



Decolonising MUSEOLOGY

DESCOLONIZANDO LA MUSEOLOGÍA

3

Decolonising the Curriculum

Descolonizar el currículo

Editors

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Karen Brown, Ana S. González Rueda
& Bruno Brulon Soares
(Eds.)

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCCIÓN

Introduction: decolonising the curriculum

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“[O]ne of the difficult aspects I find with museum studies—like heritage studies, memory studies sometimes—is our inability to speak the political; our inability to address race, gender and sexuality in our teaching” (Modest, 2021).

In the first decades of this century, the museum sector has witnessed the insurgence of multiple claims from various social groups and activist associations for decolonising its practices and methods.¹ Some of the largest well-established institutions, located in diverse contexts of the globe, were once again called to a responsibility for opening to different social experiences aiming to reshape the museum arena vis-à-vis the situated perspectives of underrepresented communities. While these social claims have denounced the authorised discourse and the colonial practice of museums towards specific groups, they have also evinced coloniality of knowledge in the basis of a discipline that has been taught in academic centres for the last century, disregarding epistemologies differing from the European and North American canon, which until now has defined the curricula of museum and heritage studies and how we teach museology around the globe.

The present publication brings together a collection of reflections presented during the webinar conference “Museums and Community Action: Decolonising the Curriculum,” hosted by the University of St Andrews and the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) in April 2021. This book is the third volume of a multi-vocal series entitled “Decolonising museology,” including approaches from different parts of the world and diverse museological backgrounds. The

1. For example, in 2018, the Welt Museum in Vienna reopened with a redisplay of its entire collection as a “history of colonial encounter”. That same year, the Africa Museum in Tervuren, Belgium, underwent a complete refurbishment that transformed it “from an implicitly colonial to an explicitly decolonial museum” (Giblin et al., 2019, pp. 474-5). Germany is currently negotiating the return of 440 Benin bronzes held at the Ethnological Museum, a repatriation process that the foreign minister, Heiko Maas, has referred to as “a question of justice” (Bajare, 2021).

webinar conference and the resultant publication are part of the Special Project *Museums, Community Action and Decolonisation* developed by ICOFOM and ICOM since 2019, which aims to foster debates and develop reflexive bases for museum practice relating to the claims and actions of communities seeking greater agency through the forum of the museum. The debate on “decolonisation,” while not a new one in the disciplinary field of museology, adopts a new critical approach to previous debates and events that also presented a deliberate intention to decolonise “the museum,” such as the International Movement for New Museology (MINOM, officialised in 1985), and even the discussions of the Round Table of Santiago de Chile in 1972, 50 years ago.

Since the upheaval of social movements for the liberation of formal colonies in the 1960s, and several forms of activism from subaltern groups whose claims have reached cultural institutions as well as universities around the world, much has been said and written about the practical decolonisation of museums—a process that in some contexts is still strictly related to the restitution of colonial collections. However, what about the decolonisation of museology? This critical moment for museums and museology in the world have led ICOM and its several national and international committees to generate multiple and potent critical reflections on museums’ colonial past and its effects on museological thinking—effects that have been analysed and debated within ICOFOM for the past few years. Since 2016, ICOFOM has also collaborated with the European Horizon 2020 project called “EU-LAC Museums,” led by Dr Karen Brown, in the sense of activating an international network to conceive how communities transform museums (and vice versa) in Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. A number of the speakers who agreed to contribute to this volume have engaged in this previous project.

Such a movement to rethink the bases is not only connected to the objective procedures of museums, but also to a preliminary decolonisation of museology, as a politically charged academic discipline that has been shaping the ways of thinking and conceiving museums and their social roles. These are the critical issues with which the six essays in this volume grapple, coming from different geographic regions, backgrounds, and experiences.

Moving forwards from the postcolonial debates of the 1970s and the decolonial approach of some Latin American thinkers spread since the 1990s, multiple events have taken place, led by other universities and museum support organisations engaged in debates surrounding decolonisation (e.g., Mignolo, 2017; Pinho & Rao, 2020; Association for Art History, n.d.). Most recently, the UK Museums Association has released a statement on decolonisation and hosts a growing resource for further reading and research, including case studies (Museums Association, 2020). Many universities are also engaging in this process on a structural level, including several initiatives proximate to the St Andrews webinar: the Decolonial Summer School run by Rolando Vázquez and Walter Mignolo in Middelburg; and the 2020 appointment of a “Curator of Discomfort” to tackle racism at the University of Glasgow by finding ways to re-interpret col-

lections from multiple viewpoints (Yeaman, 2021). However, although toolkits and reports are emerging on decolonising university curriculum at large, few of these actions are addressing precisely the question of museum and heritage studies curriculum that this volume seeks to progress (e.g., Decolonising SOAS Working Group, 2018; Liyanage, 2020).

Moreover, even though some museologists in the past few years have been exposing the colonial centres of knowledge that structure our discipline (e.g., Brulon Soares & Leshchenko, 2018) according to a political economy of knowledge, as proposed by Raewyn Connell (2014), there are still few studies that critically consider our roots as a university discipline forged in European modernity. When it comes to the curriculum, curator and academic Marquard Smith reminds us that decolonisation entails asking: Who is teaching? What is being taught and how? Under which unacknowledged epistemological assumptions? How is structural racism embedded into the curriculum and the discipline? And who is this curriculum working for? (Smith, 2020, p. 18). In this way, we are reminded to fundamentally question our epistemic world view as well as our institutions' structural biases that preserve the inequitable status quo.

In the context of updating the curriculum, we must be clear that diversification and inclusion are not decolonisation and only get us so far. As Mignolo (2017) observes, it is not enough to change the content of the conversation; we must change the *terms* of the conversation. As several social scientists will argue, coloniality of power² continues to shape the intellectual world and determine how knowledge will be produced and distributed around the globe. For instance, attempts to make neoliberal rankings of universities in the world presupposes the existence of a homogeneous domain of knowledge on which measuring operations may be performed, regardless of cultural and economic differences (Connell, 2014). Nonetheless, the conditions for the circulation of knowledge according to a global division of labour that shapes academia still reproduces colonialist standards, imposing unequal conditions for different academic centres and researchers. This perverse dynamic will establish different forms of “academic dependency” (Alatas, 2006), which will help to undermine local knowledge and alternative kinds of theory produced in the South.

So, how can the global pattern of coloniality and dependence be contested? What are the effects of the centrality of certain perspectives and epistemologies in the diversity of knowledge that shape the professional profiles of universities of the North and those of the South? Furthermore, how can we change a pattern of domination and colonisation of thinking starting from our teaching programs and curricula? As the conversations initiated in the webinar conference and continued in this publication show, these questions refer to a common issue for museologists and academics based in different parts of the world. Motivated by this common concern, the authors in this book share their views on this complex debate that involves a critical understanding of the knowledge/power

2. A concept forged by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (e.g., Quijano, 1992).

relations that founded academia as we know it and structure our curricula up to the present.

The volume opens with “Decolonial Pathways” by **Rolando Vázquez**, placing emphasis front and centre on the politics and ethics of decoloniality/decolonisation in the present day. Butting against the capacious adoption of the terms in recent academic discourse, Vázquez centres his thinking in the Latin American (Abya Yala) network of decoloniality to argue for pathways that seek to heal the wounds of colonialism. This action means stepping beyond the modernist/capitalist order that fabricated a subordinate “other” beyond the colonial Western (male) gaze and domination, in a process of restitution of loss, for example, through museum displays and programmes working against normative functions that assure a dominant white gaze or world view, or altering the curriculum to encourage awareness of lecturer and student positionality. Fundamentally, Vázquez argues for living a more ethical life that is not based on extraction from the earth or suffering of others. Moreover, these principles should also affect the design and delivery of museum and heritage studies curriculum where we live and work.

Also focused on processes of healing the colonial wound, in “Emancipation, Independence, Decolonising and Historicising: Our Process of ‘Becoming’ in Trinidad and Tobago,” **Heather Cateau** provides a timely critical view on the decolonial debates and actions affecting these independent Caribbean islands. Taking historical and sociological approaches to an ethnically diverse but unsettled nation, Cateau draws close attention to tensions at work under the surface of Trinidadian civil society that have become visible through recent local attitudes towards monuments associated with the histories of colonisation, extraction, and marginalisation. Beyond the international movement of dismantling monuments, the author argues that society has the opportunity to consider their national identity and plan through cooperation between educational institutions (challenging the “hidden curriculum”) and museums (becoming active in decolonisation). In this way, museums and monuments can be transformed from sites of contestation to sites of consciousness in a continuous “Process of Becoming” involving healing processes at public levels.

Bruno Brulon Soares’ chapter is based on his experience teaching experimental museology at the Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, one of the most traditional institutions in Brazil, which offered the first museum studies programme in South America. This chapter delves into classification as a fundamental principle that has historically shaped museology and established its foundational boundaries. In particular, the author considers the profound implications of museology’s relegation of experience (as opposed to rational thinking). Brulon Soares presents the premises of “border museology” through three different examples: a candomblé altar held by the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, in Recife, Brazil; an unauthorised performance at the Art Museum of Rio; and an activist protest by Les Marrons Unis Dignes et Courageux at the Musée du Quai Branly during the Black Lives Matter mobilisations in 2020.

Through his analysis, Brulon Soares demonstrates an “undisciplined” approach that confounds borders and points to an epistemic shift. As part of the ongoing process of museum decolonisation, this chapter puts forward an understanding of experimental museology as a “museology of liberation.”

In her chapter “Community museums as spaces of decolonised university learning,” **Lauran Bonilla-Merchav** proposes to extend the university space for learning to the communities that conduct museological practices and provide potential critical thinking that goes beyond authorised knowledge and formal teaching in academia. She discusses two examples of students’ engagement with community museums in Costa Rica: the Sor María Romero Museum in San José, and a project at the Ecomuseum of the Mines of Abangares in Guanacaste. Bonilla-Merchav’s analysis emphasises the community museums’ social role and sustainable practices. Her approach to decolonising the curriculum is based on active, constructivist learning. Overall, this chapter highlights the possibilities of moving away from Enlightenment epistemology, the value of non-hierarchical teaching, and the challenging and nurturing experiences these spaces provide to the students.

Conal McCarthy and **Awhina Tamarapa** present a view from Aotearoa New Zealand. Their chapter examines the far-reaching transformation of museum studies and practice over the last few decades, particularly the emergence of indigenous pedagogy in higher education programmes through *kaupapa Māori* methodology. This chapter integrates the authors’ *Maōri* and *Pākehā* (New Zealand European settler) perspectives, theory, and practice, and academic and tribal community contexts. McCarthy and Tamarapa focus on the shift to Māori agency and strategies within a specific master’s course. They discuss Māori museology, which acknowledges “the spiritual and cultural dimensions of objects seen as living ancestors,” aims to “open the storeroom doors” as a way of reconnecting with museum collections, and implies a specific understanding of restoration. A key example from the course is the *wānanga*, where students are immersed in a *marae* (tribal complex) for three days as guests of the community. By reflecting on their own curatorial and teaching approach, the authors demonstrate the importance of engaging with critical indigenous pedagogy in the process of decolonising the curriculum.

Finally, in conversation with **Ana S. González Rueda**, **Wayne Modest** discusses the relevance of European ethnographic and world cultural museums in the context of the “anxious politics” of the present. Modest addresses the impact of recent black, indigenous, queer, feminist activism on museums. He considers institutional investment on redemptive, reparative, or caring work, his commitment to a horizon of justice, and interest in how museums can listen more and talk less. Referring to specific projects such as the *Afterlives of Slavery* exhibition at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, this chapter touches on the issue of complicity and the conception of the museum as a site of healing. Modest puts forward his understanding of the decolonised museum as a space of uncertainty and a work in progress. In his view, the role of future curators

involves both provocation and imagination, while museum visits become investments in critical discomfort.

In these chapters, the task of decolonising the curriculum comes through as a pressing ethical issue that we cannot turn our backs on. To very different extents, coloniality affects all of us, and we should all share the labour of decolonisation in our institutions and classrooms. It might be impossible to decolonise the university, the museum, and the curriculum, but that should not prevent us from engaging in the process. By means of this focused volume, we wish to invite discomfort and to advocate for, as bell hooks says, “thinking against the grain” (1994, p. 44).

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Introducción: descolonizar el currículo

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[U]no de los aspectos de la museología —como los estudios del patrimonio, a veces los estudios de la memoria— que encuentro difícil es nuestra incapacidad para hablar de política; nuestra incapacidad para abordar en nuestra enseñanza temas como la raza, el género y la sexualidad.

(Modest, 2021)

En las primeras décadas de este siglo, el sector museístico ha sido testigo del surgimiento de múltiples peticiones de diversas asociaciones sociales y activistas por la descolonización de las prácticas y métodos de los museos.¹ A algunas de las instituciones más grandes y bien establecidas del mundo, ubicadas en diversos contextos, se les ha invitado, una vez más, a asumir la responsabilidad de abrirse a diferentes experiencias sociales con el objetivo de remodelar la arena del museo frente a las perspectivas de comunidades subrepresentadas. Si bien estos reclamos sociales han denunciado el discurso oficial y las prácticas coloniales de los museos hacia grupos específicos, también han evidenciado la colonialidad del saber en los orígenes de una disciplina que se viene enseñando en los centros académicos desde el último siglo, sin reconocer epistemologías distintas a las del canon europeo y norteamericano, que define, hasta el día de hoy, los planes de estudio de museos y estudios patrimoniales y la forma en la que enseñamos museología en todo el mundo.

La presente publicación reúne una colección de reflexiones presentadas durante el seminario web “Museos y Acción Comunitaria: Descolonizando el Currículo”, organizado por la Universidad de St Andrews y el Comité Internacional para la

1. Por ejemplo, en 2018, el Museo Welt en Viena reabrió con una nueva exhibición de toda su colección como una “historia del encuentro colonial”. Ese mismo año, el Museo de África en Teruren, Bélgica, fue completamente remodelado, lo que lo transformó “de un museo implícitamente colonial a uno explícitamente descolonial” (Giblin et al., 2019, pp. 474-5). Alemania actualmente está negociando la devolución de 440 bronce de Benín que se encuentran en el Museo Etnológico, un proceso de repatriación que el ministro de Exteriores, Heiko Mass, ha llamado “una cuestión de justicia” (Bajare, 2021).

Museología (ICOFOM) en abril de 2021. Este libro es el tercer volumen de una serie polifónica titulada “Descolonizar la Museología”, que incluye enfoques de diferentes partes del mundo y diversos antecedentes museológicos. El seminario web y la publicación resultante son parte del Proyecto Especial *Museos, Acción Comunitaria y Descolonización*, desarrollado por el ICOFOM y el Consejo Internacional de Museos (ICOM) desde 2019, con el objetivo de fomentar debates y desarrollar la reflexión entorno a la práctica de los museos a partir de las peticiones y acciones de las comunidades que buscan una mayor agencia a través del foro que son los museos. El debate sobre la “descolonización”, si bien no es nuevo en el campo de la Museología, adopta un nuevo enfoque crítico en debates y eventos anteriores que también presentaban una intención deliberada de descolonizar “el museo”, como el Movimiento Internacional para una Nueva Museología (MINOM, oficializado en 1985), e incluso las discusiones de la Mesa Redonda de Santiago de Chile, en 1972, hace 50 años.

Desde la convulsión causada por los movimientos sociales por la liberación de las colonias en la década de 1960 y varias formas de activismo de grupos subalternos cuyos reclamos han llegado a instituciones culturales y universidades de todo el mundo, mucho se ha dicho y escrito sobre la descolonización práctica de los museos: un proceso que en algunos contextos todavía está estrictamente relacionado con la restitución de colecciones coloniales. Sin embargo, ¿qué pasa con la descolonización de la museología? Este momento crítico para los museos y la museología en el mundo ha llevado al ICOM y a sus varios comités nacionales e internacionales a generar múltiples y potentes reflexiones críticas sobre el pasado colonial de los museos y sus efectos en el pensamiento museológico, efectos que han sido analizados y debatidos dentro del ICOFOM durante los últimos años. Desde 2016, el ICOFOM también colabora con el proyecto europeo Horizonte 2020 denominado “EU-LAC Museums”, liderado por la Dra. Karen Brown, para activar una red internacional que pueda concebir cómo las comunidades transforman los museos (y viceversa) en la Unión Europea, Latinoamérica y el Caribe. Varios de los oradores que aceptaron contribuir a este volumen estuvieron involucrados en este proyecto anterior.

Tal movimiento de repensar los fundamentos no sólo está conectado con los procedimientos objetivos de los museos, sino también con una descolonización preliminar de la museología, como una disciplina académica políticamente cargada que ha ido moldeando las formas de pensar y concebir los museos y sus roles sociales. Estos son los temas críticos que los seis ensayos de este volumen, provenientes de diferentes regiones geográficas, antecedentes y experiencias, abordan.

Para avanzar con los debates poscoloniales de la década de 1970 y el enfoque descolonial de algunos pensadores latinoamericanos difundidos desde la década de 1990, se han llevado a cabo múltiples eventos liderados por universidades y organizaciones de apoyo a museos que participan en debates en torno a la descolonización (por ejemplo, Mignolo, 2017; Pinho & Rao, 2020; Association for Art History, n.d.). Más recientemente, la Asociación de Museos del Reino

Unido ha publicado una declaración sobre la descolonización y alberga cada vez más recursos para lecturas e investigaciones adicionales, incluidos estudios de caso (Museums Association, 2020). Muchas universidades también se están involucrando en este proceso a nivel estructural, algunas similares al seminario web de St Andrews, como la escuela descolonial de verano, dirigida por Rolando Vázquez y Walter Mignolo en Middelburg, así como el nombramiento, en 2020, de un “curador de la incomodidad” para abordar el racismo en la Universidad de Glasgow a través de la búsqueda de formas de reinterpretar las colecciones desde múltiples puntos de vista (Yeaman, 2021). Sin embargo, aunque están surgiendo herramientas e informes sobre la descolonización del currículo en general, pocas de estas acciones abordan en específico la cuestión del currículo de estudios de museos y estudios patrimoniales que este libro quiere atender (por ejemplo, Decolonising SOAS Working Group, 2018; Liyanage, 2020).

Por otra parte, si bien algunos museólogos en los últimos años han venido exponiendo los centros coloniales de conocimiento que estructuran nuestra disciplina (por ejemplo, Brulon Soares y Leshchenko, 2018) según una economía política del conocimiento, tal como lo propone Raewyn Connell (2014), aún existen pocos estudios que consideren de manera crítica nuestras raíces como una disciplina universitaria forjada en la modernidad europea. Cuando se trata de abordar el currículo, el curador y académico Marquard Smith (2020, p. 18) nos recuerda que la descolonización implica preguntar: ¿Quién está enseñando? ¿Qué enseña y cómo? ¿Bajo qué suposiciones epistemológicas no reconocidas? ¿Cómo se integra el racismo estructural en el currículo y la disciplina? ¿A quién le favorece este currículo? De esta manera, recordamos que debemos cuestionar fundamentalmente nuestra cosmovisión epistémica, así como los sesgos estructurales de nuestras instituciones que preservan el inequitativo *statu quo*.

