtiers or commoners might view it respectively as ugly and menacing, a glorious manifestation of their group, or as awesomely sublime. An artist could fix mainly on the details of manufacture and the skill of the artist. Those who did not belong to the original audience, such as Africans from a neighbouring area might see the sculpture as unknown and alien or might mistakenly interpret it in terms of their own differing traditions... Further, that experience changed over time."⁴⁵

Although it may be recognized that there is a diversity of knowledge traditions around the world, modern Western science prescribes to the epistemological standard. "What is needed is to find ways to give a voice to local knowledge without smothering them in totalizing theories".⁴⁶ With the category "The Other" I do not only refer to people from source communities or cultural minority groups as their qualifying aspect as speakers only. The terminus 'The Other' expresses the challenge of social inclusion of non-museum people in general into the museums work, inviting them to tell their specific local knowledge about items they are related to. The next example will illustrate this.

An actual example for a mixed context-art-party presentation is the exhibition „Being Object – Being Art“ in the Museum of World Cultures in Frankfurt/M. Masterpieces of the collection are shown in an art style (isolated) and sorted according to their geographical origin. Chosen room colors – like green for America and blue for Oceania – rely to Western conventional associations and separate the different geographical regions from each other. Only few data about the contexts are given on two levels (in German and English): The first one is a list of about five lines e.g. with the category/the name of the object – if possible in the vernacular language, then the tribe, area, and year specification/century. These lists are printed on the outer front parts of the showcases or on the wall aside the cases. As a second level of information, great displays are attached at the wall and positioned close to the passages into the next room or continent. Here, abstract colored maps of the chosen continent and texts in the style of the catalogue can be found – with a storage place for laminated texts to be carried around.⁴⁷



Museum of World Cultures: "Being Object – Being Art. Masterpieces from the Collections of the Museum of World Cultures Frankfurt/Main" (31.10.2009-31.10.2010); Left side in the front: "Figurengruppe/Figural group, Mexico, Metepec, 20. Jh."⁴⁸

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However, there is a further level of information proximal to some artifacts – mostly inside of the showcases. These labels catch the visitor's eye not only because of the closeness to the object but because of the specific color in which each label is printed. On these labels one finds the names and the city of the godparent who sponsored the artifact. This concept of closeness/relational representation, was part of the search for sponsors as one can read on the museum's homepage "Jeder Pate und jede Patin kann sich aus 80 Kunstwerken eines auswählen und wird – sofern gewünscht – für die Laufzeit der Ausstellung... namentlich auf einer Tafel am ausgewählten Objekt... genannt"⁴⁹. Following the question 'Who is speaking?' in the above mentioned example, the godparents have definitely one of the strongest voices in this show. And indeed, they have very interesting stories to tell – when they are asked as explained in the following example.

Together with his wife Hanna Laura Klar, Jens Jakob Happ became godparent of the Mexican sculpture pictured above. He told me the following story about his special relationship with the chosen object. "In my childhood I saw many of those colorful artifacts and paintings in the house of the former ethnologist and curator of the Städtische Museum für Völkerkunde (City Museum for Ethnography)⁵⁰ in Frankfurt /M., Karin Hahn-Hissink, who travelled together with her husband, the painter Albert Hahn, to Mexico in the 1960s. My parents were close friends with the couple and collectors of Albert Hahn paintings. In 1995 I visited Albert Hahn's house in Kronberg, shortly before his death⁵¹. I still remember very well the impressive beauty of the colorful collections. Unfortunately his excellent work seems to be largely forgotten. Because of my nice memories and my fascination about the combination of art and science in this special couple of anthropologist and artist, we chose this sculpture – which from an art market point of view seems to be of less value"⁵².

In this exhibition there are about 23 godparents mentioned together with their chosen objects. However, none of their personal stories, talking about their special relationships, were mentioned.⁵³ The concrete relationships of the godparents are suppressed in favor of the formal aesthetic approach of the exhibition which should uphold the ethnographic artifacts as real art objects.⁵⁴ This aesthetic presentation creates a timelessness which would have been interrupted by the personal stories, grounding the artifacts in space and time.

However, through the story of Jens J. Happ, the Mexican sculptural group could have become a strong medium connecting the past with the present and the future. The visitors would experience an impression of two professional people, who worked together for the museum some years ago. The reader of the story would learn about a special method in the anthropological fieldwork: the close cooperation between a scientist and an artist for the documentation and for a future research about the collected artifacts.