En el contexto de actualizar el currículo, debemos tener claro que la diversificación y la inclusión no son descolonización y sólo nos llevan hasta cierto punto. Como observa Mignolo (2017), no basta con cambiar el contenido de la conversación; debemos cambiar los términos de la conversación. Como argumentarán varios científicos sociales, la colonialidad del poder² continúa dando forma a los mundos intelectuales y determina cómo se va a producir y a distribuir el conocimiento en todo el mundo. Por ejemplo, los intentos neoliberales de clasificar las universidades en el mundo presuponen la existencia de un dominio homogéneo de conocimiento sobre el cual se pueden realizar operaciones de medición independientemente de las diferencias culturales y económicas (Connell, 2014). Sin embargo, las condiciones para la circulación del conocimiento, de acuerdo con la división global del trabajo que conforma la academia, aún reproduce estándares colonialistas, imponiendo condiciones desiguales para los diferentes centros académicos e investigadores. Esta dinámica perversa establecerá diferentes formas de “dependencia académica” (Alatas, 2006) que ayudará a socavar el conocimiento local y los tipos alternativos de teoría producidos en el Sur.

2. Un concepto forjado por el sociólogo peruano Aníbal Quijano. Por ejemplo, véase (Quijano, 1992).

Entonces, ¿cómo se puede cuestionar el patrón global de colonialidad y dependencia? ¿Cuáles son los efectos de la centralidad de ciertas perspectivas y epistemologías en la diversidad de saberes que configuran los perfiles profesionales en las universidades del Norte y las del Sur? Además, ¿cómo podemos cambiar un patrón de dominación y colonización del pensamiento a partir de nuestros programas y currículos? Como lo muestran las conversaciones iniciadas en el seminario web y continuadas en esta publicación, estas preguntas se refieren a un tema común para museólogos y académicos con sede en diferentes partes del mundo. Motivados por esta preocupación común, los autores de este libro comparten sus puntos de vista sobre este complejo debate que implica una comprensión crítica de las relaciones de saber/poder que fundaron la academia tal como la conocemos y que han estructurado nuestros planes de estudio hasta el presente.

El volumen abre con “Decolonial Pathways”, de **Rolando Vázquez**, que pone énfasis en la ética y la política de la descolonialidad/descolonización en la actualidad. En contra de la amplia adopción de los términos en el discurso académico reciente, Vázquez centra su pensamiento en la red de descolonialidad de Latinoamérica (Abya Yala) para abogar por caminos que busquen sanar las heridas del colonialismo. Esta acción significa ir más allá del orden modernista/capitalista que fabricó un “otro” subordinado más allá de la mirada y dominación colonial occidental (masculina), en un proceso de restitución de la pérdida, por ejemplo, a través de exhibiciones y programas de museos que van en contra de las funciones normativas que aseguran una mirada o visión del mundo blanca dominante, o alterar el currículo para fomentar la consciencia de la posicionalidad del profesor y del estudiante. Fundamentalmente, Vázquez aboga por vivir una vida más ética que no se base en la extracción de la tierra o el sufrimiento de los demás. Además, estos principios también deberían afectar el diseño y la impartición del currículo de museos y estudios patrimoniales donde vivimos y trabajamos.

También centrada en los procesos de sanación de la herida colonial, en “Emancipation, Independence, Decolonising and Historicising: Our Process of ‘Becoming’ in Trinidad and Tobago”, **Heather Cateau** brinda una oportuna visión crítica sobre los debates y acciones descoloniales que afectan a estas islas independientes del Caribe. Tomando enfoques históricos y sociológicos de una nación étnicamente diversa, pero a la vez inestable, Cateau se enfoca en las tensiones que existen bajo la superficie de la sociedad civil trinitense que se han vuelto visibles a través de las recientes actitudes locales hacia los monumentos asociados con las historias de colonización, extracción y marginación. Más allá del movimiento internacional de desmantelamiento de monumentos, la autora argumenta que la sociedad tiene la oportunidad de considerar su identidad y plan nacional a través de la cooperación entre instituciones educativas (desafiando el “currículo oculto”) y los museos (participando de manera activa en la descolonización). De esta manera, los museos y monumentos pueden transformarse para dejar de ser sitios de contestación y volverse sitios de consciencia en un “proceso de devenir” continuo que involucra procesos de sanación a nivel público.

El capítulo de **Bruno Brulon Soares** se basa en su experiencia enseñando museología experimental en la Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, una de las instituciones más tradicionales de Brasil, que ofreció el primer programa de estudios de museología en América del Sur. Este capítulo profundiza en la clasificación como un principio fundamental que históricamente ha dado forma a la museología y ha establecido sus límites. En particular, el autor considera las profundas implicaciones de la relegación de la experiencia (al contrario del pensamiento racional) en la museología. Brulon Soares presenta las premisas de la “museología fronteriza” a través de tres ejemplos diferentes: un altar de candomblé en el Museu do Homem do Nordeste, en Recife, Brasil; un performance no autorizado en el Museo de Arte de Río, y una protesta activista de Les Marrons Unis Dignes et Courageux en el Musée du Quai Branly durante las movilizaciones de *Black Lives Matter* en 2020. A través de su análisis, Brulon Soares demuestra un enfoque “indisciplinado” que confunde las fronteras y apunta a un cambio epistémico. Como parte del proceso en curso de descolonización de los museos, este capítulo propone una comprensión de la museología experimental como una “museología de la liberación”.

En su capítulo, “Community museums as spaces of decolonised university learning”, **Lauran Bonilla-Merchav** propone extender el espacio universitario de aprendizaje a las comunidades que realizan prácticas museológicas y brindar potencialidades de pensamiento crítico que van más allá del saber oficial y la enseñanza académica formal. Habla de dos ejemplos de la participación de los estudiantes con los museos comunitarios en Costa Rica: el Museo Sor María Romero, en San José, y un proyecto en el Ecomuseo de las Minas de Abangares, en Guanacaste. El análisis de Bonilla-Merchav enfatiza el rol social y las prácticas sostenibles de los museos comunitarios. Su enfoque para descolonizar el currículo se basa en el aprendizaje activo y constructivista. En general, este capítulo destaca las posibilidades de alejarse de la epistemología de la Ilustración, el valor de la enseñanza no jerárquica y las experiencias estimulantes y enriquecedoras que estos espacios brindan a los estudiantes.

Conal McCarthy y **Awhina Tamarapa** presentan una perspectiva desde Aotearoa, Nueva Zelanda. Su capítulo examina la gran transformación de los estudios y la práctica de los museos en las últimas décadas, en particular, el surgimiento de la pedagogía indígena en los programas de educación superior a través de la metodología *Māori kaupapa*. Este capítulo integra las perspectivas, teoría y práctica y los contextos académicos y comunitarios tribales de autores maoríes y *pākehā* (colonos europeos de Nueva Zelanda). McCarthy y Tamarapa se centran en el cambio a la agencia y las estrategias maoríes dentro de un curso de maestría específico. Discuten la museología maorí, que reconoce “las dimensiones espirituales y culturales de los objetos vistos como ancestros vivos”, tiene como objetivo “abrir las puertas de la colección” como una forma de reconectarse con los acervos del museo e implica una comprensión específica de la restauración. Un ejemplo clave del curso es la *wānanga*, donde los estudiantes se insertan en un *marae* (complejo tribal) durante tres días como invitados de la comunidad. Al reflexionar sobre su propio enfoque curatorial y

de enseñanza, los autores demuestran la importancia de comprometerse con la pedagogía indígena crítica en el proceso de descolonización del currículo.

Para finalizar, en conversación con **Ana S. González Rueda**, **Wayne Modest** analiza la relevancia de los museos etnográficos y enciclopédicos europeos en el contexto de la “política ansiosa” del presente. Modest aborda el impacto del reciente activismo negro, indígena, queer y feminista en los museos. Considera la apuesta institucional por una actividad redentora, reparadora o solidaria, su compromiso con tener un horizonte de justicia e interés por que los museos escuchen más y hablen menos. Haciendo referencia a proyectos específicos, como la exposición *Afterlives of Slavery* en el Tropenmuseum de Amsterdam, este capítulo toca el tema de la complicidad y la concepción del museo como un lugar de sanación. Modest plantea su comprensión del museo descolonizado como un espacio de incertidumbre y en un proceso constante. En su opinión, el papel de los futuros curadores implica tanto la provocación como la imaginación, al hacer que las visitas a los museos se vuelvan inversiones en incomodidad crítica.

En estos capítulos, la tarea de descolonizar el currículo se presenta como una cuestión ética apremiante a la que no podemos renunciar. En muy diferente medida, la colonialidad nos afecta a todos, y todos debemos compartir la labor de descolonización en nuestras instituciones y aulas. Puede que sea imposible descolonizar la universidad, el museo y el currículo, pero eso no debería impedirnos participar en el proceso. Por medio de este particular volumen, deseamos invitar a la incomodidad y abogar por, como dice bell hooks (1994, p. 44), “pensar contracorriente”.

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PAPERS

ARTÍCULOS

Decolonial Pathways

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What decoloniality means for us is very different from other notions of decolonisation. Here, there is already an important difference: that between decolonisation and decoloniality. For us, decolonisation is very much connected to the political process of colonisation and often refers to reclaiming sovereignty and the formation of new nation-states, whereas decoloniality refers more generally to overcoming the modern/colonial order. After decolonisation, we still have coloniality in many places, and we still need decoloniality. In Abya Yala, especially “Latin America,” the struggles for decolonisation or national independence were very prominent in 1810, two hundred years ago. With the independence of the countries and the decolonisation process, there was no real decoloniality. Racism, exploitation, the destitution of lands, the denigration and erasure of cultures of the “First Nations”¹ continued.

Decoloniality/decolonisation is becoming a very trendy topic, and many people are using the conceptual resources that have been developed by these groups of scholarship and social movements. However, they are just using them as a conceptual apparatus to further academia or research, and they forget about the political commitment and ethics they imply. I often say that decoloniality is being skinned like the fur traders did; they are killing decoloniality as a political-ethical project, taking its conceptual skin to dress with and leaving the organs to rot. For us, decoloniality carries a politics and ethics; it is not just a set of conceptual tools. It is also important to note that not all critical thinking is decolonial. The work of the great critical thinkers of the West such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, or Bruno Latour is without a doubt of high importance, but it is not decolonial because they are not addressing the colonial wound, they are not concerned with the colonial difference. Decoloniality is about addressing the issue of the colonial difference and the colonial wound. It is about a politics and ethics towards social, epistemic, and aesthetic justice. These prominent authors from the West did not have the decolonial question; it was not their question. They are very important, but this does not mean that their critique is or has to be decolonial.

1. In some regions, “First Nations” has become a contested term; however, in this text we use it instead of “indigenous” recognizing that the author’s positionality, not being from a First Nation, carries a position of enunciation in which the term “indigenous” is often associated to forms of discrimination. But of course, when “First Nations” name themselves or their struggles “indigenous,” from their positionality this term becomes a dignified term of struggle.

I will sketch here the main premises of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality coming from our network. I also discuss what I call the decolonial path, a path of research or investigation and its moments. Then I address the major questions for decolonising institutions and how we have engaged in the Netherlands with the debates on decolonising the university, the museum, the art gallery. Finally, I consider the pedagogies, the practices in the classroom that are important for decolonising.

Premises

The decoloniality network is a loose one; it is not based in the work of a single author as canonical, like Marxism, for example. While at the same time, everybody is working in their own context and within their own network of relations, and of course we have many differences. Nonetheless, I would like to present here what I see as our common premises.

The first premise comes from Enrique Dussel (1993), who said that 1492 is the beginning of modernity. This is a challenge to Western scholarship that places the origin of modernity in the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution. People like Anthony Giddens would place it there, for example. According to Enrique Dussel, modernity starts in 1492 because we understand modernity as the Western civilisation project, which is the youngest in world history; other civilisations have been older and have lasted longer. It is only after 1492, the origin of modernity, that Europe can think of itself as the centre of the world and the *now* of history. Without the colonial enterprise and the conquest of the “Americas,” of Abya Yala, Europe could not have done that. In the western educational system (either in the West or outside the West), the world map has Europe as its centre, which is not an issue of objective geography. If you see the photos of Earth from the Moon, Europe is obviously not at the centre. However, we have that map as a very concrete manifestation of the epistemic power conferred through colonialism. Walter Mignolo (2010–2020) often says to students, “Imagine the world before 1492: it was not a Eurocentric world; it was a polycentric world.”

Colonisation enables the formation of a Eurocentric Europe. In the debates we are currently having in the Netherlands and in other places in Europe—about what it means to decolonise Europe if Europe was not conquered, its territories were not invaded, and most peoples of Western Europe were not racialised (although some people within Europe were and particularly in Eastern Europe)—decolonising Europe means overcoming that Eurocentric Europe that was formed by colonialism (Khalidi & Vázquez, 2021). Can we think of a pluriversal Europe that recognises its difference and entanglements with other histories? Dussel (1993) understands 1492 as the start of modernity and Mignolo (2000) shows how this enabled the formation of Europe as the centre of the world geographically, but also as the *now* of history. Europe will define itself as in the present and will see all other peoples of the world as in the past, as “barbarians,” “backward,” “savages,” or “in nature.” For example, the term “indigenous” will be used to

designate people that are either placed in the past or outside history, and the other terms work in the same way.

The second premise of the modernity/coloniality framework is that there is no modernity without coloniality, and that is the work of Aníbal Quijano (2010). To say that there is no modernity without coloniality is to say that the history of modern civilisation is unthinkable without the process of coloniality. There is no industrial development and wealth in Europe without the plantation system, enslavement, the extraction of resources of the Earth, and the exploitation of people from around the planet. Quijano (2010) calls attention to that entangled history erased from the Western narrative of modernity by saying, “There is no modernity without coloniality”—we have to think about them together. Coloniality is not the lack of modernity. It is not that people under coloniality lack modernity; they are under the hegemony of modernity, which is why they are under coloniality. Very significantly, the term coloniality is already signaling an epistemic shift. Coloniality is not a western term; colonialism is, but coloniality is not. Coloniality is a term anchored in the lived experience of the global South, a global South that is perceiving and thinking modernity from outside the West. Coloniality is not a term that came through a Western author, because the canon of Western authors has not experienced living under coloniality, their universe of thought, their horizon of intelligibility is modernity. However, an author living in the global South sees coloniality deeply configuring the conditions of everyday life, that is a coloniality that remains unnamed in the frameworks of the West that is in the Eurocentred epistemic and aesthetic frameworks. Coloniality already performs an epistemic shift and begins creating a vocabulary to speak of things for which there are no words to speak about in the dominant grammars and epistemologies; that is one of the tasks of decolonial scholarship, to create those vocabularies.

The third premise is how the colonial difference is articulated through race and gender, thus establishing the borders between humanity and dehumanisation. It is what María Lugones (2010) has named the modern/colonial gender system. Through the modern/colonial gender system, the separation or rift between modernity and coloniality—between the consumers of the world and the others producing and suffering for us—is a lived experience in which race and gender function to exclude people from humanity. Lugones (2010) shows that gender and race are entangled in such a way as to exclude the other from humanity. While race functions to mark the other, for racialising others as non-white, gender functions to exclude the other from gender dimorphism. Gender is only for the human, so, in this case, white males and white women are in gender, and they are citizens, but the others are animalised as being outside gender, to the extent that, as Lugones argues, sexual violence against black women was not considered rape under the modern/colonial gender system, because they were not considered humans. They were suffering enormous violence, but this was not considered violence against a human being because of the entanglement between gender and race.

Through the coloniality of gender, Lugones (2010) shows the boundary of humanity expressed through the modern colonial system and the process of dehumanisation that enabled the exploitation of human life and extraction from the Earth. In the plantation system in the Caribbean and elsewhere, we have this combination of the radical extraction of Earth life through monocultures and human life through enslavement to produce the global commodity, the merchandise, the accumulation of capital. That also makes modern colonial enslavement a distinctive case that should not be confused with the enslavement in Egyptian, Roman, or Aztec times; there are many histories of enslavement across the history of humanity, but this mass enslavement is mainly geared to produce profit. It is a unique system and form of dehumanisation that has not occurred before to that scale and in that way.

The fourth premise, “delinking,” comes from Walter D. Mignolo (2011). The decolonial is about delinking; to decolonise is not to create a space in modernity for everybody. The decolonial project is not aiming at becoming modern or contemporary or accessing that nucleus of Western modernity, but it is working to enable the plurality of forms of living in the world that have been suppressed through coloniality. These are the four premises that I wanted to clarify to establish the particular theoretical ground of how we understand the modern/colonial order and decoloniality.

The decolonial path

The decolonial path understands these three moments—modernity, coloniality, decoloniality—and enables them as forms of research or investigation. First, the question of modernity brings us very close to Western knowledges; it is about what has been imposed as hegemonic, as the dominant reality. For example, the formation of the museum as a dominant mechanism of representation, which has been instrumental in the formation of national identities, cultural frameworks, cultural capital, and so on; this modernity has been researched by the West as well. The second moment is coloniality. The question of coloniality does not ask what is there as the dominant order in society. Instead, it asks what has been erased or displaced out of historical reality by the power of modernity. It brings us to ask what has been erased, what are these histories of denigration, erasure, racialisation, the politics of oblivion that underpin modernity’s epistemic and aesthetic hegemony. The research of coloniality is the research of loss. The third moment, the decolonial, responds to what has been lost and how it can be restituted, re-exist (Albán Achinte, 2009) or find forms of expression anew in historical reality. It is a delinking from modernity. We are in the task of humbling modernity since modernity is valid but not universally valid. The humbling of modernity and the recognition of coloniality are both needed in order to enable the decolonial. The decolonial, in its response to the modern/colonial order, needs to understand the dominance of modernity and the suppressions of coloniality. These three moments delineate what we have called a decolonial path. For example, in the case of the museum, modernity refers to how it functions to establish an order of representation; coloniality names what has

been erased from those narratives and representations, even through exhibition, and decoloniality asks how to overcome both of these functions of the museum.

While we should be concerned with how the ethnographic museum, for instance, represents indigenous knowledges and ancestralities, we also need to raise the question of the social function of the museum. In our opinion, the social function of the ethnographic museum has not really been that of representing the other truthfully, of really being about meeting the other, or facilitating transformative intercultural encounters. The ethnographic museum has been a colonial tool designed early on, in some instances, to train colonial officers, the people that would go to the colonies. You can see this, for example, in the formation of the ethnographic museum in Leiden. However, the question that concerns us more is to recognise that the ethnographic museum has held the function of the formation of the “white gaze” (Vázquez, 2020); it was to set the metropolitan publics apart and in a superior position from other worlds of sensing and meaning. It seems to us that the publics go to these museums not to encounter the other and humble themselves. The actual effect is the production and affirmation of whiteness as the vantage point of the world at large. You pay a ticket, you visit, and then you go out in an affirmation of your epistemic and aesthetic “whiteness,” in an affirmation of being in the *here* of geography and the *now* of history in contradistinction with the other that is somewhere backward, mythical, or in the antipodes of the modern world. The function of the museum in the imperial metropolis is something that needs to be further investigated. The production of such an epistemic and aesthetic whiteness through the ethnographic museum is an urgent topic. Whether it represents the other adequately or not is an important question, but it had a very particular function in the modern/colonial divide. For example, in *Vistas of Modernity* (Vázquez, 2020), I write about ethnographic exhibitions or the human zoos that were happening in European capitals and had the same function of entertainment and the affirmation of whiteness in the public. What do we do with the white gaze? You can have, for example, a dignified and well-researched representation of indigenous or First Nations spiritualities and their alternative ontologies, but the public will still consume it through the mechanics of the white gaze. How do you enable conditions of reception that undo the colonial difference? This is one of the most difficult questions to address today for these institutions.

Decolonial pedagogies

In the report of the Diversity Commission of the University of Amsterdam (Wekker et al., 2016), we looked at diversity in a multi-level approach, asking: What is the university and (we can add here the museum) teaching? What is the epistemology and aesthetics that are produced and reproduced through these institutions? Why is the curriculum white? Who is admitted? Who are the publics? Who are the curators? Who are the directors? Who is teaching? Who is directing? Who is cleaning? Who is cooking? In our universities, when you look at who is cooking and cleaning, and you look at who are the Deans,

you immediately find the colonial structure. We are shocked when we see a plantation movie, but not when we see it in our institutions; we just accept it.

In the diversity report, we emphasized the importance of changing the pedagogies, of changing the ways in which we practise the knowledge and aesthetics we produce and reproduce. People can be teaching black literature in a racist way. We can change the content but still reproduce the politics of coloniality. *What is this knowledge for*, and what is our learning doing in relation to the colonial difference and the wellbeing of Earth and other peoples around the world? We suggest what we call the pedagogies of positionality, the pedagogies of relationality, and the pedagogies of re-existence or transition as concrete practices to inhabit those institutions and transform the way they function. The decolonial calls for a shift in orientation from the underlying logic of modernity (representation and appropriation) to a politics of listening and reception. What would it mean to change the orientation of our institutions from being geared to empower forms of representation and appropriation, towards forms of knowing and doing through reception and listening? This is the call for decolonial transformation of aesthetic and epistemic practices.

The pedagogies of positionality come from black, decolonial, and Chicana feminisms. The fundamental philosophical statement that there is no universal knowledge has been generally accepted in the West and the humanities. However, we do not undo universality or metanarratives to go into relativism or performativity. Positionality is a different path to undo universalities. We undo universalities to reach contextual and positioned knowledges. We undo metanarratives to recognise our own position. We are all positioned somewhere along the colonial difference, along axes such as gender, race, class, geography. Using the expression of Donna Haraway (1988), positionality brings you to a more truthful knowledge. You do not claim the truth; you do not claim a new universality. You claim a positioned knowledge that is more truthful and can come in conversation with other knowledges. It is also a tool to move towards pluriversality. For example, I often work with my students' family histories. Even here in the global North, in the colleges where I teach, most of my students' grandparents cultivated the land. It is not far, it is very close; it is not about romanticising indigenous people that cultivated the land. I make them reflect on how our connection to the Earth has been reduced to a mediation, to the supermarket. When the students begin remembering their own histories, they encounter all those things that are rapidly disappearing from their life through consumer capitalism and that have not been part of their education because they were never trained in relation to the soil, the land, and their memories. Positioning themselves helps them recognise their separation from Earth and their formation within epistemic and aesthetic whiteness. For example, when you read texts by black feminists such as Gloria Wekker (2016) in the context of a sociology class, it is often the first time that students have encountered an author who is a woman and is not white and that is as challenging to understand as Heidegger or Foucault. Furthermore, they encounter an author that is speaking about whiteness. The students have been reading all their lives, and

they are used to naming the other, the indigenous, the enslaved, but they are never named in what they read. Often it is the first time that they see themselves being named. Suddenly they see that they are somewhere in the world and not in this abstract universality looking at the world. They are also being looked at. Then they can begin recognising themselves.

In that sense, the decolonial is also offering a mirror to Eurocentrism to exit its monologue. Eurocentrism is a type of ignorance, firstly, because it only knows itself through itself. The moment we open the canon and begin reading those others whose lives have been impacted by the history of the West, we get a more balanced view of what Europe means and what whiteness means. This is part of the work to overcome the arrogant ignorance and closed epistemic and aesthetic territories of modernity. The struggle is in both fields: in epistemology, the way we know and understand the world, and aesthetics, the way we perceive and experience the world. The modern/colonial history has also been a history of the control of perception and experience of the world: the way we see, sense, and appreciate the world, and how that instils the colonial difference, sexism, racism, and so on. We need to lead the epistemic and aesthetic struggle next to the fundamental struggles globally for the land, autonomy, and justice.

The pedagogies of positionality also have to do with positioning the canon. Many teachers say, “Well, we cannot teach biology or mathematics without the canon of the West; where do we find texts from other authors if they are not available?” It is crucial to change the canon but also to position the canon. If you teach the classics of sociology or anthropology or museography, you must say who they are historically, where they come from. Normally you will end up with modern/colonial history. Why did these people, primarily white males, have the power to develop these fields? We must at least situate this knowledge in a particular historical configuration instead of simply assuming them as the canon, thus universalising them.

The pedagogies of relationality have to do with transforming the classroom into a relational space, not a space in which the teacher acts as a small dictator, and the students are repositories or empty shells. In our view, the classroom should become a space where the life stories of the students matter. Every student has a life story and ancestry that can contribute a lot to the classroom.

The pedagogies of transition are concerned with the meaning of knowledge and the question: what is this knowledge for? They entail moving from expert knowledge that is usually closed to an open expertise where students have the right to know what this knowledge is for. Is this science, technology, or discipline being used to further exploit others and extraction from the Earth? Or is it knowledge that we can use for undoing the colonial difference and healing the colonial wound? The meaning of knowledge is essential because knowledge for knowledge's sake is really dangerous. The 20th century is full of mass killings enabled by very sophisticated forms of knowledge like the atomic bomb or the industrial organisation of genocide with the Nazi Holocaust. We need to place

the meaning of knowledge at the centre of learning. Are we teaching for transition, for overcoming the problems of our time, instead of just for expertise?

To conclude, I do not see a theoretical impossibility of decolonising the museum. Something that comes from social movements in Latin America, particularly the Zapatistas, is that there are things to do in every place. We think a lot about contextual thinking and contextual action. If you are in a classroom, in a university, or a museum, there are things to do because you can change the way these things are used and displayed and how they reproduce colonial violence. Positionality is also about exiting this innocent position that makes us believe we are not implicated. María Lugones (2003) tells us we are all implicated, and that is the start; we are all in the mix of these privileges and violence that we are fighting against. By recognising that we are implicated, and that museums and universities are implicated, we can begin to transform how they can function. We must not see decolonial thinking or the museum or the university as the edge of the struggle, because it is very clear that the edge of the struggle is with communities and social movements fighting to defend their land, earth-beings, and knowledges in their territories. We are doing our work as companions because we know that the university, the museum, and the state are complicit with that violence.

We need to be cognisant of our positionality and the things we have to do here. For many years at our University College, I have been coordinating the 'going-glocal Mexico' program, through which I have taken students to regions of Mexico where there are indigenous movements (Vázquez, 2015). The students often ask what they can do to help, and the reply from the activists is often the same: ask what you can do where you live. It is not about doing help-tourism or about saving the other. They are doing their work, and they are struggling to continue their knowledges and ways of life, often under very extreme conditions. We also have to do our part on our side instead of thinking universally. What can I do in my classroom? What can I do in my museum? It might not look like the grand plan of Marx; decoloniality is well beyond the idea that there is an organic intellectual who will plan a new utopia for the world. There is one "no" to modernity/coloniality as a system of oppression, injustice, and suffering, but multiple "yeses". The answer is not one; the answer is contextual and always rooted in an ancestral history, in a particular context.

The question is whether we can live an ethical life in a world in which our well-being and sense of self are made dependent on extraction from the Earth and the suffering of others. If we look at our consumer life in the global North and the North in the South, we are complicit with the way we dress, our electronics, the way we eat; in many aspects, we enjoy the consumption of the life of Earth and the life of others. There are so many people working to make our clothes and foods that cannot enjoy the life we enjoy, so the position of innocence is untenable and ignorant. We are all implicated; overcoming that boundary and recognising that we are not pure is a step towards responsibility, instead of being obsessed with producing an image of ourselves on social media as perfect beings saving

the world. Historically, we are in a very complex and difficult situation, and we are implicated in the violence that we are struggling against. That consciousness, which brings about the end of the individual innocence that is only projecting itself into futurity, a career, or an identity, is necessary. Who are we in the history of the world and the history of the life of others, human and non-human others? I tell my students that it would be unbearable for us to face even the sight of all those people working to produce our clothing, electronics, and food, not to speak of the ecological devastation behind it and the suffering of Earth-beings. We are okay shopping at the supermarket and looking at the brands, but we would not be able to hold that ethical encounter. That is a crucial question that does not have a straight answer, it is a call to stop for the end of that false innocence, the end of what María Lugones (2003) would call the lover of purity. We should begin recognising and remembering who we are and doing what we can.

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Emancipation, Independence, Decolonising and Historicising: Our Process of “Becoming” in Trinidad and Tobago

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The Caribbean can be described as a scene of contestation. If we take Trinidad as an example, our island was “re-discovered” by the Spanish in 1498, colonised by the French in the late 18th century, and captured by the British in 1797. A history of coercive labour systems like *encomienda*, enslavement, and indentureship is at our very foundation (Brereton, 1996; Beckles & Shepherd, 2004). With Independence in 1962, political power was grasped from the white elite. Thus, people of African and Indian descent predominate in the political realm, but a substantial part of the population has not made the rise up the economic ladder. This is now complicated with class distinctions which also generally reflect racial and ethnic distinctions, as well as geographic locations.

On the surface, Trinidad and Tobago is a diverse, multi-ethnic society in which several racial and ethnic groups co-exist peacefully and have adopted much of each other’s cultural vestiges. Our culture has been described as a Creole (Brathwaite, 2005) and Plural culture (Smith, 1965). Diversity is a central part of our makeup. However, we have not fully reckoned with our past. The most visible manifestations of this are periodic outbreaks of protest. In the 1930s, the region experienced labour riots (Brereton, 1996) and forty years later in the 1970s, the Black Power revolution took place (Moheni, 2021). In 1990, there was an attempted coup d’état (Neaves et al., 2020) and most recently, in 2020, the international Black Lives Matter protests sparked local disturbances that shocked the population (Steuart, 2020). Thus, the Black Lives Matter movement has been an important trigger, but this is a fight we have been engaged in throughout the 20th century, and these sporadic outbreaks of protest are now a pattern in our history.

We are really a twin island where numerous narratives have been forged. Our history is characterised by cruelty, violence, and racism which are descriptors that are reflective of centuries of colonisation. Our history has also positioned us on the periphery of the international economic system. There are enduring legacies of empire, dependency, and marginalisation in our relationship with international economic and political systems (Williams, 1970; Sudama, 1979; Wallerstein, 2002). However, our people are also characterised by amazing de-

termination, creativity, and survival instincts. We have evolved into a hybrid of blended cultures on a base that is reflective of the conundrum of diaspora versus nationality identities. Immigration from centuries ago (Spanish, French, British, African, Indian, Chinese, Madeiran) (Brereton, 1996), as well as Venezuelan immigration recently in 2020/21 (ACAPS, 2020), and its related complexities continues to shape our reality.

Museums and monuments will be critical for shaping how we deal with these issues. Our communities have proven to be resilient to the process of decolonisation, especially symbolic decolonisation. Independence has not brought the extent of the transformation that was envisioned. We are still very much in the middle of what I have coined as our “Process of Becoming.” Our journey to full freedom must be rethought. This has proven to be a longer journey than anyone anticipated. History has also shown that it is indeed an extended process which will span centuries. Much more is needed than the passage of an emancipation act, which took place in 1834 (Williams, 1970, p. 280), or changes in governance status like our achievement of independence (1962) and republicanism (1976) (Brereton, 1996). A revised assessment of our freedom journey should outline four phases: the legal emancipation process, the decolonising process, the reparation process, and the historicising process. The last two are more recent additions to the traditional trajectory to which we have become accustomed.

It is in the historicising phase that I want to include our own brand of Caribbean museology. The role of museums, monuments, and other cultural vehicles has not been actively and sufficiently engaged in this process and this sector remains underdeveloped in Trinidad and Tobago. Our museum sector has been used primarily for tourist attraction and periodic school visits as opposed to strategic vehicles for community empowerment. Contemporary discussions in the public domain suggest that there is urgent need for change.

The public discourse has concentrated on statues and renaming of visible “ceremonies of possession” (Trotman, 2012, p. 22). There is a sense that it is time for qualitative changes. Discussions have included renaming of our National Awards; changing the name of Milner Hall¹ (Marketing and Communications Department, UWI St Augustine, 2018) to Freedom Hall on the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus; the removal of statues of Christopher Columbus (Gioannetti, 2020) and the renaming of Picton Street in Trinidad (Sheppard, 2020). There has been a request for a tribunal to identify monuments and names which need to be replaced and changed (Gioannetti, 2020). We must now outline a framework through which we can examine and review the current state of statues and monuments in Trinidad and Tobago. It is hoped that this would lead to a level of national consensus and a path forward. However,

1. In 2018, the Milner Hall of Residence at the UWI, St Augustine was renamed “Freedom Hall.” The key consideration was “the association of Lord Alfred Milner, whom the Hall was named after, with crimes against humanity in Africa among other actions driven by his self-proclaimed ‘British race supremacy’ ideology” (Marketing and Communications Department, UWI St Augustine, 2018).

in some senses these developments have also created new spheres of conflict and distanced some people from that kind of advocacy (Gioannetti, 2020; Jacob, 2020). It has illuminated some of the divisions that persist in our society, which were there under the surface but not out in the open (Deosaran, 2020; Mendes-Franco, 2020).²

In addition, in the public discourse we have concentrated on statues and the renaming of these visible ceremonies of possession. However, we have not focused sufficiently on what is less visible. There is need to face the reality that we cannot deal with the visible without fully appreciating the extent and impact of what is not visible. Further, in order to deal with all the dimensions of decolonisation in effective and impactful ways, a bridge must be created connecting the tangible to the intangible. After all, the support structure for colonisation was a complicated web woven from tangible and intangible sources of discrimination and notions of inferiority. Eric Williams, our first Prime Minister, in his seminal text *Capitalism and Slavery*, warned us that if this is not done, the vestiges of colonialism become even more dangerous in our contemporary society (Williams, 1944, p. 211).

Recent discussions in our newspapers and on social media have made several things visible. The rich engagement has highlighted the areas on which we must focus. One of the more worrying revelations has been the limited historical knowledge in the general population. Another issue now apparent is the reality that we must confront past historical wrongs, and we have to find the right way to do it. The path we take must lead to the creation of sites of conscience and not new sites of contestation. There is also need to ensure that we include all ethnic and cultural groups in the new framework that must evolve. This introduces the complexity of text and language when we are dealing with several different groups. To be truly impactful we must therefore take that additional step of activating the history, creating public dialogues, and making the connection to the challenges we face today. Our history also means that we must confront the trauma that some of these discussions will create in communities. The diversity in Trinidad and Tobago also means that the nature of the pain in different areas and among different groups will require different responses.

Thus, the decolonisation project must involve expanding perspectives to portray views beyond those of the socially accepted dominant cultural group, particularly

2. During the lead up to and aftermath of the 2020 General Elections in Trinidad and Tobago, racial polarity resurfaced. Social media sites became the chief platform of racist expressions as well as both condemnation and support of these exchanges. One news article read, "After its general election, Trinidad & Tobago's racist underbelly is showing" (Mendes-Franco, 2020). Another commentator expressed, "This multi-ethnic society experienced so much ill-will, vile racist statements and even physical threats shared on social media, it all became quite scary" (Deosaran, 2020). One academic (Amilcar Sanatan) retorted, "What we see which is miserable and unequal cannot only be responded to with our feeling of remorse, it has to be matched with education and political action." Key areas of attention highlighted were "cultural discourse and memory, language, social and economic policy" (Mendes-Franco, 2020).

white colonisers. However, in Trinidad and Tobago we must also engage a multiplicity of other groups. Authority must therefore be shared for the documentation and interpretation of local culture. Our narratives must unfold cognisant of the fact that we must be aware of biases and this becomes even more complex when there are so many groups of characters in the overall plot.

We have been slowly dealing with the issue of symbolic representation as a young nation. Trinidad and Tobago also made a symbolic change in 1984 when the decision was made to commemorate Emancipation Day instead of Discovery Day (Gioannetti, 2020). There have been some new statues and memorials erected since the late 20th century. Many of them have been cultural icons like our calypsonians the Lord Kitchener (1994), the Mighty Sparrow (2001), Calypso Rose (2015), chutney artiste Sundar Popo (2011), and sporting heroes such as Brian Lara (2011) and Hasely Crawford (2019). This however has not led to the removal of the ones erected during colonisation.

New narratives with revisionist perspectives have been written by academics (Williams, 1944; Beckles, 2013; McCollin, 2016). However, they still have not really been heard and internalised by the average person. There have also been changes to the curricula at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Ministry of Education, 2017). These changes focus on the development needs of the country, instilling national pride and creating citizens who know their history and “understand their role as young citizens in national development” (Ministry of Education, 2017). They have not yet yielded the results anticipated. It has proven easier to decolonise in the formal academic sphere than in the informal public sphere.

It has proven difficult to maintain sustained discussion of these issues outside of periodic outbursts of contestation. There needs to be a bridge into the new and revised academic insights. Many persons have written and shared their viewpoints in local newspapers. However, a bridge with a strong foundation has not yet been erected. Revised historical perspectives have not reached the average man in the street. The decolonisation project must expand beyond the pages of books and newspapers.

As a developing country, one of the most important considerations is the extent to which we can produce a society that is more inclusive and responsive to the realities of racialised people. In 2017, in connection to the EU-LAC Museums project focused on community museums, the Caribbean Civilisations class at the University of the West Indies was given an assignment that required them to visit a museum or memorial and create a reflective piece highlighting what was learnt and its impact. Our students’ responses clearly showed that there is a role for statues and monuments in discussions of race, heritage, and nationhood. After a visit to the Indian Caribbean Museum, Trinidad and Tobago, one of our students reflected:

“The museum is a place where people of other ethnic cultures can visit and learn about the Indian culture. This will help them to identify the

various aspects of the culture and clear any misconceptions they may have had. This can therefore cause them to revisit their views and opinions on the culture by actually learning about it instead of depending on preconceived notions.