A presentation of the stories would illuminate that the connection between the godparents and their objects cannot be reduced to the financial aspect only. Through these personal explanations, the visitors would get emotionally involved with the artifacts together with the museum. They would start to have a story in common. The collected object, connected with the voice of the godparents, would have created a different perspective on historical museum items. This different style of presentation would encourage the visitors to search for their own ideas and memories connected with objects – besides the official, seemingly neutral texts published by the museum.⁵⁵

Multiple Dialogues

As Fanny Wonu Veys points out, an ethnographic museum "must contextualize"⁵⁶ whereas an art museum "emphasizes the aesthetic aspects"⁵⁷ independently of the presented object which can also be the same one in both places. In the last years it became accepted that artifacts do not have a stable and fixed role, but on the contrary, a multitude of roles⁵⁸. And this new insight demands different methods for the museum's work. According to Susan Pearce, we have reached a point within the sphere of the museum, where we have to discover new voices in old collections. The museum as a social construct, a purveyor of ideologically charged notions of knowledge and historical truth, must evolve into a reflexive, exploratory cultural space where existing collections speak in new voices. To her this implies a major shift in museum management and attitudes.⁵⁹ One challenge for the future will be to show cultural systematic and diversity of knowledge in the museums.⁶⁰

A relational approach is the method which offers different opportunities, following new ways of working with (old) collections and museums projects. It opens traditional scientific categories for new ways of thinking, for asking different questions, to start multiple dialogues and to create relationships between people not only within the institution museum⁶¹.

The relational approach opens the category 'culture'. A "fluid view of culture [opposite to a static, closed view]⁶², identity and multiculturalism treat culture as a constructed identity which is perennial in motion, continually under reconstruction."⁶³ People will speak for themselves. They should tell of their personal relationships to the museums items and contribute their (local) knowledge. They should talk about what the chosen item means to them and their opinion about to whom else it belongs, independently of the scientific definition to which tribe for example the object should belong to. Therefore the approach works in a trans-cultural way and not in an inter-cultural one⁶⁴.

The relational approach allows a museum to act in more diverse ways and on different levels. Besides working with archives and with scientific positions, it works on the social networks connected with the chosen object. It is not dealing only with the decolonization of the ethnographic museum – giving recognition to the people who produced the collections, or to their descendants⁶⁵ – but, the relational approach integrates everybody who is connected with the items of a collection and with the museum, independently of his/her nationality, education, age, descendant, or sex.

This manifold dialogue approach has often been attempted within particular projects but it has to be incorporated into the daily practice of the museum and its yearly budget⁶⁶.

Until now, professionals are searching for the one right way of interpreting and presenting ethnographic items in vain. Fortunately, there is no formula for ethnographic museums as Daan van Dartel recapitulates⁶⁷. It is encouraging to realize that while talking with each other, museum and non-museum people can take their chances to create vivid images reflecting multiple aspects of cultures and concepts of life and identity connected with museum collections and different local knowledge systems.

The 'ideal' ethnographic museum has to be spacious and sovereign enough to reflect the validity that there are more truths to be told about the artifacts and the life of people (who created them). The combination of the quality of the collected items together with the questions the people should ask about the artifacts constitutes the constructive and creative message the museum should propagate and which will be highly valued by the public. In this sense, a museum is a collection of objects as well as a network of social relationships.

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Notes:

- 1 This text is based on a lecture in the Museo Forum in Ljubljana / Slovenia on the 24th of May 2010 under the title „Who is speaking? Challenging dimensions of objects for ethnographic museums in changing times“. Thanks to Lydia Icke-Schwalbe, Ralf Ceplak and Rainer Hatoum for many inspiring discussions about ethnographic museums. Thanks to Patricia Lee Riesenkauff for the proof reading of this text.
- 2 Source: <http://www.postmedia.net/02/shopping.htm> (consulted 10.5.2010).
- 3 Airport Gallery in Terminal 1 (Abflughalle B, Exit A). Source: http://www.fraport.de/cms/presse/dok/215/215784.1_euro_market_grossinstallation_auf_dem.htm (consulted 9.5.2010).
- 4 The label, which is bound on the top of the basket, explains that it was produced in Thailand – but it could have been produced somewhere else in the world. Plastic baskets are products which do not follow any traditional concept in its outfit. They are designed according to their later function and they are distributed all over the globe – wherever people like and accept cheap plastic commodities. It is known, that one's own status and identity is reflected in the choice which basket one uses for shopping. On the label you see the original concept how it was imagined the basket would be originally used in daily life in Thailand.
- 5 Source: <http://www.basis-wien.at/avdt/htm/151/00060311.htm> (consulted 11.3.2010).
- 6 My basket can be seen in the background of the picture.
- 7 Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urinal#Das_Urinal_als_Kunstobjekt_von_Marcel_Duchamp (consulted 10.5.2010)
- 8 With the term "relational" I refer to the text of Basu 2009, p. 27, in which he introduces the noun in the context of his lecture "The Relational Museum". The term relational expresses the variety of social relationships concerning an (art) object and which should be included within the preliminary dialogue regarding museum collections and exhibitions.
- 9 Seziner zitiert nach Edwards et alii 2006, p.13 und Edwards et alii 2006, p. 13
- 10 Steiner 2001, p.210; zitiert nach Edwards et alii 2006, p. 13
- 11 Pilcher und Vermeylen 2008, p. 3
- 12 Pilcher und Vermeylen 2008, p. 4
- 13 Vgl. Basu & Alivizatou 2009, p. 27
- 14 Gosden 2009, p. 2
- 15 Gosden 2009, p. 1