Each cultural group has unique strengths and ideas that the larger community can benefit from. An appreciation of different cultures creates a just and equitable society” (Student A, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

During a visit to Harris Promenade in San Fernando, Trinidad, our students were able to demonstrate an understanding of the historical significance of such sites and the connection between the past, the present, and the future:

“The Harris Promenade is of great importance to our history of Trinidad and Tobago which serves as a reminder of our past and how we became who we are based on our history. Sir Harris has set out and impacted positively towards our country therefore he is honoured by being given a promenade named after him. The promenade serves as a great admonition towards the citizens of how our yesterday became a today in a much better way” (Student B, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

Their responses to statues of Christopher Columbus were also illustrative and reflective of the age-old question of whether monuments are reflections of colonial legacies or national heritage or both. One student reflected after a visit to the Christopher Columbus monument at Moruga Bay (2012). He acknowledged and respected the fact that the people of Moruga wanted their statue to remain where it is. In coming to his conclusion, he considered and quoted the perspectives of others in our society:

“Whether you like Columbus or not, it is part of history and you can’t erase history” (Louis Lee Sing, Former Port of Spain Mayor).

“The time has not come in Moruga for the Columbus to be removed. If the Columbus from Port of Spain is removed, it will be enthusiastically accepted at the Moruga Museum” (Eric Lewis, Moruga Museum Curator).

“However, I partially agree with the sentiments shared by the persons interviewed. ...they did not (take) into consideration the consequences of Columbus’ arrival. There was the subsequent genocide of the indigenous people by the Spanish powers. Their religious and cultural practices were eliminated as they were forced to adhere to European lifestyle. The women were exploited and abused. Also, the enslavement of the Africans as they suffered from very brutal and harsh treatment, died of starvation and diseases which their immune system was... subjected to.

Nevertheless, I substantially agree that the Columbus monument located at Moruga Bay is essential, as he is a significant figure in (the) Caribbean’s history” (Student C, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

Another student chose to reflect on the Christopher Columbus statue (unveiled in 1881) in Columbus Square:

“Now to think that the man who was pivotal to the worst part of modern history has a square and a statue in his honor is absurd. What the man stood for and fought for is not what we as a Caribbean people feel proud and happy about. To have the statue there shows me how much information has been left out in the teaching of Christopher Columbus in history classes, and how misinformed or misdirected the general populace are (sic) concerning the history of the Caribbean. It’s even worse when there are people who know the truth about Caribbean colonization, and the horrors behind it, that sit comfortably as the idol of Columbus remains erected” (Student D, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

If revisionism was our ultimate goal, it was clearly achieved. Here is another student’s perspective:

“To bridge the gap between the civilization of the past and the present... The National Museum and Art Gallery in Port-of-Spain showed a wide variety of tools and appliances that were manufactured in the Caribbean by the Indigenous groups, Africans, Indian and European persons throughout history. Many of these are currently being used, upgraded, and are incorporated into society’s everyday life.

The tools used by persons in history (have) influenced society today. Hence no cultural group should be deemed as uncivilised or superior to another due to their beliefs because each person has impacted on history in their own way and shaped the present into what it has become.

Therefore, though the indigenous persons may not have been as advanced in their customs as the Europeans, they were flourishing as a society in retrospect as many aspects of their culture have stood the test of time and are still prominent even as current society strives for advancement today” (Student E, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

At the Cleaver Woods Museum after viewing the cooking utensils utilised by our First Peoples, one student related the accounts of a fellow visitor who spoke of seeing her mother prepare food using these tools and related the process of learning how to build and use clay ovens (Student F, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017). The student continued:

“Identifying as a descendant of Indian indentured labourers and Spanish settlers, her (the fellow visitor’s) history mirrors that of numerous Trinidadians who identify as being of ‘mixed descent.’

This shared culture, handed down and surviving the passage of time, ties different races together and enables people to comprehend and feel comfort in the complexities of their own identity based on history.

A great part of Caribbean people's identity stems from learning the depths and truth of their ancestry and history" (Student F, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

A central part of decolonisation is dismantling or changing the way we engage with monuments. Deep-seated change must accompany the evolution of a new era in Caribbean museology. One of the most important aspects of the decolonisation exercise must be a new public phase in the development of Caribbean History. Not only must the biases that produced the particular statues, monuments, cities, towns, villages, streets, and places be revealed, but also the powerful narratives of resistance, survival, and rebuilding which are also central parts of the narrative.

Our students captured how impactful this changing engagement can be:

"Not only do you learn about their history in a refreshing way, from a view which is not heavily Europeanistic but you also get a look into their civilisation and how they lived before the Europeans arrived.

Knowing this history more deeply and from a non-European point of view is very important and helps to develop a sense of culture, identity and pride among Caribbean People.

The history taught at the museum pulls away from the history normally taught from a European point of view. The teaching that there were only two tribes native to...Trinidad and Tobago for example is revised and we learn of eight tribes native to the island such as the Warowitu and Yao" (Student G, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

Thus, I suggest that the crux of the matter is not whether we destroy colonial-era monuments. The students looked at many colonial monuments, but they were given the revisionist lens that was needed. It is true that people see a statue and assume it is a great man. This is a discussion on visual memory. Thus, our real focus should therefore be on the ways in which we can shape a new visual memory. It may indeed be time to remove or relocate some statues and monuments. However, there are other dimensions to this contemporary phase of historicising. This includes the kind of representation reflected with the statues and monuments we choose to retain as well as those relocated.

Another part of the solution is the need for more statues and monuments engraved in our landscape that speak to the presence, contributions, and empowerment of other groups. Our students' responses to the Redemption Song statue in Jamaica reinforces this conclusion. They were clearly moved. One student commented:

“It can be said that the ‘Redemption Song’ statue has a lot of symbolism and meaning especially for the African descent individual. One main theme that continuously pops up is the freedom from slavery and the redefining of the Caribbean individual” (Student H, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

Another student recounted:

“The Redemption Song Monument has reminded the Caribbean people of their history. Furthermore, the statue stands as a symbol of the perseverance of black people overcoming the challenges faced and the road travelled to reach their present destination” (Student I, Caribbean Civilisations, 2017).

Out of the mouths of our students, we find the mandate for a Caribbean brand of museology in Trinidad and Tobago, which is shaped by the needs of a new process of historicising in the 21st century. To do all of this we will need the required trained professionals at all levels in our society. Education and a revisionist approach must be critical dimensions of this brand of Caribbean museology. Such calls are generally viewed as demands for cultural signifiers from segments of our population, but they are much more than that. Our current context must be articulated as a phase in our development that we must navigate for us to enter another phase of Caribbean nationhood. This involves, on a developmental level, radical education reform which must include revised consideration of the role of statues and monuments in this reformulation.

It is time to revisit the role of museums and monuments as active sites not just for education, but for public healing in Trinidad and Tobago. All of this is directly connected to our education system. Decolonising the formal and hidden curricula in Trinidad and Tobago and revisiting the role of museums and monuments go hand in hand. It is time to transform sites of contestation to sites of conscience and make this part of our national history. We have reached the stage where we need to develop guidelines to determine how and under which circumstances a national historic designation may be removed, where it is placed, and how it is represented there. This societal reckoning must be accompanied by an academic process and captured in curricula at all levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). To be truly impactful, national and community museums and spaces must also be incorporated as part of the informal curricula.

The challenge we face today is finally grappling with the inner plantation that has been planted in all of us and which has continued to grow in forms and ways that we did not envisage even after independence. Jennifer Lavia (2012) accurately contextualises that current reality when she notes there is need for us to practise “historicity, positionality, criticality, reflexivity and rationality” (p. 14). She places emphasis on the need for “(r)esisting the inner plantation, confronting the colonisation of the mind and undermining the legacy of dependence” as decolonising projects at the centre of our education system (Lavia, 2012, p. 10).

Education has always been given a central place in the development plans for Trinidad and Tobago. Before emancipation in 1834 only the children of the free classes, most of whom were white, received formal education. However, even during enslavement, parents of enslaved and free children of African descent found ways to educate their children. These efforts intensified after emancipation (Trinidad and Tobago Independence Celebration Committee, 1962). After official freedom the state became involved, but in reality educational units were run by the white elite. Religious bodies also organised schools. However, the emphasis was also on the propagation of their religion. By the middle of the 19th century, education was dominated by the Church with state assistance. What emerged is a complicated mix of private and public education with strong religious connections.

By the early 20th century, we see what can cautiously be described as early attempts to decolonise the curriculum. A new set of books was introduced, including *West Indian Readers* (designed for the West Indian child) (Cutteridge, 1928), *West Indian Arithmetic* (Cutteridge, 1929), and Captain E. W. Daniel's *West Indian History* (1936). Of course the English model still persisted. As part of the independence battle, in 1955, Williams referred to the need for a new curriculum for the West Indian schools (Trinidad and Tobago Independence Celebration Committee, 1962). With independence, education was expected to play a key role in social transformation. Williams made the statement that the "children of the nation carried the future of the nation in their school bags" (Williams, Independence Youth Rally, 1962). He was correct. We know now that we have to find new and dynamic ways to engage the content of those book bags.

At the onset of the 21st century, the Trinidad and Tobago government began to plan for reaching development status by the year 2020, through modernising the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2004). We have been consistently involved in this process and the government has recently called for radical education reform (Ministry of Education, 2017; Gopaulchan, 2020). We are in the process of engaging in consultation on what this will look like in Trinidad and Tobago. Another stage and level of decolonisation must be included.

In spite of the many complexities and disappointments, we have done well to date. The challenges ahead should in no way underplay the ways in which education has transformed lives and created new possibilities for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. However, as we move toward the middle of the 21st century there is targeted and specialised work that must be done. We can only shape a qualitatively different future by fully appreciating the nature of the historical watershed we are in the middle of at present and understanding how we have come to this point.

As a people we have experienced great hardship: indigenous genocide; the atrocities of enslavement and indentureship; the challenges of forging new nations; the ravishes of environmental crises, hurricanes, diseases, pandemics, and even volcanic eruptions. We looked to emancipation, decolonisation, and independence to chart new pathways. These developments have brought sig-

nificant changes but dangerous continuities persist. We have entered a period when we have realised that the emancipation process is not complete. We are also realising that decolonisation must enter another phase. We can only conclude that a new development trajectory is necessary. As a necessary corollary to the new pathway that is evolving, our education system must be rethought. A key aim of this rethinking phase would be to address the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum provides students with values and beliefs. It is what makes a subject meaningful and not a meaningless collection of facts. The hidden curriculum is what teachers should be thinking about when they teach. It's the purpose behind their teaching (Jacob, 2012).

To be successful, we must therefore deal with both the formal curriculum and the informal or "hidden" curriculum. "This includes the symbols and naming conventions that privilege and affirm certain knowledge and cultural traditions while excluding others" (Essop, 2016). This contribution therefore makes a case for museums and monuments to be conceptualised as that bridge which is excellently positioned to be one of the engines fueling that reform that is so needed.

I hope that I have established the basis for Caribbean museology to be included as part of radical education reform in Trinidad and Tobago. An inventory of museums in Trinidad and Tobago between 2017 and 2018 highlighted low visitor rates, lack of funding, insufficient staffing, and the declining state of artefacts and facilities (Bain, 2017). In fact, multiple museums have closed their doors throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Practitioners were reported to have perceived an attitude of indifference towards the contribution of these institutions (Bain, 2017). We can anticipate that the Covid 19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation.

The 2017 Caribbean Civilisations course requirement across the UWI campuses indicated the powerful role of statues, monuments, and museums in our "Process of Becoming." On the one hand, the assessments of some students revealed a tension between notions of imperial grandeur/advancement and indigenous/local foundations/pride. On the other hand, students' re-interrogations of the past and revaluations of how the past has been constructed and conveyed were unmistakable.

The case can be made that higher and more sustained levels of cooperation between formal educational institutions and museums can be effective in expediting our "Process of Becoming." Part of our radical education reform must include aligning certain collections with formal and informal curricula. The time has come for partnering to increase contact between institutions and facilitate mutual benefits. These potential benefits include increased profitability, greater relevance for museums, and a more wholistic student experience. These considerations must be incorporated into any national plan that is developed to re-examine our choice of public visual symbols and how they are represented in Trinidad and Tobago in the 21st century.

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Museums and their borders: teaching and learning from experimental museology

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This chapter is based on my own experience teaching and learning from experimental museology in Brazil, a country where museology has become a discipline with some inherited dogmas and frontiers. First, it is relevant to situate my point of view: I teach museology in one of the most traditional schools in Brazil and the oldest training program for museum professionals in South America. A course that was originated in the 1920s and fully established in the 1930s, in the environment of a military museum that was the first training course for specialised museum technicians in my country. A lot has changed since the 1930s, and in many ways this course, today at a university, has subverted its original normativity and the focus on European notions and procedures to deal with collections. But some of the frontiers raised during this period have been preserved and continue to reproduce various forms of coloniality in museum practice and theory today.

In fact, since the 18th century, in the formation of modern sciences, epistemological frontiers were set in place that “expelled to the outside the epistemic colonial differences” (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 206). These frontiers, in an imperial sense, were the result of the European classification of the world in a double division: at the same time territorial and epistemic. Museology resulted from such division, but it also helps us think of it in a critical way.

One can argue that museology is a discipline or *science* devoted to categorising the material and immaterial world captured in museums’ showcases. The term “museology” originally appeared in the universe of archaeology and art history museums to denote a set of practices oriented to the classification of material artifacts of a certain culture¹—the European one, defined as “classical” or “canonical”—and their “exotic” others—the cultures of non-European populations.

1. According to the findings of François Mairesse and André Desvallées (2011, p. 347), one of the first appearances of the term “museology” was in Georg Rathgeber’s *Aufbau der Niederländischen Kunstgeschichte und Museologie* (*Structure of Dutch Art History and Museology*, 1839) printed in Weissensee. The authors note an even earlier appearance of the term in 1830, in Karl Ottfried Müller’s *Manual of Archaeology* (*Handbuch der Archeologie der Kunst*), where the term “museology” appears with a slightly different sense from “museography,” the latter understood as “part of the systematic classification of antique art.”

Still in the 19th century, “museology” denoted a form of professionalisation for museum workers, based on a modern epistemology that wished to make the world into something to be mastered (Dear, 1995). The so-called Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, based on operational or utilitarian knowledge according to Francis Bacon and on the mathematisation of Isaac Newton, marked a new beginning for science and a fragmentation of knowledge according to paradigms based on rationality. Until then, “experience” and “experiment” were interchangeable notions at the heart of the conceptions of natural knowledge and modern science that dominated European learning and teaching (Dear, 2006). It was only in the 16th century that a vernacular connotation related to the Latin term *periculum* (trial or test) began to be used to designate deliberate carrying-out of an experiment (*periculum facere*), initially in the mathematical sciences, as Peter Dear demonstrates (Dear, 1995; Dear, 2006). By the end of the 17th century, the notion of “experiment” in this rational sense had acquired a wider and more influential currency in the emerging modern sciences.

Experience, as a form of relating to the world that could not be objectively measured, was then placed outside of the scope of rational sciences and modern disciplines. This scientific rationality and its standards for objectivity would structure and set standards for the modern social institutions, along with their principles and practices that are regarded as most progressive in the industrialised societies of the North (Harding, 2008). The criteria for this division of the world between *modern* and *traditional* ended up leaving other forms of knowledge, based on marginal experiences, on the peripheries of Northern modernity. Museology, then, would develop within scientific museums, as a branch of authorised knowledge that help to separate the *authentic* (based on rational thinking) from the *unauthentic* (based on “raw” experience) in all forms of cultural transmissions.

In the 20th century, when modern sciences were still seeking validation, and academic disciplines were separated in the process of the “pulverisation of knowledge” (Morin, 1977), museology was assimilated in the humanities, according to the division of areas confined in faculties and departments in universities. Defined in some places as a social science, in general terms, it studies the different ways humans have engaged in the objectification of culture in the form of cultural heritage. But museology is also about human experience. Even though we are more used to dealing with objects and the formal procedures involving them, experience is the matter of museums.

This chapter is inspired by three examples that evoke what I’ll be calling *border museology*—a decolonial term to define marginal forms to experimenting museums based on community practice and social engagement. I propose to cast an undisciplined gaze on the museum, through the lens of experimental museology, to blur its frontiers and see experience from the borders. Thus, I will argue that, by relegating experience to the borders of museum-authorised knowledge, museology has excluded certain subjects and their ways of thinking. These subaltern subjects of museums, communities, and individuals excluded

from hegemonic institutions are now, and at least since the 1960s and 1970s, reclaiming their right to heritage and their right to make museums in spontaneous and creative ways.

Since early modernity, museums have built their borders. Museology, affirmed as a scientific discipline in the 20th century, has helped to reiterate the modern frontiers between persons and things, subjects and objects, experience and discipline, modernity and tradition, primitive and civilised, developed and underdeveloped, etc. As an act of rebellion against these frontiers founded on coloniality and modernity, we propose an undisciplined way to teach and learn from lived experience, looking at museums from the perspective of marginalised groups and reconsidering their unsubordinated practices and theories.

Museum of what?

Museums generally operate in the division of the material and symbolic world. Like their predecessors, the early cabinets of curiosity in the 17th century, museums were going to hold the selected *treasures*, separated from society, only shown in very specific contexts and according to hermetic classifications. In early modernity, by selecting what had value to a privileged elite, museums were also choosing who could access their collections and on what terms. In the first public museums, only the “wise men, the savants, the amateurs and the artists” (Mairesse, 2005, p. 8), an audience essentially made of white males, were allowed to access the encyclopaedic temple.

Museums are historically attached to the movement of “exploitation of knowledge” that marked the Scientific Revolution in the self-determined West. Since the Enlightenment and the expansion of the imperial project of cultural, political, and economic domination, museums were built based on the European belief that different societies were culturally connected, and the notion of “civilisation” was used to define a centre and its vast periphery from which collections were going to be wiped out. For the purpose of sustaining unequal relations based on the classification of cultural difference, social hierarchies were nurtured with “scientific proof” of the fact that some people were inferior to others. Museum collections and the attached disciplines were going to be categorised based on a comparison within a limited material world, having imperial collections as the basis for the establishment of universal standards to which all the other categories would relate.

Until the middle of the 20th century, in France, museums were going to be classified according to their collections. A report of the International Museums Office (Office International des Musées, OIM, created in 1926), an organisation bound to the League of Nations and that preceded ICOM, listed museums according to four specific categories: fine arts, archaeology, history, and popular art (folklore) (Office International des Musées, n.d). The OIM oversaw themes then considered important for museums—in the selected universe of Europe and North America. The examples of Art Museums in rich countries would

orient the first guidelines for the training of specialised museum personnel in different centres of the world. The main international publication in the 1920s, the journal *Mouseion*², concentrated its reports of activities almost exclusively on art museums and history museums (Mairesse, 1998), leaving out of its field of interest museums with ethnographic collections and science institutions as part of a completely different area of expertise. These frontiers, traced in the genealogy of European museums, have shaped the ecology of knowledge (Souza Santos, 2007) for the museum field worldwide, reflected in the curricula of museum courses in both hemispheres.

For instance, the program for the course at École du Louvre in 1929–1930 comprised of sections on archaeology (national, Egyptian, Oriental, Roman, and Greek), antiquities, history of art, history of decorative art, and history of painting, plus history of collections and museography (*Bulletin des Musées de France*, 1929). In a similar structure, the curriculum of the museums course created in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1932, aligned with international guidelines and comprised of sections of history, history of art, archaeology, numismatics, and museum technique (Brasil, 1942).

This objective classification of knowledge based on a disciplinary division of the material world was going to leave human experience outside of the scope of modern museums and reify categories of value reproducing hegemonic hierarchies and certain areas of expertise. By inventing, with the museum device, a particular way of observing the world from a rational point of view, these curricula and their professionals created and normalised a new regime of museality based on coloniality, one that is not attached to any territory nor to any temporality. It is a product of the colonisation of space and the colonisation of time, and it informs what is going to be shown in a museum and how it's going to be perceived by its audience.

According to Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006), colonial subjectivities—and, we could add, colonial materials in museums—are “the consequence of racialized bodies, the inferiority that imperial classification assigned to everybody that does not comply with the criteria of knowledge established by white, European, Christian and secular men” (p. 210). This imperial classification of the world oriented the organisation of collections in the larger national museums, permitting the materials of the *others* classified as the explorer’s “discoveries,” to be seen as detached from their original human groups. That way, museology, in these imperial centres and their peripheries, has been operating as a discipline of museums defined according to the mathematician model, which uses modern reason to introduce a hierarchical division within humanity.

In the following sections I will critically approach some of the central frontiers in the roots of museum knowledge and in the foundation of museology. I will use

2. The review *Mouseion* was published from 1927 to 1946 (fifteen years, with a gap during the war period) by the OIM.

three recent examples to demonstrate how these inherited frontiers are being challenged by border thinking and marginal appropriations of the museum. Finally, I will propose that border museology, based on experience and insubordination, is a way to surpass the violent divisions materialised in museums that still operate with imperial forms of categorisation and monovisual readings of humanity.

Modernity and tradition



Figure 1: Assentamento de Exu [Exu settlement], Author: Manoel do Nascimento Costa (Manuel Papai). Arquivo Institucional do Muhne, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Brazil.

Our first example refers to a mysterious acquisition by Museu do Homem do Nordeste (Museum of the Northeast Man), in Recife, Brazil. The object (Figure 1) is an altar, a religious candomblé settlement, on display in this ethnographic

museum. It became part of the museum's collection probably at the end of the 20th century. Despite its spectacular effect on the audience, this mysterious artifact never officially entered the museum before its first documentation was produced in 2005. Meanwhile, most of the professionals in this institution did not know exactly when it was acquired.

This altar to Exu materialises one of the most important *orixás* (spirits or deities) for the African-diasporic cosmology that is part of our cultural heritage in Brazil. More than a support for religious manifestation, this object represents the deity in its materiality in the human world. It was produced by the famous *babalorixá* (priest) Manoel do Nascimento Costa, known as Manuel Papai, a religious leader dedicated to the preservation of Nago tradition in the terreiro Sítio de Pai Adão, in Recife. When creating its inaugural collection of African-Brazilian artifacts, the museum curators recurred to the terreiro, ordering a full collection to be made by the *babalorixá* for its first exhibition, opened in June 1979. The museum went outside of its borders to represent another view on the *traditional* culture of Recife, nonetheless still exhibiting it in a *modern* framework. The lack of information on this artifact persisted until 2005, when a French private institution asked to include this *assentamento* (religious settlement) in a short-term exhibition about Brazilian syncretism. Until then, the settlement remained unclassified in the museum, even though generating great impact in the visitors' experience in the long-term exhibition due to its supposed religious powers. It was displayed without proper documentation, and not even a number was attributed to this piece for more than a decade.

In 2020, a correction was made in the institutional documentation, after some professionals in the museum staff decided to go back to the terreiro and interview the *babalorixá*, who would reveal that the settlement was made in the 1990s and that it never had a religious purpose before entering the museum. Further research in the museum archives has shown that the object could not have been delivered in the 1970s, as previously indicated in its technical sheet. This confusion is a symptom of the difficulty faced by museum professionals to work with the "inbetweenness of things," as Paul Basu (2017) describes the quality of diasporic objects in-between two worlds, when they must classify the unclassifiable, reconsidering objects on the borders of the colonial regimes of visibility and museality.

The "inbetween," in this perspective, provides a way to escape the methodological essentialism that dominates Western logic, and in many ways Western museology in its "relentless search for the singular and true nature of things; the desire for certainty, for dividing the world into *this* and *that*" (Basu, 2017, p. 2). This counter-modern perception of material culture, of the "inbetweenness," is influenced by a double-consciousness according to the concept of W.E.B Dubois, born from "histories of borrowing, displacement, transformation, and continual reinscription" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 102). This double-consciousness is characterised by a "syncretic complexity," in the terms of Paul Gilroy, which is constitutive of terreiros but also present in museums.

For centuries, museums have used categories of time to denote a division of the world, producing a sense of “otherness” that served to organise collections while domesticating cultural difference. Tradition, as a notion that is based on linear time, has been used to affirm difference as both temporal and spatial distance. It implies a symbolic separation between past and present, or between different societies and populations subjected to different places in the temporal scale of progress and civilisation. In a way, tradition is related to *authenticity*, a notion also linked to the origin of museums. Such a conception helps to define a rupture in time that locates the subject of science and its objects of study in different places.

Museology, in its own way, inherited this preconceived perception of cultural difference and diverse forms of knowledge according to linear time, inventing its own traditions based on the European conception of philosophical time, materialised in museums’ representations of the Other. In this sense, the framework of modernity also defines the “premodern” and its conventional association with nature, the past, primitivism, or with “fetishism” and “sorcery” in the case of sacred artifacts of other cultures. When museums exhibit such objects, a line is drawn beyond which lies the irrational, the incomprehensible, and the unintelligible (Harding, 2008, p. 8), namely what is neglected or disregarded in their collections in terms of information and research.

The altar to Exu exposed in this ethnographic museum was a provocative piece to the established categories of “modern” and “traditional,” “primitive” and “civilised,” and also those of “past” and “present.” Furthermore, its undefined human-like form and the association of Exu with the devil in the Christian tradition disseminated through colonisation make this unique object, produced through a modern transaction between the museum and a religious community, to be perceived as detached from linear time and unrelatable to modern rationality. As a result of its unclassified exhibition, this liminal object deforms the established regimes of visibility and challenges museology to consider other aesthetics, border subjectivities, and cultural creations as *contemporary*.

Modernity, thus, has allowed museums to contain things as epistemic objects. In that sense, in the context of museums, *modernity is tradition*. Bearing the tradition of a modern institution, the museum has been perceived as “an act of violence, a rupture with [other] traditions” in certain societies where *time* was not defined according to the Eurocentric logic materialised in museum collections (Konaré, 1987, p. 151). As the self-appointed keepers of other peoples’ materials and self-designated as the interpreters of others’ histories, museums continue to impose academic classifications as the scientists’ “glass boxes” of interpretation (Ames, 1992, p. 140) upon others’ cultures.

This example shows that border objects remind us that borders are actually not only geographic and material, but also political and epistemic. According to Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006, p. 208), the very notion of borders implies the existence of people, language, religions, and knowledge on both of its sides “linked through relations established by the coloniality of power” (p. 208), cre-

ated in the very constitution of the modern world. *Border thinking*, a way of looking at museum objects with non-normative lenses, emerges as a response to the violence of frontiers born within imperial/territorial epistemology (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). It permits us to look from the exterior of the known and canonical regimes of visibility and, from the outside, it penetrates the canon by tearing it apart. In terms of museology, it means moving away from the normativity of this discipline that determines our ways of seeing and of being, and shifting to its experimental re-definition, supplanting the frontiers and restoring its fragmented parts.

Subject and object



Figure 2: Tia Lúcia in the exhibition *Rio in the Seven hundred*, October 2015. Museu de Arte do Rio, MAR, Brazil.

The second example I would like to evoke is a museum intervention, in which a “popular” female artist places herself in the museum altar. This photograph (Figure 2) was taken in the Art Museum of Rio (MAR), and it shows a non-authorised artistic performance, a spontaneous gesture by a visitor who appropriated the museum’s displays. By making herself visible, the woman in the photograph made apparent an invisible gap between what museums exhibit and the experience of their audiences—two things that have been ontologically separated through modern rationality and in the museum visual regimes.

Tia Lúcia was a known personality in the port area of Rio, living on the periphery of the city since childhood and making her living as an artist, a craftswoman, a caretaker, and a Catholic teacher. She started participating in the MAR activities through a social and educational program initiated to engage local “neighbours” in its activities. In this unauthorised performance, she can be seen dressed as Our Lady of Concepcion Aparecida, patroness of Brazil, in the exhibition *Rio*

*in the Seven hundred*³, opened in October 2015. Her static figure between two baroque sculptures in this art exhibition attracted the attention of visitors to what seemed like a planned performance of the museum (Oliveira, 2019). After this event, the MAR recognised the artistic work of Tia Lúcia, incorporating some of her art in its collection and finally making a short-term exhibition devoted to her work and her life in the borders of the museum.

In her performance, Tia Lúcia blurs the boundaries between subject and object, inherited from encyclopaedic institutions. Since the 19th century, scientific museums have defined the Other from the perspective of a privileged subject of knowledge who is (other than white and male) an observer that makes the rest of the world *his* object of observation. These museums were material evidence of how European men perceived the world, materialising a difference that was based on a racial classification of the global population, putting himself and his equals at the top of humanity and on the other side of museum objectification.

According to this assumed correlation between subject and object—in the foundation of museums as much as in *modern* sciences—it became unthinkable to accept the notion that a knowing subject was possible beyond the subject of knowledge postulated by the very concept of rationality in modern epistemology. Due to this separation, the “dis-incorporated epistemology” (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 211) of European men, and their belief in universal parameters, blinded them to the subjectivity of others, here denounced in the experimental performance of Tia Lúcia.

To question the epistemic geopolitics through decolonial lenses implies denouncing the pretence of a universal subject-object relation in the genealogy of modern museums. Border museology generates blurred lines and epistemic confusion in the classical order of museums. Is it an art institution? A community-based museum? A stage for popular culture? Today, one can say that the presence of the Other is the downfall of the modern museum. It disrupts the colonial domain of domesticated images and imaginaries to allow unsubordinated creation and disobedient appropriations.

Discipline and experience

When modern science and its institutions were invented, rationality was elected as the main principle for the understanding of man and reality as entities that were separated by the Cartesian *cogito* (“I think therefore I am”) to be apprehended in disciplines. Museology, in its claim to be recognised as a science in modern terms in the second half of the 20th century, has developed a corpus of knowledge that inherited rational thinking as the basis for museum practice. By relegating experience to non-scientific forms of creation, modern museums have treasured rationality and the hegemony of scientific systems of classification. As a result of the appropriation of the Others in colonial museums, certain popula-

3. “O Rio nos Setecentos”, in its original title.

tions and marginal subjects were alienated from their own cultural productions and inheritances, which have been looted and captured in imperial collections.

Our third example refers to an act of activism when five members of the movement Les Marrons Unis Dignes et Courageux attempted to seize a Bari funeral artifact from the long-term exhibition of Musée du quai Branly, as a form of protest amid the Black Lives Matter movement in the French capital in June 2020. This attempt of repatriation was documented in a 30-minute video and spread around the world via social media and the online press. In this contemporary document the activists stated that “their heritage” should be taken back to where it belonged, because “most of the works were taken during colonialism and we want justice.” The protesters were stopped by museum security and faced French court in September of that year, being banned from the museum premises (Solomon, 2020).

In 2021, the quai Branly director Emmanuel Kasarhérou announced that, in order to decolonise its narratives, the museum is working on new research projects based on “decentralising the perspective” over the history of its collections⁴. By considering the information available on the objects to be incomplete—a trace of their systematic theft during colonisation—the museum researchers take on the challenge of finding new documents to complete them. However, their work is essentially based on the research of colonial archives in French public institutions, which have preserved, throughout the years, only the documents of the colonisers and none of the colonised. By focusing on the documented history of collectors and looters, this attempt for decolonisation is bound to fail due to its own coloniality, once again disregarding other subjects of knowledge and undisciplined forms of archives (such as the living archives of African oral history).

One can say that going beyond the colonial archive is a decolonial basic responsibility of all museums holding hostage the material traces of the colonial past. Going beyond the borders of modern thinking to perforate the regimes that allow these institutions to narrate the past is what I propose as a method for experimental museologies and undisciplined museums. In this sense, epistemic disobedience, as proposed by Walter D. Mignolo (2011), may open museums to decolonial options “as a set of projects that have in common the effects *experienced* by all the inhabitants of the globe that were at the receiving end of global designs to colonize” authority, knowledge, and being (p. 45).

The reaction to anticolonial activism in a colonial institution, in the case of the quai Branly, helps to denounce how discipline in the museum continues to be prioritised over human experience and social bounds. The classification of “African artifacts” expropriated from Africans and incorporated into a national

4. The current research projects cited by Kasarhérou (2021) include the project CROYAN—Collections Royales d’Amérique du Nord, dealing with the royal collections from North America, and the project Histoire croisée des collections BnF/MQB-JC, which is based on the cross-research in the collections of the quai Branly and the archives of Bibliothèque nationale de France.

French collection continues to reproduce the imperial epistemology according to which some museums' frontiers cannot be trespassed.

(Un)Conclusions: notes for an experimental museology

Regarding the examples briefly explored in this text, other than being active provocations to the museum modern performance, one could ask: what do they have in common? Firstly, they all present alternative readings of the colonial past. More than that, they are attempts to racialise the museum by showing a glaring image of who was left out from museums' systems of classification. But they also provoke every museum to look outside its domains to reconsider human experience in its unclassifiable, undomesticated, and undisciplined plurality.

These three examples, while contemporary, also touch the *modern* foundations of the museum, in an archaeological movement to disrupt material frontiers and shift imperial epistemology. They share the unsettling need to disturb the lines drawn by modern rationality in museums' regimes of value that pave the ways of adjusting the past into the present. The proposed epistemic shift that they bring to the forefront of museology results in the emergence of other epistemologies and other subjectivities that are undisciplined and unsubordinated to Eurocentric disciplines. Hence, what we call *experimental museology* is a kind of museology of "liberation," the aim of which is to liberate experience from the subaltern place where modern science has relegated it. The genealogy of experimental museology can be traced from the echoes of the social movements of "national liberation" and political decolonisation in Africa and Asia, as well as Latin America, which inspired the Philosophy of Liberation proposed by Enrique Dussel (1977). It is also based on the method of popular education introduced by Paulo Freire (1987[1968]), who proposed the valorisation of popular knowledge in the *readings of the world* that were connected to the *life experiences of the oppressed* and their cultural realities.

An "experimental turn" in museology can be perceived when, in the 1960s and 1970s, the museum field witnessed a shift from the focus on material collections to the lived experience of cultural heritage. Rather than merely educating or edifying the public, experimental museology proposes other cultural readings and interactions beyond the restrictive borders defined by colonialism and modernity. It establishes a radical revision of museum regimes through a process of renegotiating the differences that produced relations of oppression and exclusion, which involves syncretic conversion and critical selection. This border museology—which can be put into practice in any given museum—creates new experiences in the "in-between spaces" where discontinuous historical realities can be narrated (Bhabha, 1994) and new temporalities are considered so that the past can be decolonised in the present.

In its performances, the experimental museum refutes the absolute objectification of objects and the subalternisation of social subjects, to generate more relative boundaries between subjects and objects, subverting modern rationality and

allowing borderline existences and liminal identities to rise free. Decolonising is an ongoing exercise in museums where the very museum is at once an object of continuous critical revision and a political device for social and epistemic disputes.

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Community museums as spaces of decolonised university learning

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Museums have changed and are evolving. As such, the strategies for teaching aspiring professionals must seek new solutions for ensuring our students are prepared for the future of museums. This paper argues that community museums are ideal spaces to expand students' approach to museum work, with the ultimate mission of being custodians of heritage, sharers of knowledge concerned with the sustainable development of communities. Doing so also permits us to decolonise the curriculum by bringing new narratives into students' understanding of what a museum communicates, what it does, and how it functions. It also grants the opportunity of putting into practice inclusive approaches in heritage work. Grounding student experience within communities is a valuable way to provide learning opportunities beyond those which factor into hegemonic education systems. By generating spaces for acquiring knowledge within community museums, and by actively implementing the participatory practices fundamental to this kind of museology, it is possible to provide occasions for students to question and critically consider the hierarchical social structures that have favored some and diminished others. To ground these ideas, I will discuss two examples of community museums in Costa Rica and the integration of university students: one being independent study projects at the Sor María Romero Museum in San José and a project proposal to work with the Ecomuseum of the Mines of Abangares in Guanacaste.

On community museums

Community museums can be considered museums of the colonised, in this case, considered not only as those who have been culturally dominated, but also as those who have been generally Othered by society. As such, for the purposes of this paper, I expand the notion of community museums to encompass any museum that represents a specific community (not necessarily connected to a territory) that has been marginalised. Community museums are spaces created by and for a minority, subaltern, generally dominated, or othered group, which has come together in a shared effort to assert its cultural identity, history, and concerns for the present and future. Following this notion, and as I have argued before (Bonilla-Merchav & Muñoz, 2020), the *Museo de Identidad y Orgullo* (Museum of Identity and Pride), Costa Rica's LGBTIQ museum, can be considered a community museum. So too might we consider the Sor María Romero

Museum, which is run by the nuns of the order of the *Hijas de María Auxiliadora* (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians). Currently undergoing restoration, it previously had on permanent exhibit a variety of objects connected to the beatus, aiming to display the life of this multi-talented, extremely active nun, believed to be a saint, who seemed to be everywhere and capable of doing everything. Now, why should this latter example be considered a community museum, when the majority religion in Costa Rica is Catholicism and the museum is located in the heart of San José, the nation's capital? I would argue that those who dedicate their lives to religion are a minority, and within that minority women figure as an inferior branch of the church. If thought of in this manner, then it can be conceived of as a museum of empowerment and self-determination.