- ¹⁶ Gosden 2009, p. 2
- ¹⁷ Following this question in 2004 the Museum of World Cultures in Frankfurt/M. presented in the exhibition "Ansichtssachen aus 100 Jahren" (9.10.2004–01.05.2005) at least six different perspectives as being connected with each object. With this concept the shown artifacts became connected with the ideas of their producers and former users as well as with the personal biography of the curators. Furthermore the significance of the objects e.g. the science ethnology together with a changing economic value for collectors became obvious (see Rein 2009, p. 13f).
- ¹⁸ With the expression „assemblage“, I refer to Muñoz (2009, p. 60f.) where she suggests the "dream situation is to use collections (assemblage of objects) as a library (assemblage of books)".
- ¹⁹ Gosden 2009, p. 7
- ²⁰ Gosden 2007, p. 7
- ²¹ I am not dealing here on cybermuseology which definitely offers new possibilities to work in an inclusive way while networking between objects, people and museums.
- ²² For the history of the changing perspectives after the closure of the curio cabinets see Rein 2009
- ²³ Assunção dos Santos 2009, p. 46f
- ²⁴ See Kästner 2009
- ²⁵ See Rein (2009) and Raabe (2008) concerning the exhibition "Reisen und Entdecken. Vom Sepik an den Main" Museum of World Cultures Frankfurt/M. (27.10.2007–30.08.2009).
- ²⁶ A simulation or reconstruction can be found in dioramas.
- ²⁷ Förster 1999, p. 40f
- ²⁸ Begleitheft zur Ausstellung 2007: e.g. see pp. 61, 68, 70
- ²⁹ In the exhibition in the Museum of World Cultures on the Sepik area indigenous, individual and contemporary voices from the Sepik villagers were left out. Therefore the Others remain for the visitor still a stereotyped personality being part of The Tribe.
- ³⁰ Förster 1999, p. 41.
- ³¹ The following informations were given: "Giebelfigur, Holz, Mittlerer Sepik, Malingei, latmul" (Figure for a Gable, Wood, Middle Sepik, Malingei). With the "art gallery" presentation being a small part within the whole exhibition it should be demonstrated that the knowledge of indigenous contexts is very important for any approach of understanding indigenous artifact.
- ³² Vogel 1995, p. 13
- ³³ Vogel 1995, p. 17
- ³⁴ See Veys 2010, p. 275
- ³⁵ See Rein 2009, p. 11
- ³⁶ I am aware of the artificiality of the use of this differentiation into an art-party and a context-party. Curators in the museums practices can belong to both parties depending on the topic and the collection they want to present. However, the decision to emphasize either the art aspect or the context one has a strong impact on any concept for a later presentation. While presenting the paper in Ljubljana the reaction from the colleagues was very clear – they decided immediately to which of the two parties they would belong to. (See also Veys 2010, p. 263ff). According to Susan Vogel (1995:11) an examination of how we (the Europeans/North-Americans) e.g. view African objects is important. "because unless we realize the extent to which our vision is conditioned by our own culture – unless we realize that the image of African Art we have made a place for in our world has been shaped by us as much as by Africans – we may be misled into believing that we see African Art for what it is."
- ³⁷ In her article, Larissa Förster (1999) relies on different approaches of co-operations between artists and curators of exhibitions in Paris (1986, 1995) and Amsterdam (1992). However, in her extended model of exhibitions (p. 53) she remains in a static concept of culture, curator, artist and visitor as (only partly moving) fixed entities. In the context of the relational approach, two important recent cooperations between artist and ethnographic museums should be mentioned here: "The Garden of Eden" at the National Museum of Ethnography, which started in 2003 and the exhibition "Pacifica styles" at the University of Cambridge Museum of Archeology and Anthropology (5.5.200–23.2.2008).
- ³⁸ See Rein 2009
- ³⁹ Source: http://www.kunsthil.nl/22-285-De_wereld_van_de_Zwartvoet_Indianen.html (consulted 2.8.2010)
- ⁴⁰ Sloof 2003, p. 1
- ⁴¹ Sloof 2003, p. 2
- ⁴² Sloof 2003, p. 9
- ⁴³ See Rein 2009, p. 12f.
- ⁴⁴ Basu; Alivizatu 2009, p. 27
- ⁴⁵ Vogel 1995, p. 14f
- ⁴⁶ Vermeyelen et alii 2008p. 2010
- ⁴⁷ This very common presentation of different text formats in an exhibition demands from the visitors a typical motions sequences (back and forth, up and down, sideways) which Andreas Spiegl suggests to call "Info-Foxtrott" (2005, p. 94).
- ⁴⁸ The same text appears on the homepage. [http://www.mwk-frankfurt.de/Deutsch/Being_Object_Being_Art_ _Mit_80_Paten_um_die_Welt/Amerika/index.phtml](http://www.mwk-frankfurt.de/Deutsch/Being_Object_Being_Art_-_Mit_80_Paten_um_die_Welt/Amerika/index.phtml) consulted 31.8.2010). In the catalogue the group is named as follows: "Städtisches Museum für Völkerkunde 1964 – Grandes maestros del arte popular Mexicano 1998" Suhrbier 2008, p. 42
- ⁴⁹ Source: http://www.mwk-frankfurt.de/Deutsch/Being_Object_Being_Art_ _Mit_80_Paten_um_die_Welt/index.html (consulted 8.8.2010). "Every godparent/sponsor who chooses one of the 80 pieces of art to support can decide to have their name posted in proximity to the art work during the entire length of the exhibition". Translated by the author.
- ⁵⁰ Since 2001 the new name of the museum is Museum der Weltkulturen/Museum of World Cultures.
- ⁵¹ His wife died already in 1981. Gugel 2004, p. 154
- ⁵² Jens Jakob Happ, interview 19.8.2010
- ⁵³ There have been several very convincing examples of non-museum people presenting their local knowledge in exhibitions very recently. Rein 2009, p. 14f
- ⁵⁴ In this show, artists of the ethnographic artifacts remain unknown (their tribe/region/culture is mentioned as collective, anonym authors) – a personal, vivid relationship is constituted only by means of the individual mentioned godparents.
- ⁵⁵ See Hoffer 2005, p. 181f.
- ⁵⁶ Veys 2010, p. 275
- ⁵⁷ Veys 2010, p. 275
- ⁵⁸ Veys 2010, p. 265
- ⁵⁹ Pearce, Source: http://portal.uneso.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2284&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.htm1#museums (consulted 15.05.2010)
- ⁶⁰ Bush 2005, p. 17
- ⁶¹ Veys 2010, p. 274
- ⁶² Added by the author
- ⁶³ Pieterse 1997, p. 128. Quoted after Assunção dos Santos 2009, p. 45
- ⁶⁴ See Welsch 2010
- ⁶⁵ See Muñoz 2009, p. 60
- ⁶⁶ As Adriana Muñoz points out (2009, p. 60), the opening exhibition in the Swedish Museum of World Culture "Voices" was funded by the European Community and tried to develop another kind of practice in the beginning of its existence. However because of the lack of financial resources, similar projects like the first one "Equal" could not be started. According to her, the re-interpretation and re-contextualization of collections cannot be based on projects only but have to be incorporated into the daily work of a museum. See also Förster 2010, p. 254, footnote 17.
- ⁶⁷ Dartel 2009, p. 37