Community museology can be a useful conceptualisation for many heritage spaces, supplying valuable resources for learning, growth, and sustainability. And so, we may further prod the use in considering the Sor María Romero Museum a community museum. At their core, community museums work with local actors. This requires the museum to identify its stakeholders, those who form part of the community and who are thus pertinent sources of information from the outset, relevant voices who can tell the stories that need to be told. In this case, the nuns are primary stakeholders, these women who accomplish a remarkable amount of good deeds, despite being relatively few women who run this chapter of the order in Costa Rica. What can we understand about their lived experience and their devotion? What might we learn from these members of society who are generally so quiet, working and living out their lives on the margins of society, but doing tremendous work that benefits the whole social order?

There is also the story that can be told of the deeply devout, those who profess absolute faith in the holy nature of Sor María Romero (1902–1977), a beatified Nicaraguan nun, who lived most of her life in Costa Rica, and whose mausoleum is within the *Casa de María Auxiliadora—Obras Sociales Sor María Romero* (The House of Mary Help of Christians—Social Work Sor Maria Romero). The devout continuously return to this complex, more commonly known as *Casa Sor María Romero* (The House of Sor Maria Romero), to attend mass, volunteer in the social work initiatives, arrive on pilgrimage, or celebrate other important rituals throughout the year. In so doing, they revive and replenish their faith. To this day, Sor María inspires not only the nuns within the order, but also many who are devoted to her worship.

Lastly, but no less important, is the community that benefits from the social work of these nuns, those who have been underserved within society. These people are manifold, but Sor María Romero paid particular attention to the plight of girls and women, who continue to be the primary beneficiaries of the order's public service. The nuns run a day-care center that enables young women to go to work without worrying about the care of their children. Beyond that, inside the *Casa Sor María Romero*, there is a free clinic open to the poor and a boarding program for high-risk, teenage girls who receive the resources necessary to complete their high school education and gain employable skills upon graduation.

The Margaritas (Carnations) program is geared to provide elderly and at-risk women heads of households with emotional, health, and food assistance. Can't all of these women, and the many other people who benefit from the work of the nuns, be considered part of the community represented within the museum? If so, the narrative would be carried forth by various voices, incorporating the many perspectives that comprise a multi-dimensional conception of Sor María Romero and the Casa as a whole. It is crucial to incorporate all of the stakeholders as the museum tells its story, their beliefs and motivations, in turn generating greater respect for and self-respect within the community. This is of principal importance, because the sustainability of the community museum depends on its shared self-management, which is generally on a volunteer basis. In this case specifically, the museum also depends entirely on donations, as do all the other projects that they run.

By incorporating a wider conception of who this museum represents, a facet of the social history of Costa Rica not frequently commented on emerges: the intertwining of nuns, the devout, and low-income, at-risk women. Such a space might also generate greater recognition of the efforts and achievements of these valiant nuns, who seldom are considered with due respect outside the religious realm. If the museum can generate a greater sense of belonging to a place, then it potentially becomes a platform to influence collective life and common well-being. Taking that a step further, the museum is capable of motivating the community to assertively be part of the change necessary to forge a healthier world. By inserting students into this environment, acquainting them with community museology, and having them facilitate processes toward sustainable museum practice, the university is providing them with learning spaces that present real-life challenges and creative problem-solving opportunities that can ultimately yield knowledge and experience which they can integrate into future heritage work.

On decolonising the curriculum

Decolonisation, used in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense, implies horizontalisation. If we horizontalise the conversation, then there is recognition that the other, or the others at the table, has something valuable to contribute and a valid point of view. In this act of horizontalisation, from the perspective of academia and with regard to the Sor María Romero Museum, I consider it necessary to elevate the status of the nuns. For the most part, beyond the discipline of theology, students and academics tend not to study or conduct experiments within the contemporary religious sector. There is even a certain disdain toward the Church, precisely because of its role as coloniser. But isn't this in itself an act of disqualifying or devaluing? If, in this sense and in this particular case, the *Hijas de María Auxiliadora* are horizontalised and understood as a social force for good, beyond their religiosity, then they can be interpreted as agents that encourage transformation through their work. The tremendous acts of kindness performed by these nuns, who find great inspiration in Sor María Romero, are awe-inspiring and worthy of display. Furthermore, as has already

been discussed, we can learn from those they serve, from the wealthy faithful to the marginalised. A different side of Costa Rican society comes forth when the story is told through the experiences of this diverse community. The Sor María Romero Museum can become a space in which to cultivate the voices of the women represented in the museum, who have been so often silenced or simply disregarded throughout history.

Ultimately, at this table where everyone's voice matters, various sectors of society come together united by an overarching theme: the life, work, and theory of Sor María Romero. To integrate this into the academic setting, let's consider the colonised/ing curriculum. In his chapter "Curriculum in Postcolonial Contexts," Hickling-Hudson suggests,

"A Eurocentric curriculum teaches no critical view of culture which would enable students to see that all cultures have strengths and weaknesses and that they operate within particular epistemologies. Lacking this critical approach, it unabashedly asserts the superiority of European culture, turning non-European cultures into the inferior 'Other'[,] It disrespects and devalues other cultures and other learning styles by making them invisible or distorting them. This absence or distortion is not a simple oversight—it is an example of institutional racism" (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2004b, p. 41; cited in Hickling-Hudson, 2010, p. 303).

At another point in the text he states, "For students in Europe and its diaspora, learning is still often dominated by the Eurocentric bias nourished by ideologies of empire" (Hickling-Hudson, 2010, p. 301). And this is certainly true. I recall one student who, upon beginning her independent study at the Sor María Romero Museum, referred to it as a "museum" in quotes, as if it were not really a museum, not as valid a museum as one of the larger, state museums. Certainly, the Costa Rican state museums are more professionalised, but their reason for existing is not greater, their work not more valuable in the larger scheme of things. I encouraged this student to consider the deep importance of community museums, and in particular the Sor María Romero Museum, as it permits us to ponder the sustainable development of those sectors of society who have been marginalised precisely because of social structures still heavily based in colonial/colonising practices. Furthermore, I explained to her that she may learn more deeply from the practical experience in this community museum, since it requires creativity, social skills, and out-of-the box thinking. Ultimately, there is more room for experimentation, imagination, and overall impact working in a community museum. This same student completed the requirements of her coursework within the museum last year, and has continued working on a voluntary basis, as part of the curatorial team.

My proposal of how to go about decolonising the curriculum is through active, constructivist learning. By having students do projects in community museums, the learning process becomes active rather than passive, and knowledge is transferred from the professor to the student as practical or theoretical advice that orients the activity. In this way, students are no longer sitting in the classroom,

supposedly absorbing knowledge that emanates from the professor, but rather come to the professor to discuss ways in which to confront real-life situations.

Much has been written about the constructivist approach in museum education programs, leading to many hands-on, interactive activities within museums, generally designed for younger and older audiences. But not much has been considered at the level of university learners within the museum field. Constructivist learning is a form of active learning, which implies an integral growth of the person in a way that has a more profound impact on the self. Vargas Fonseca summarises, “[Active learning] is a branch of pedagogy that situates the teaching and learning phase as an interactive process in which the student is an active person who assimilates and adapts knowledge repeatedly to build learning, coming eventually to appropriate it” (Vargas Fonseca, 2019, my translation). In other words, the best way to learn is by putting the acquired knowledge into practice repeatedly. Only through experience can one internalise and appropriate learning. Chilean researcher Oscar Jerez states it more simply in his book *Aprendizaje activo, diversidad e inclusión [Active learning, diversity and inclusion]*, “In summary, it can be said that learning ‘happens’ because the student did more than listen to a class, and the teacher focused on making the above happen, taking into account the learning that he wanted to achieve in them” (Jerez, 2015, p. 16, my translation).

In Costa Rica, learning the museum profession has to happen in this active way, as currently there are no Museum Studies programs in Central America, let alone the country. Nonetheless, in recent years, there has been a surge of interest in museum work among art history students at the University of Costa Rica. Considering that they receive a single Museum Studies course, the only possible way to deepen their learning in the field is through museum work, be it volunteer or in some way linked to their coursework (there are also no established internship programs in the museums). My belief is that working specifically in community museums can provide the most enriching experience, deepening student comprehension of and feel for museological practice. The small size of most community museums means that whatever work students do will likely enable them to gain insight into various aspects of museum work, such as museum and collection management, basic conservation techniques, research, curatorial practice, and museum education, all achieved in practice rather than theory. Furthermore, while engaging in activities that collaborate toward the museum’s development, students will expand their perceptions beyond hegemonic discourse, as they will become sensitive to a marginalised community.

Currently, I have four students participating in the Sor María Romero Museum project, two interested primarily in curatorship, and two in museum education. One of the urgent needs of the museum is to inventory its collection, and as the students move ahead with this, they gain hands-on experience. But the museum also needs to reinstall the permanent exhibition, thus opening the opportunity for these students to be a part of the curatorial team, which includes Sor Irma Murillo, the nun who heads the museum, Gordiano Montero, secretary of the

Centro Histórico Teológico Sor María Romero (Theological Historical Center Sor María Romero), and myself. As the students do the more routine task of inventorying the collection, they are considering its legacy and the ways in which the objects can be put together to tell a story. They are learning from these objects during the slow process of beginning to catalog them. Once the inventory is done, they will engage in participatory practice with the various museum stakeholders identified, as part of the research material that they gather for the new exhibition. I am guiding the curatorial team into expanding their notion of what a museum is and can be. I am also having them question the message they wish to communicate and how, through the exhibition, the museum can increase its connection and relevance to the public. Together we are envisioning how this once staid museum might become a space that can generate social change in its visitors towards the common good. Could this happen if the message of Sor María Romero's life and work, as well as that of the nuns and the expanded community, is well communicated?

Museums can influence change by being spaces that promote tolerance and social inclusion. They can be generators of transformative processes that are collectively beneficial. In this way, these students can be part of the creation of the new narratives necessary to live in a more just society for all, since they will be helping to tell stories from different perspectives that reflect the diversity of lived experience. Sor María Romero understood the plurality that exists in our world, so the question is: How to make Sor María Romero an inspiration for society in general, but particularly for young people who will lead the future? Sor Irma suggested that the people who come to the *Casa Sor María Romero* are those who recognise:

“a special charisma in Sor María Romero, a charisma that the Lord gave her for the good of the most needy, they recognize that she was someone unique, someone who gave to the poor. But she also served with love, listening attentively to people of any class or social status; in this way a wealthy person may have come to her, but perhaps with a great need for love...or to get rid of some disease. These people too... they all come to the house...and the good that they contribute, their money, their work, their time, their advice, is really used for the benefit of acts of solidarity. And that makes these people keep coming and keep multiplying the possibility of helping others, at the same time that they benefit internally because whoever gives, feels the joy of giving...It is a project of God in favor of the poorest. For me it is a model of society, where the one who has the most joins with the one who has the least” (L. Bonilla-Merchav, 2020, my translation).

Why not emulate that vision at the museum? Instead of focusing on exhibiting the biography of the beatus only, why not expand on that message? Why not consider it a museum that can have an impact on society, a space within which to see and recognise how Sor María Romero was an inspiration for many and a force for social wellbeing? Why not conceive of the museum's permanent

exhibition as a vehicle for inspiring societal transformation? By posing these questions and challenges to the students and having them work directly with the community to respond to them, it is possible to enable critical thinking in a real-life museum setting, thereby providing a learning opportunity that cannot be replicated in the classroom.

I have discussed the ways in which community museums can serve as spaces of decolonised museum studies learning. But can this approach be applied to university learning more generally? I believe it can, and provide the example of a project proposal formulated for the National University of Costa Rica to work with the Ecomuseum of the Mines of Abangares (EMA) in Guanacaste. While this is primarily a social outreach program for the university, it is also a teaching opportunity and part of the activities are to be included into coursework. If funding is awarded, university students enrolled in different humanities and tourism courses at the Liberia campus, along with three student assistants, will benefit by learning from the community of Abangares. Students will work closely with holders of traditional knowledge, facing alongside them the difficulties of adapting to current circumstances, while both retaining and reinventing local identity. By bringing students together with community members in engaging activities, it is possible to incorporate into the classroom the varied histories, experiences, and perspectives of those who have been disregarded, enabling learning not generally integrated into an academic education.

The EMA, with its 38 hectares of protected territory and the ruins of gold-mining facilities from the early 20th century, began its formation in the mid 1980s and was officially established by government decree in 2007 (Law 8596). However, it has never been sustainably managed, and the great potential this resource has to support local development and wellbeing has never been reached. The project presented for funding is titled “Ecomuseum of the Mines of Abangares: the power of heritage and critical thinking for the construction of identity and social cohesion.” Its main objective is to collaborate in the reactivation of the EMA, which has been closed since the beginning of the pandemic and which has suffered great vandalism. Through active learning exercises, community members, stimulated by the participation of students, will together generate a diagnostic of the current situation and will gain a better sense and estimation of local heritage. Furthermore, they will collaborate to create two databases, one thematic and one of local enterprises that can be linked to the museum. Both of these databases and the diagnostic can serve as a solid departure point for future activities. The overall project also includes an artist residency program, with the intention of generating spaces for critical reflection within, and potentially beyond, the territory.

The three stages of the project (diagnostic, databases, and artist residency) will be driven by the community. It is necessary to further define community as conceived within ecomuseology. The Ecomuseum Observatory describes the community as “a group with general involvement, shared responsibilities and interchangeable roles; public officers, representatives, volunteers and other local

actors all play a vital role in an ecomuseum” (cited in Davis, 2011, p. 85). In this case, the EMA project first sets out to locate these members of the community, creating a Committee of Key Actors. Through exercises and workshops facilitated by the university, these key actors will actively participate in the diagnosis, planning, implementation, validation, and self-evaluation of the various stages of the project. The three student assistants will have the opportunity to work on all stages of this project in a creative way, both in the design and the execution of the activities to be held. As previously mentioned, some of the activities will also involve students from tourism and humanities courses, who will have the opportunity to engage with the community directly as they conduct research. This will culminate in their semester projects, which will be beneficial to the project and thereby the museum. By learning from and with the community of Abangares, and working together to develop tools and materials to strengthen the museum, students and student assistants will have the opportunity to integrate into their learning that which the colonised/ing university curriculum has historically left out.

Abraham Magendzo, Chilean professor of education, tells us,

“The curriculum, consciously or unconsciously, has contributed to generating discrimination. The mere fact of denying the existence of everyday knowledge, knowledge of one’s own cultural identity, popular knowledge, knowledge of socialization is reflecting a prejudiced attitude...Underlying this rationality there is no intention to elevate everyday experience to the level of abstract and universal knowledge” (Magendzo, 2000, p. 187, my translation).

The Ecomuseum project and, for that matter, the Sor María Romero project, intends to correct this error. The aim is to locate learning in spheres that go beyond colonising influences, beyond the grand narratives and universalising tendencies born out of the Enlightenment. By involving students in projects that encourage their positive engagement with the community, we can enrich their entire being, opening them to question and attempt to provide responses to the unfair relations that subjugate some members of society due to race, social class, cultural capital, profession, or religion, and elevate others.

The purpose of these involvements with community museums is not for the university to tell the community what to do with their spaces. Rather, the idea is to facilitate processes that integrate critical thinking skills to help the community define its own path, while encouraging a sense of pride and responsibility in keeping heritage, identity, and culture alive. Integrating students into these processes, in turn, will also embed within them a more analytical approach to their own communities and their own cultural identity. In this way, the university can conceive of community museums as spaces of decolonised learning that can facilitate discussions regarding the past, the present, and the future in a non-hierarchical approach to knowledge, equipping students with the empathy and open-mindedness necessary to face the new challenges society presents in purposeful ways.

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Teaching a master's course on museums and Māori: Decolonising and indigenising museum studies in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Introduction: Decolonising the museum studies curriculum

This webinar considers complex issues of decolonisation, community action, and museum practice as they affect the teaching of museum and heritage studies. We offer a view from Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ and European settler), which, despite ongoing problems and challenges, has seen in recent decades the transformation of the museum sector after the ground-breaking exhibition *Te Maori*, the emergence of indigenous academic pedagogy in universities through *kaupapa Māori* methodology, and a national reckoning with a difficult past through the Waitangi Tribunal. How has this changing social context shaped the teaching of museum and heritage studies in NZ universities?

We approach the topic from different personal perspectives, Māori and *Pākehā* (NZ European), academia and tribal community, and theory and practice, but focus on the development of one particular course within a university master's degree. Over the period 2005–2020, this course has changed often in response to professional trends, student needs, administrative constraints, and academic debates on topics such as representation, repatriation, decolonisation, and indigenisation. Describing the course content, structure, and delivery, the readings, assignments, and assessment, we reflect on the shift to Māori agency and strategies toward self-determination and autonomy, working both inside and outside of mainstream museums. While touching on the theoretical literature, we focus on the practical ways in which Māori community values, perspectives, and practices have been incorporated into museum practice, and how this in turn has affected the teaching of this course that aims to prepare graduates to work in a dynamic sector where professionals are confronted every day with tricky dilemmas in collections, exhibitions, policy, management, and community engagement. A key feature of the course is the *wānanga*, a three-day, fully

immersive workshop for students and professionals staying together on a *marae* (tribal complex) as guests of the community, learning about their history, cultural knowledge, customs, protocols, and way of life today.

The context of Aotearoa: The emergence of Māori museology

In the British settler colony of NZ, museums established in the 19th century reflected European models and were implicated in the process of colonisation, including the alienation of indigenous culture and heritage. Museum and art gallery collections, exhibitions, and policy reflected the perspective of the dominant *Pākehā* culture, much as they did in other settler colonial contexts such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa (McCarthy, 2019b). While the colonial experience for Māori people in Aotearoa was an overwhelmingly negative encounter, which resulted in the loss of land, culture, and language, by the early 20th century there was evidence of a spirited engagement with anthropology and museums through the work of leaders such as politician Apirana Ngata and doctor and anthropologist Peter Buck (Te Rangihīroa), which sought to preserve and revitalise tribal arts, culture, and heritage (McCarthy, 2012; McCarthy & Tapsell, 2019).

By the 1980s, a process of domestic decolonisation (Belich, 2001, p. 392) spurred a coming to terms with a dark past and painful colonial legacy in various parts of NZ society, including the Waitangi Tribunal which investigated historical breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document signed in 1840 (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021). In the cultural sphere, the ground-breaking *Te Maori* exhibition, which toured the United States and New Zealand 1984–1987 (Mead, 1984; H. Mead, 1986; S. Mead, 1986), ushered in sweeping reforms in the museum sector, such as the hiring of Māori staff, the inclusion of Māori perspectives on community engagement, collections, and display, and development of what has been described as “Māori museology” (McCarthy, 2011). This phenomenon can be seen in the ways in which Māori staff, or *kaitiaki* (guardians), look after *taonga* (treasures) according to their own *tikanga* (concepts, practices, and values), which includes acknowledging the spiritual and cultural dimensions of objects seen as living ancestors rather than inert artifacts (Tamarapa, 1996a; Tamarapa, 1996b). A major milestone was the opening of Te Papa in 1998, a reimagined national museum that incorporated specifically Māori policy and practice: a Māori co-leader, a *marae* or customary space for welcoming visitors, and exhibitions co-created with *iwi* (tribes) (McCarthy, 2018; McCarthy, Schorch & Hakiwai, 2019; Te Papa, 2021). An example of the new approach was the exhibition of Māori weaving, *Kahu Ora Living Cloaks*, curated by Awhina Tamarapa at Te Papa in 2012, raising public awareness of the significance, values, and knowledge of Māori cloak weaving as a living cultural practice. The exhibition was an outcome of a long-term Māori curatorial objective to “open the storeroom doors” of the museum, by working with descendants, researchers, artists, and knowledge practitioners to engage and reconnect with the museum collections.

The exhibit and public programmes were organised in partnership with the national collective of Māori weavers, Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa. Multiple subject experts contributed to a publication, *Whatu Kāhahu Māori Cloaks* (Tamarapa, 2011; Tamarapa, 2019). Networks extended to an international conference held in June 2011, “Whatu Raranga a Kiwa: Understanding and Uniting Māori and Pacific Textiles.”

Theory and practice: Decolonisation or Indigenisation?

These bold steps towards an indigenous museology in the heritage sector mirrored wider changes in the public sector, often referred to at this time as *biculturalism*, i.e., the bringing together of the two partners enshrined in the Treaty. This process was criticised however as ameliorating Māori demands within state institutions and falling short of independent self-determination (Tapsell, 2001; O’Sullivan, 2007). Yet broader debates in NZ society about politics, identity, and history from the 1980s to the present did not often refer to “decolonisation” as such. Indeed, Māori scholars generally talked about the aim of *tino rangatiratanga* (absolute chieftainship) or “sovereignty” taken from article two of the Treaty (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021). Renowned Māori lawyer and indigenous rights expert Moana Jackson advocates for constitutional transformation in Aotearoa based on restoration ethics (Jackson, 2020). Māori ways of knowing and being are underpinned by relational moral principles, expressed as *tikanga*—“right” or correct behaviour determining cultural practice—and *kawa*, or protocols that enact customs. Restoration in this sense requires Māori independence, to have the ability to self-govern and thrive, rather than be reliant on a pervasive, dominant system. Jackson has argued that “[r]estoration (like colonisation) is also a process, not an event, and it will require a change of mind and heart as much as a change of structure” (2020, p. 149).

At Te Papa, Māori curators were guided by the policy of *mana taonga* (the power/authority of ancestral treasures), which ensured the input of source communities to decisions about the care and management of objects and collections (McCarthy et al., 2013; Schorch et al., 2016). One curator simply referred to the “Māorification” of the museum (Cairns, 2020). Such discussions also included the necessity of removing human remains considered *tapu* (sacred) and the prospect of taking *taonga* out of museums and setting up tribal cultural centres run according to community aims and principles (Tapsell, 2006; McCarthy, 2011; McCarthy, 2014).

Of course, decolonisation means different things to different people in different contexts (Lonetree, 2012; Kreps, 2020; Soares, 2020), and there is arguably a need to better historicise and theorise the term, which tends to be used rather loosely, particularly in heated online arguments. In more recent years, there have been debates in NZ about decolonisation that use this term specifically, and sometimes in relation to museums (Elkington et al., 2021). Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith published a global bestseller in 1999 about “decolonising methodologies” (Smith, 1999), creating a Māori cultural framework for ensuring

that research was conducted by/with/for Māori communities and providing the conceptual platform for the advancement of Māori scholarship in universities through *kaupapa Māori* methodology and *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge). More recently, Smith has engaged in public dialogue with Argentinian scholar Walter Mignolo about “de-linking coloniality,” and bringing museum objects back to life through reconnecting them with communities (Smith & Mignolo, 2019). In 2021, a panel at the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt debated the question: Can you decolonise the art gallery? (Dowse Art Museum, 2021). At Auckland Museum in late 2020, a panel of Māori and Pasifika speakers discussed decolonising and indigenising museums (Auckland Museum, 2020). Indeed, it seems scholars, artists, and activists in Australia, Aotearoa, and the Pacific often question which is the better pathway, decolonisation or indigenisation (Isenger Pilkington MA keynote, 2018; McCarthy, 2019a). Is it better to decolonise, to restructure the social and political relations of power and ownership within institutions (but still have to deal with a colonial framework), or to draw on indigenous concepts and approaches to create something more Māori-centred or even new, according to a Māori world view, and, perhaps more importantly (and more radically), a Māori way of being (Lythberg et al., 2019).

The “Museums and Māori” course: Developing a critical indigenous pedagogy

Decolonising museum studies courses is equally as challenging as decolonising museums. Without genuine acknowledgement of colonisation and intergenerational trauma as an ongoing reality for indigenous people, there is no recourse for the kind of “rebalance” Jackson (2020) refers to. Amy Lonetree writes that museums need to tell the “hard truths about colonialism” (Lonetree, 2012, p. 23). The recovery of cultural knowledge has been described by Kreps (2003) as a form of “liberation” in a museum context and museum decolonisation as “deep museum engagement” (2020, p. 37). Just as museums undergo self-reflexivity, it is incumbent on university museum studies programmes to closely examine not only the implications for museums, but to interrogate their own part in the fraught entrenchment and/or dismantlement of colonial structures.

Museum and Heritage Studies is taught at postgraduate level at three NZ universities, the oldest at Massey University was established in the 1980s and was for a time part of the School of Māori Studies (Cobley and McCarthy, 2009). All these programmes have substantial Māori content, but are aimed at a broad audience, though one Māori art history paper at Auckland University is aimed at Māori students and has a reading list made up solely of publications by indigenous writers (Ellis, 2018). There is an exciting initiative at Toi Hou Kura, the Māori art school at a polytechnic in Gisborne, where a programme called Te Ara Pourewa, a graduate diploma in heritage and museum studies aimed at Māori students, employs a framework of traditional knowledge alongside museum practice and heritage management (Te Ara Pourewa, 2021).

At Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington, the “Museums and Māori” course (MHST 507) can be seen as an attempt to prepare future museum professionals to work in a changing sector, and to navigate the complexities of processual transformation of “mind and heart as much as a change of structure” (Jackson, 2020) by its focused attention to Māori agency and self-determination, while at the same time developing critical indigenous teaching tools in theory and practice. Over several years, the course has shifted away from an academic analysis of museum history and theory to focus on what is going on in museums today. “Museums and Māori” is a biannual course offered in the Masters of Museum and Heritage Practice (MMHP), a one-year taught degree focusing on professional practice. Like all the courses in the programme, it employs an integrated cycle of teaching, research, professional development, and training that aims to span the problematic gap between theory and practice, and ultimately challenge and transform museology (McCarthy, 2015; McCarthy, 2016). This enables staff to focus class discussion on pragmatic and operational aspects of current museum practice through case studies, which are further explored through placements and internships. Research is important, but is embedded in practice. Recent student research projects include a gap analysis of Māori engagement at a local Wellington museum, and working with the Perth Museum, Scotland, on the development of an exhibition based on their collection of *taonga Māori* (Māori treasures).

The course is taught over two trimesters, from March to May and July to September. In 2020, the course changed from weekly classes to six-hour sessions every month, aligning more to a *wānanga* or workshop style of delivery. In the first half of the year, MHST 507 introduces cultural, social, and historical contexts by examining the changing relationship between museums and Māori people from the colonial period to the present. Māori perspectives, customs, practices, concepts such as custodianship, and forms of knowledge, experiences, connections to cultural heritage, museum collections, display, and representation is explored, including ramifications of the Treaty. The learning objectives are to:

1. Critique the historical and theoretical aspects of museum practice in relation to Māori people and culture.
2. Compare and contrast Māori perspectives on their *taonga tuku iho* (treasures handed down) with current museum practice.
3. Outline the major principles of *tikanga*, *kaupapa*, and *mātauranga Māori* as they apply to museums and heritage.
4. Analyse current trends, issues, and debates related to Māori issues in New Zealand museums.

“Museums and Māori B” (MHST 508) examines the ongoing relationship between museums and Māori people in the current professional context, with input from professionals who share their experience of working with iwi on recent projects. It culminates in an independent research project and presentation examining

current policy and practice in New Zealand museums including post-settlement tribal cultural development. The learning objectives are to:

1. Critique the historical and theoretical dimensions of museum practice in relation to Māori and indigenous people and culture.
2. Apply the major principles of *tikanga*, *kaupapa*, and *mātauranga Māori* to a case study of New Zealand museums.
3. Compare and contrast different approaches to indigenising/decolonising New Zealand museums.
4. Theorise different approaches to Māori/indigenous museology inside/outside New Zealand museums.

The term *wānanga* or “*whare wānanga*” refers to schools of higher learning. This teaching pedagogy originated from the Pacific, encapsulating thousands of years of ancestral, accumulated knowledge connected to their worldview and environment. *Whare wānanga* were ritualised spaces, set aside for selected students, either by chiefly lineage or by their natural abilities as observed by priests, master teachers, and elders. These exclusive schools taught various forms of sacred, ancestral knowledge. *Wānanga* is a form of Māori epistemology (Salmond, 1985) kept within tribal communities; its disciplines include environmental science, navigation, martial arts and weaponry, religion, and prestigious arts such as weaving and carving. Particular schools were famous for their excellence, recorded in oral narratives through ancient chants, songs, and artistic achievements that are revered to this day (Ngata, 1958; S. Mead, 1986).

Over time, those customary schools went underground, but the teaching method continues in new ways. Today, the term *wānanga* is used for *kaupapa Māori* based on in-depth discussion or learning in an immersive environment. The term *whare wānanga* applies to universities, whether they are Māori total immersion or mainstream. For the purposes of intercultural museum studies, it may be helpful to think about the discourse as an intersection in moments of time—between students, teachers, museum professionals, and communities. Some may identify with all of those descriptions concurrently. This intersection is a vortex of different *wānanga*, “schools” or “disciplines” of thought. One approach to thinking through this meeting place of experiences is to apply *critical pedagogy*, which is to teach in a way that *encourages* one to be self-reflexive, to look under the surface of things and examine existing unequal power structures.

Leading Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire, author of the seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), has influenced the work of Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren in education and critical pedagogical studies. Kincheloe and McLaren have described the idea of cultural pedagogy as emancipatory specific teaching that “generates knowledge, shapes values, and constructs identity” (McLaren, 1991, p. 441; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 285). Critical indigenous pedagogy is inquiry that is both political and moral. It uses methods for social justice and “values the transformative power of indigenous, subjugated knowledges” (Semali

& Kincheloe, 1999, p. 15). Following these ideas, the “Museums and Māori” course opens up critical indigenous inquiry and practice by being able to introduce *Māoritanga*, or Māori ways of knowing and being, in socially responsive and practical ways. This intersectional strategy allows for movement between forms of learning, the classroom and wānanga, so as to operate simultaneously both in and outside of academia and museums.

Working on this programme and teaching this course means having to negotiate *Pākehā* ways of doing things within a university whose commitment to our work has at times seemed uncertain. For McCarthy as a *Pākehā*, working in a Māori space can be politically charged and contentious. This demonstrates the complexities of our work. However, the objectives of the course are based on opening up discussion and encouraging the students to critically review the museum/Māori dynamic and their place within it. The students come to terms with their own backgrounds, including their sense of identity and privilege in some regards. They are supported to hone what they will bring to the museum and heritage sector, hopefully equipped with a more nuanced understanding of Aotearoa NZ's problematic past and a greater awareness of Māori experiences, rights, and perspectives.

Through readings and discussion the course explores history and theory related to museums and indigenous people, and Māori in particular. However, we go a step further, by re-examining Māori agency through historical and contemporary case studies. This begins to unpack the often overlooked, or subsumed, stories or voices that indicate the complexities of the time. These untold stories shift the historical frame that has been a pervasive, dominant lens through which Māori have been relegated. The irony is that Māori were active, in many cases on both sides, resisting and advancing colonial ideology, patriarchy, laws, commerce, religion, and military force.

The constant tension, the push and pull factors between acculturation and assimilation continues today. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is our nation's founding document that lays out a blueprint for a constitutional relationship between Māori and the Crown, identifying rights and full authority over our *taonga* (cultural treasures, tangible and intangible) for Māori as *tangata whenua*, or people of the land, and the relationship with *tangata tiriti*, or non-Māori New Zealanders who have rights to live in Aotearoa through *Te Tiriti*. The importance of *taonga* is examined, especially regarding the role of museums as custodians. The words of esteemed elder Henare Tuwhangai remind us as Māori of what we need to do. “Bring to light the achievements of your ancestors,” he said, “gifts handed down through the generations” (Tuwhangai, 1990). Those gifts are what Māori perceive as *taonga*.

The course's final assignment is a research project that aims to contribute directly to Māori communities or museum work involving the care, display, and custodianship of Māori heritage. The value of such work is the opportunity for students to think about and work through the kinds of issues that communities and museums grapple with on an everyday basis. The students are able to offer a

fresh perspective, apply what they have learned, while reflecting on the lessons from the literature as part of their research assignments. For the recipients, the research can provide options and independent thinking to help with difficult problem solving. In 2020, the class had the chance to work on topics involving the Māori collection held in the Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Scotland. The class were first introduced to the principles and practice of *kaupapa Māori* research theory, as fundamental guidelines on respectfully addressing Māori needs, to remember that they develop and undertake their research with Māori and the outcomes are for Māori social and emancipatory goals. Tamarapa (2011, 2019) has built up a relationship with Perth Museum staff for over 10 years, primarily through collaborative work on a rare *kākāpō* (*Strigops habroptilus*) feather cloak that has been part of the David Ramsay collection in the Perth Museum since 1842. The Perth Museum and Te Papa staff, with Tamarapa, are currently working on the development of a memorandum of understanding to guide future research and exhibition projects.

Wānanga Taonga: From the classroom to a Māori tribal marae

The most effective way of learning about Māori knowledge and perspectives is to be fully immersed in the culture. The Museum and Heritage Studies programme holds a three-day *wānanga taonga* on a *marae* within a tribal community. A *marae* is a meeting house and complex of buildings that function as a tribal gathering place for important occasions such as welcoming visitors, farewelling the departed, holding meetings, celebrations, and tribal activities. The method of learning through *wānanga* becomes much more real when a participant is free of their familiar cultural context and surroundings. To contend with feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, the anxiety of not wanting to cause offence, and to be outside of one's comfort zone are all part of opening up to new experiences and bringing forth acceptance, appreciation, and connection.

Since 2013, the programme has held annual *wānanga* at *Hongoeka marae*, Hongoeka Bay, Plimmerton, situated on the coastline of the Porirua harbour basin, north of Wellington. Hongoeka is home to approximately 37 extended families of three primary *hapū*, or sub-tribes, of the *Ngāti Toa Rangatira* tribe, who have occupied the lands and wider region since the 1820s, surviving colonisation as one of the largest remaining Māori reserves in the Wellington district. *Ngāti Toa Rangatira* are amongst several tribal groups who have settled long-term injustices with the Crown through the Waitangi Tribunal Settlement process. Supported by long-standing relationships with Hongoeka people, the *wānanga taonga* enables participants to be exposed to living values, customs, and protocols. These include undergoing a formal welcome to the *marae*, practising how to greet and introduce oneself in the Māori language, understanding key values and concepts like the impact of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and its implications in the cultural heritage sector, providing insights into Māori museum practice from the personal experience of Māori professionals in the sector, and last, but not least,

meeting the local people and learning about their history, way of life, and how they manage the marae and look after their visitors. One of the most profound experiences is to realise how much Māori people have lost through colonisation. On the last morning of their stay, the group are taken on a guided walk up a steep hill through a bush reserve to the tribal cemetery grounds. Overlooking the breathtaking view of the harbour, the locals point out important cultural markers in the landscape, then show how much land (as far as the eye can see) was taken from their ancestors by stealth and under duress.

In 2021, the marae experience was an overnight stay hosted by the *Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai* people of Waikanae, Kāpiti Coast. They are related to the Hongoeka people, which is a valuable relationship for the programme. The marae is situated in the middle of the Waikanae township that has grown around it. Despite quite significant land loss and desecration of ancestral sites in the process of the region's development, the tribe remain stoic and fight for representation in areas of environmental conservation, waterways and land restoration, and protection of culturally significant species. The value of the local people interacting with the *wānanga* participants is reciprocal. As an example, the concept of *kaitiakitanga taonga*, to act as cultural custodians, is delivered in a memorable, pragmatic way. Les Mullens, a burly, highly-skilled hunter and gatherer, happened to call into the marae as our group were sitting on the porch of the meeting house, enjoying the afternoon sun. Pulled along by his relations to talk to us, Les explained he was a cultural monitor for his tribe. He turned around to proudly point to the word *kaitiaki* emblazoned on the back of his bright orange high-vis vest. The discussion turned to the protection of eels, or *tuna* as a *taonga*. One of our group spoke up and asked, “*But how do you know when an eel is a taonga?*” To which Les wraps both his hands around his tree trunk of a thigh and goes, “*When they are this big!*” Jaws dropped. Needless to say, Les got his point across.

In conclusion, this is just one example of the many concrete and immediate ways in which students learn about complex and long-term historical issues on the *wānanga*, an effective learning experience that readies them to work in a sector grappling with these very issues. By developing critical indigenous pedagogy in academia, museums, and Māori communities, we have tried to teach in a way that encourages students to learn who they are and how they can be part of a decolonising process that changes hearts and minds in very real ways.

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Decolonising Ethnographic and World Cultures Museums: Complicity, Collaboration, and Healing

*Wayne Modest, in conversation
with Ana S. González Rueda*

*National Museum of World Cultures, Wereldmuseum,
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AG: I would like to start with *Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage* (SWICH). Could you please introduce us to the main ideas behind the project?

WM: SWICH was a Creative Europe-funded project that followed on earlier projects such as RIME (International Network of Ethnography Museums) or READ-ME before that. SWICH, like the other projects, brought together several museums across Europe to critically think about what the stakes of their work and position in society was, what is their relevance for the present, and how these stakes or this relevance might be influenced by their histories. We were interested to ask how these histories help us to better understand and engage with the present, so basically asking what is the utility of an ethnographic and world cultural museum in the present. SWICH was more invested in what scholars have described as “post-migrant citizenship,” how our understanding of Europe as a political and social space has been shifting over time, and how museums have participated in fostering ideas about what constitutes Europe and the European, who is *us* and who are *they*. From my perspective, I was interested in how some people became stubbornly conscripted within the category of the migrant and others were seen as self-evident citizens and how this relates to questions of race. SWICH, although not always explicitly, wanted to trouble such commonplace ideas and understand how the museums participated in those ingrained ideas of who we are as Europe, what constitutes Europe’s heritage and culture, and the role that colonialism has played in shaping these ideas. It demanded that museums like ours participate in fashioning heritage futures through the lens of creativity and inclusivity, futures that would push against old racialised, colonial notions of what it means to belong in Europe in the present.