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Anzeige

GLASBAU HAHN 

Victoria & Albert Museum, London

HahnVitrinen
Design und Technik in
höchster Perfektion

Konservieren und Restaurieren



Kürzlich durfte ich drei verschiedene Museumsdepots besuchen. Mein Wunsch wurde sofort erfüllt, Museumsmitarbeiter nahmen sich die Zeit für eine kleine Führung. In einem Fall konnte ich sogar ganz allein die geliebten Objekte ohne trennende Scheiben besichtigen. Mit einer Leiter an den Regalen und Hochschränken entlang, wurde es mir erlaubt, einige unbekannte und doch so vertraute Dinge in einer ungeahnten Fülle näher betrachten zu können. Der stille Vergleich mit eigenen Objekten oder woanders gesehenen, aus Publikationen bekannten, war ein Erlebnis. Das stundenlange Eintauchen in eine kostbare, aber nur nach konservatorisch-praktischen Gesichtspunkten sortierte Objektwelt ließ Zeit und Stunde vergessen, selbst Hunger und Durst. Im gedanklichen Dialog mit den beigefügten Beschriftungen und Karteikarten von Generationen von Kuratoren und Restauratoren zeigt sich, wieviel Mühe dahinter steckt, ein Ding „einfach nur“ staubgeschützt und auffindbar im Regal zu verwahren. Die Einordnung nach Materialien, nach Objektgruppen, nach Schenkungen weist auf wissenschaftlich durchdachte, museale Sucherfahrungen hin. Im Depot laufen also viele Fäden zusammen, wenn man so will, nicht nur im Direktorenzimmer.

Wieviele Überlegungen müssen erst notwendig sein, diese Dinge im Rahmen einer Ausstellung „zum Sprechen“ zu bringen? Die dazugehörige Fachliteratur zu kennen, die Objektgattung zur Gänze zu überblicken, zu wissen, wie es andere machen, was das Publikum interessieren könnte, wo der Lerneffekt liegen könnte; zu prüfen, in welchem, doch oft finanziell so begrenzten Rahmen Medien, Gestaltung und hinzuzuziehende Leihobjekte noch möglich sind – das ist jedes Mal und überall eine respektable Leistung.

Dieses Heft geht auf beides ein, auf Ausstellungspräsentationen und auf die restauratorisch/konservatorische Vorarbeit.

Bei der Zusammenstellung der Beiträge ist uns wieder Frau Dipl.-Rest. Friederike Zobel zur Seite gestanden, der wir hier besonderen Dank für ihre Zuarbeit aussprechen dürfen.

Adelheid Straten

Zum Titelbild

2008-2010 hat GLASBAU HAHN drei spektakuläre Galerien im Victoria & Albert Museum mit Spezialvitriolen ausgestattet. Sie sind Teil des sog. Future Plan, die umfangreiche Neugestaltung des V&A mit der weltweit größten Sammlung an Kunstgewerbe und Design in mehr als 140 Galerien unter einem Dach. Für die **William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery** hat HAHN nach dem Design von Eva Jiricna zwei runde und vier geschwungene, freistehende Vitriolen aus entspiegeltem „Anti-Bandit-Glas“ entwickelt, die im Zentrum der 33 m langen Galerie stehen. Eine Herausforderung sind die gebogenen und gedrehten Deckelscheiben der gewölbten Vitriolen, deren Oberkanten von 2,20 m auf eine Höhe von 3,50 m ansteigen. Diese in sich gebogenen Deckelscheiben wurden in einer individuellen Gießform hergestellt. Höchste Sicherheit und gleichzeitig komfortablen Zugang bietet das unsichtbar im Sockelbereich installierte Öffnungssystem.

Zusätzlich wurden die **New Medieval and Renaissance Galleries** 2009 mit 111 Vitriolen in zehn neuen Ausstellungsgalerien ausgestattet, deren Sockel ideal an die Architektur angepaßt, mit Naturstein beschichtet ist oder aus rückseitig lackiertem Glas bestehen. In zwei Phasen hat HAHN die **Ceramics Galleries** mit bis zu 26 m langen freistehenden Schaudepot-Vitriolen neu eingerichtet. Für einen besonderen Vitrintyp, der längsseits in den Raum ragt, wurde in der Ceramics Gallery ein spezielles Öffnungssystem entwickelt, das eine 100%ige Öffnung durch einen Dreh-Schiebetürbeschlag ermöglicht.

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