AG: You have also suggested that the SWITCH project may have responded to the conjuncture of “anxiety politics” and that “an attentiveness to colonial things in museums [might] help us address some of the more pressing matters of our common globally interconnected present” (Modest, 2018, p. 119). How do you think we should intervene from the perspective of museum studies and the curriculum? What kinds of learning and teaching models are needed?

WM: The idea of an “anxious politics” of the present was something that I wrote about with my friend and colleague Anouk de Koning in 2016. This idea emerged at the moment recently when there was growing consternation across society but also in the media about the so-called “refugee crisis.” We were concerned about how these conversations were imbricated in colonial and racialised ideologies. These ideas have been rigorously critiqued by numerous scholars since then, including Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019a) and Camilla Hawthorne (2017). Like we were doing, they tried to think through the link between the narratives that were being mobilised to describe refugees and Europe’s colonial past. For Anouk and I, the discussions uncovered the kinds of anxiety about what the future of Europe could look like, an anxiety about a threat to Europe’s future marked by a feeling of loss. This threat, this loss, was projected onto specific racialised groups of people as if they were taking something from a presumed “us,” our freedom, land, jobs, etc. So we were thinking about the political anxiety that existed at that time and which continues to mark Europe in a particular way. This anxiety, at least on our account, evidences a stubborn persistence of seeing, of imagining the European in a particular way that seems to forget Europe’s colonial past and how that past continues to shape the postcolonial present.

If I were to answer what museum studies can do, one of the difficult aspects I find with museum studies—like heritage studies, and memory studies sometimes—is our inability to accept our role as political—a part of the political—our inability to address race, gender, and sexuality in our teaching. There is some change now, but it remains limited. We can go through an entire curriculum talking about heritage as if it exists as a self-evident fact, and talk about UNESCO, norms and numbers, and preservation without any attention to the global inequality that animates the present or how this unequal distribution is bound up in colonial and racialised structures. I struggle with how our disciplines are frightened of thinking of themselves as fundamentally political. In these politics, we try to constitute a heritage regime based in nuance, nice language, and what I call “huggy-huggy politics,” without being attendant to the fact of the ways in which our disciplines are implicated in violence, exclusion, and long histories of racialisation and othering. Such issues, far more complex and vexed, are what I think our disciplines must take seriously if we are to engage with the anxious politics of which I spoke. In doing this, we can help students but also our societies to become more critical of museums and heritage infrastructures more generally. For example we need to become more wary of words such as “partnership” and “sharing authority” and all of these nice words that we like to use in museology

and ask what these words mean more precisely. Don't get me wrong, these are important concepts but sometimes they become shallow, hollowed out, because we do not want to attend to the very nature of the politics that they also inscribe. We are not attendant enough to the kinds of precarities that come with such notions. Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019a, 2019b) speaks about it nicely in her recent book and film: the fact that the crisis of how we understand people who are trying to get to Europe is a crisis of the political, a crisis of how we understand the human, a crisis that is part of colonialism's afterlives. This must also be the focus of our disciplines. Museum studies must also be attendant to its own embeddedness in a history of race and racism, sexism and gender inequality, and violence; we do not attend enough to these issues in the curriculum.

AG: “Neutrality” would be one of these nice words, right?

WM: Yes, the “neutral” or the “objective” or even when we accept that we are not objective, we still think we are institutions of culture and not political. We think, for example, that we cannot have a judgement of the past in our discipline; there is a kind of foreclosure on being critical of history. Still, we judge the past in many other ways for many other historical moments. Our caution with judgement is however heightened when it comes to questions of colonialism, and our ongoing implication in that past. This is not just a question of the past but involves issues that permeate the daily life of most people in the world today.

AG: That reminds me of a quote by a poet, Jay Bernard, who says, “I am haunted by this history but I also haunt it back” (2019, p. xi). Moving on to the next question, citing and contradicting activist and scholar Audre Lorde, you have argued that “it may precisely be with the master’s tools that we can do the work of dismantling the master’s house” (Modest, 2019, p. 13). How do you understand the role of ethnography and world culture museums in questioning who institutions serve and to whom European heritage belongs?

WM: First, I would like to acknowledge the work of recent black, indigenous, queer, feminist, activist, political mobilisation that has pushed us in museums to think differently about what we do. Questions of decolonising the museum did not start from within the museum, but is an agenda that has been set outside. Regarding Lorde's work, I am fascinated by the recent move by museum scholars and practitioners to mobilise the work of critical theorists such as Lorde, Fanon, Glissant, and so forth, while at the same time we find diversity and inclusion and decolonisation difficult. These are institutions that can easily cite their works, and this is a good thing, but without thinking that these are the very institutions that would have excluded these activist intellectuals. In fact, it is the infrastructure of whiteness, colonial and colonising infrastructures of which museums have been part, that such scholars have been fighting. Now do not get me wrong, Lorde, Fanon, and Glissant do provide us with signposts to imagine and fashion other futures, they help us to question the colonality of our institutions. But we should not forget that, even if not explicitly, we are a part of

the colonial entailments that they were trying to undo. We can cite their work, but they may not have been welcomed to work in our institutions, which is interesting, which is especially troubling. Many people have asked for the abolition of the institution, the destruction of our kind of museums because, from their perspectives, these institutions are so tainted in colonialism. One of the reasons I wanted to attend to this was to suggest that abolition might be something else, at least this is how some scholars in the US understand it. Abolition is not simply or necessarily a destruction as in getting rid of, but a destruction that is about a reorder, a rethinking of the institution, a dissolution of the founding structures that continue to do violence. I am invested in that: How do we not hide from the ghosts of history and from the colonial past? How do we help to raise these ghosts to ensure a haunting in the present, to remember and attend to whether we are continuing a colonial project, whether the tentacles of the afterlives of colonialism exist in our museum practices?

With the quote you mentioned from Audre Lorde, what I wanted to suggest for the world cultures museum is that it is a haunting that we need to stay with. We need to *stay with this trouble* of ethnographic museums. My hope is that through serious study and use, world culture museums evidence the many structures that continue to ensnare us today, and we can somehow inaugurate a different kind of institution, a different kind of institutionality. If you want to talk in a language of decolonising the curriculum, then one would have to decolonise the anthropology that we have as our disciplinary framing, or the art history, or biology. In our museums, that history of science that we are part of is a history that we need to confront and deal with. And it is not a one size fits all approach. If you want to contend with the question of race, racialisation, and racism, then you have to look at how our museums are specifically implicated in these structures differently from other museums. We need to see how race and racial science were part of the undergirding of the work these museums did, or even continue to do. For instance, my museum has a history of physical anthropology being done in the museum. Part of this was the history of race science in a certain sense. And it was not just race science in the now-discredited sense. Our investment in the idea of culture, difference, and otherness also opened us up to being part of racialising projects. What I was trying to say is that we need to acknowledge these histories of colonial entanglements and use our museums to help us to better understand the present and the ways that these histories live on in the present.

AG: Could you tell us about what you call a “double bind,” the contradictory position that ethnographic and world cultures museums occupy in discussions about European identity and heritage?

WM: We think of museums as those sites where people find themselves in a certain sense. Ethnographic and world culture museums have in some way been open to thinking of themselves as sites with objects that connect to the lifeworlds of people from diverse diasporas, and as such represent potential places where

people can find themselves—or at least their heritages—in the collections. That is one side: these sites can attend to or connect with the polity of Europe today, the Europe that we have come to know now, that has been formed through colonialism. In this sense, this aligns in some ways with the work of some scholars interested in questions of recognition. But, of course, on the other side, we now increasingly acknowledge these museums' entanglement with European colonialism, with exclusionary practice, with a history of a specific kind of othering. So for an ethnographic museum to work in Europe today and say that it is a site for recognition for the citizenry of Europe, it cannot but inhabit a contradictory position; it must acknowledge that, previously, it was a space that thought about the cultures of "Others" from outside and not the other as inside. With that double bind, I was thinking through how we attend to such a colonial logic as well as the recognition politics that it can play. A part of that is, for me, simply to acknowledge that the double bind exists and that we inhabit a world that colonialism has made, and we cannot turn back the clock; we have to deal with it.

AG: I wonder if there's a particular example you would like to mention about a museum engaging in what you call "redemptive work."

WM: Museums, and especially our kind of museums, have received significant criticism in recent years—I welcome that criticism, especially in museum studies. Professors of museums send students to us to criticise what we do. This I believe is important. What I would love, however, is for them also to be more attuned to the more complex ways that colonial entailments continue to ensnare us in the present. This is not limited to our kinds of museum, but also include many other types of museums. And importantly, we are part of the world where colonial afterlives still live on today. To answer your question: while we should criticise ourselves, I think that the work we have been doing as ethnographic museums in terms of source community work, for example, is important. I am critical of this term, but it was a very important site for reparative work in its original formation. As I understand it, Brown and Peers (2003), who developed the concept some fifteen years ago, were trying to think about the reparative work that would be part of making collections in Europe accessible to communities of origin. This reparative work was not just limited to access but was also about how these objects could play a role in practices of indigenous history writing, the rehabilitation of traditions, but also the struggles for indigenous sovereignty and futurities. We can, of course, be critical of the extent to which these practices have been successful. I myself have been critical. Nonetheless, this is one part of that kind of reparative, redressive act that museums do or can do. A museum that participates in active criticism of the politics of exclusion, in a politics of recognition, and a politics of redistribution, is a museum that can also participate in a redressive formation.

Similarly, I am interested in how museums might be invested in caring work, and that is a new project that we have with Creative Europe about creating caring spaces where diversity/plurality can flourish, the project Taking Care (Taking

Care, n.d.). I am interested in such a redemptive or reparative framing. Restitution can be repair; boldly confronting historical injustice is about repair. That is what I was thinking about, the question of how we might redress historical injustices through the archive.

AG: I would like us to talk about *Afterlives of Slavery*. Could you tell us about the notion of “contingent collaboration” and the importance of critical listening that you have used to describe the process of making the exhibition (Ouédraogo et al., 2019)?

WM: *Afterlives of Slavery* is the precursor to a new exhibition that we will open in 2022 on colonialism and slavery and their “inheritances” in the present. It was intended as a participatory provocation for how the new exhibition could be. Contingent collaboration is a concept that has been used by a few scholars, but which emerged for us out of a kind of play on words in Dutch and English. There is a word in Dutch, *Samenwerking*, which is collaboration. For me, it combines “together” and “working” nicely. It was about how we work together, labour together, do something and create a better future together. Along with Amal Alhaag and Eliza Steinbock, Alessandra Benedicti and many others, we have been thinking about togetherness as a practice, as a form of collaborative labour, not just in addressing difficult pasts but in inaugurating different kinds of futures (Research Center for Material Culture, 2020a). More recently, we have also been working closely with Michael Rothberg’s notion of implicatedness (Research Center for Material Culture, 2020b). In museum studies, we have a long history dealing with the question of participation and inclusion, and we wanted to think about how you collaborate when what is at stake, what haunts such collaborations, is a complex and contested history. How do you collaborate with stakeholders when the differences in power are so great? We were thinking about the structures and histories that we come with, the embedded inequalities: how colonialism, for example, is part of the structures we inhabit, and think about that in relationship to smaller organisations that would like to collaborate. How do we develop a collaborative framework that makes it work? If I remember correctly, when Rita Ouédraogo and I wrote on contingent collaboration, we were influenced by the important work of the scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012). If you remember, they wrote that wonderful and very important article “Decolonization is not a metaphor.” For us, contingent collaboration was a way of stating your stakes even before a project begins, it was about acknowledging where the issues are and trying to work through them, not hide from or deny them.

I have been thinking about what I call *horizon thinking* recently. What horizons of change, of justice, can we imagine, what futures can we imagine and commit to fashion? As collaborative partners we might disagree on how we will get there; we may not know how to make it happen. Still, we are committed to that horizon of justice. We need to keep that horizon in mind even if we might struggle along the way. And for us as a museum, we must always be aware that as institutions, and institutions with our history, etc., we need to know when

to step aside, we need to give up (some of) our authority, power, money, and other resources, whatever, to ensure that the party we are collaborating with can flourish. Contingent collaboration is a form of working together that is committed to the flourishing of all the partners but especially the partner that is most marginalised. It is a collaboration that privileges a horizon of justice. It is always about our flourishing, but how do we ensure that the other collaborator flourishes and their ideas blossom and bloom. It requires talking less and a critical listening, and that is thinking from anthropology. As a discipline, anthropology should be one embedded in critical listening. I was interested in how museums can listen more and talk less.

AG: Writing about the *Afterlives of Slavery* exhibition, you have addressed the issue of complicity as one that you are constantly struggling with (Ouédraogo et al., 2019). In striving to decolonise the institution, you consider whether you are truly decentring the museum's authority, whether participation and collaboration contribute to healing processes. How are you thinking about these issues now?

WM: The starting point for us is to think about how we are entangled in systems of oppression: if and how we participate in an ongoing coloniality; how are we complicit in the afterlives. We take “afterlives” from Saidiya Hartman (2007), who helps us to think about the racial and political calculus that continues to ensnare us in the world today and divide the world as worthy and unworthy, as worthy even to breathe if we were to take George Floyd's recent death and verdict into account. But to answer your question, Ana, the answer is that I do not know whether the museum can be a site of healing; I hope that it is, or can be, and I would want to fight to ensure that it can be. To do that, one has to acknowledge how we have participated in these structures of exclusion and violation and find a way to create a more caring and careful world for both humans and more than humans, for the planet. That is where I think healing comes because we are so nestled in and formed by colonialism, which was a project fundamentally opposite to the notion of caring. Now we need to inaugurate a new kind of institution that will care for the human and more than human worlds differently, and that is where I hope healing comes. It is not easy because it is not the kind of healing that hides wounds but the healing that acknowledges that the wounds are still there and one has to work hard at them, which David Scott (2018) imagines as a kind of irreparability. That irreparability is not something that we should throw our hands up at and do nothing; we should work harder to ensure that more careful worlds, healed worlds happen in the future.

AG: Would you share with us some of your reflections about the future of curatorial work within the framework of anxious politics? How do you think museums should engage with social movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter today?

WM: One of the reasons for my having hope is I think that whereas there have been a lot of activist mobilisations to shift museums in the past—some of this emerged, for example, in the new museology movement or the community museum movement or even earlier, and that these movements have resulted in terminologies and shifts in thinking that have taken hold in our museum language and practice—what we see happening now in the decolonialisation movement/moment, which is in large measure from outside the museum, is very promising. I believe that there is no going back now to a moment prior to decolonisation. The decolonial or decolonisation movement has shaken us up in wonderfully important ways. We are now trying to understand what we must undo, what to break down, but what we do not know yet is what comes next. We do not know what the decolonised museum could look like. This space of uncertainty demands a certain kind of humility, this space of not knowing creates anxiety, but is also an amazing place to be with great potentiality for thinking about another kind of museum future. Like Lonnie Bunch (2019) has suggested, museums should be spaces where we can help fashion future activists, activists for justice, for equity, for the planet, advocates for the most marginalised. However, we need to do this collaboratively, not in the lead but together, supporting all the social movements fighting for more just futures. The curatorial role is one of humility, doubt, uncertainty; but it is a role that also still believes in its own potentialities and expertise. You have the expertise, or you grow expertise, but it does not come in the space of other expertise but seeks out these spaces of togetherness to try to imagine and create different kinds of futures together. Curators of tomorrow should be people who will provoke, will imagine. I believe in imagination because this is a role for a museum par excellence; I believe in the museum not just as a site for critique, which is important, but it also plays an important part in the politics of imagination. That curator of the future will critique and provoke, being clear that this can only be done together.

AG: You have also described the museum visit as an “investment in critical discomfort” where we can be raising awareness about the world out there (Modest, 2020). How do you think that, as educators working with future curators, we can support our students in developing their critical and creative practice?

WM: This came at a time when the questions of decolonisation became more urgent, and questions of dealing with difficult histories or contested histories became increasingly relevant for museums. I must admit that at some point, I became a little bit impatient with the idea of contested and even uncomfortable histories, because I think we use those concepts and terms too easily, as easy ways out, and I am not so sure how productive they are. They become buzzwords that we use to give ourselves a feeling of doing something. In critique of myself, this may be similar for the term “critical discomfort.” Perhaps I can say it differently and tie that to the conversations around the new ICOM definition. Some people are concerned that museums are not enjoyable anymore, and I am wondering for whom museums are enjoyable. Museums are not enjoyable for many marginalised or formerly colonised peoples; that is what the decolonisation

movement has been about. To attend to the discomfort and the burden we feel in our museums, acknowledging its exclusions and violence is to push us towards what Michael Rothberg (2019), who I mentioned above, speaks of as *implicat- edness*, that I am implicated in this history and there are ethics to creating a better future. Critical discomfort is about that site of acknowledgement where one recognises how complicit one is in structuring unequal presents, pushing us to imagine and inaugurate different kinds of futures. Is it okay that some of our visitors experience joy or enjoyment while others are discomfited? I think that it is good for museums to be places where we can all feel a level of discomfort and ask ourselves when we come to an exhibition: How am I implicated in historical or ongoing injustice in the world today? That is a site for criticality that we need to embed in our museums; otherwise, we continue to create these bubbles of enjoyment where some can be joyous at the expense of others. I keep repeating what a student told me: “If we give them (objects) back, then we will not have the joy of seeing them.” The very problem is that you probably should not have the joy of seeing them because it was not yours to see in the first place. The student was understanding, I believe, when I said this. I am interested in coming to terms with that feeling; the museum becomes a site of reflexivity to think about our history but also our ongoing complicity in creating precarity, inequality, and injustice.

AG: Finally, I would like to mention the Research Center for Material Culture’s publications, which are freely available online: *CO-LAB* (Lelijveld & Rijnks-Kleikamp, 2018), a zine that reflects on the collaborative process of creating the *Afterlives of Slavery* exhibition; there is also *Words Matter* (Modest & Lelijveld, 2018), which offers guidance on word use in museum practice, and the most recent volume *Recollecting and Reallocation* (Modest et al., 2020), which focuses on how museums might repair historical wrongs. These are all very valuable learning tools for all of us interested in decolonising the curriculum. Could you tell us more about the Work in Progress series, and do you have some advice on using these resources in the classroom?

WM: Work in Progress was our attempt to do two things: first, to share our failures and therefore to learn from people’s critical approaches to such failures. It was important for us to say this is what we are trying to do and get help trying to understand how to do it better, and also to suggest that certain projects are never final. Decolonisation is never final; it is a work in progress, something that one has to commit to. *CO-LAB* was an attempt to think about how we might create a network of collaborators where together we can practice justice. It is about a certain kind of togetherness trying to deal with a topic and imagine something else. They are very speculative and open. *Words Matter* is an unfinished guide. We include blank pages where you can finish it yourself. We have received criticism on it; this was the first version as a mock-up, and we are reworking it. Everybody can download them, and we are thinking of doing a few more—for

example, one about how museum marketing can be done otherwise. We are thinking about the next ones.

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