

Promovieren im Museum

C O N

Narrating Culture(s) in
Museums and Exhibitions

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January 18 – 19, 2018

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Leuphana University Lüneburg

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Narrating Culture(s) in Museums and Exhibitions

Participants

Tricia Austin

(Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London)

Anselm Franke (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin)

Hans Peter Hahn (Goethe-University Frankfurt)

Suzana Milevska (Politecnico di Milano)

Derek R. Peterson (University of Michigan)

Mirjam Shatanawi (National Museum of World
Cultures, The Netherlands)

Raymond Silverman (Professor, History of Art, African
Studies and Museum Studies, University of Michigan)

Kavita Singh (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Miguel Tamen (University of Lisbon)

Andrea Witcomb (Deakin University, Melbourne)

Organisation

Susanne Leeb (Leuphana University Lüneburg)

Nina Samuel (Leuphana University Lüneburg)

Beate Söntgen (Leuphana University Lüneburg)

January 18 –19, 2018

Venue

Leuphana University Lüneburg
Universitätsallee 1, C 40.606 (Zentralgebäude)
21335 Lüneburg

Registration

primus@leuphana.de



**Central building 40,
room 606
on the sixth floor**

Day 1, Jan 18

2 – 2.30 pm
Welcome and Introduction

Panel I: Object Dilemmas [Beate Söntgen](#)

2.30–3.30 pm
[Hans Peter Hahn](#)
(Goethe-University Frankfurt):
The Museum as Place of Fragmentation.
A material culturalist's view on the
Transformative Power of Museums

3.45–4.45 pm
[Suzana Milevska](#)
(Politecnico di Milano):
Shameful Objects, Apologizing Subjects:
On participatory institutional critique and
productive shame

Panel II: Trouble with Representation [Barbara Plankensteiner](#)

5.15–6.15 pm
[Mirjam Shatanawi](#)
(National Museum of World Cultures,
The Netherlands): Europe and Islam:
On the In-Betweenness of Collections

6.30–7.30 pm
[Raymond A. Silverman](#)
(University of Michigan):
Collaborative Futures: Museum,
Community, Knowledge

Day 2, Jan 19

Panel III: Politics of Perception [Nina Samuel](#)

10–11 am
[Anselm Franke](#)
(Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin):
Beyond Institutional Critique.
What is an Essay Exhibition?

11.15–12.15 pm
[Patricia Austin](#)
(University of the Arts, London):
Walking Through Stories

12.45–13.45 pm
[Miguel Tamen](#)
(University of Lisbon):
More Trouble With 'Tangible'

Panel IV: Negotiating National Narratives [Susanne Leeb](#)

3–4 pm
[Kavita Singh](#)
(Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi):
Remembering and Forgetting in the
National Museum

4.15–5.15 pm
[Derek R. Peterson](#)
(University of Michigan):
The Uganda Museum and the History
of Heritage

5.45–6.45 pm
[Andrea Witcomb](#)
(Deakin University, Melbourne):
Engaging with Cultural Diversity as Lived
Experience: The Importance of Place
as Frame for Exhibition Seeking to Engage
with Cross-Cultural Encounters in
Australian Museums

7 pm
Concluding Remarks

Tricia Austin

(Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London): Walking Through Stories

This paper explores key characteristics of spatial narratives, sometimes called narrative environments. The suggestion is that spatial narratives can be conceived as located on an axis somewhere between literary, theatrical or film narratives, in other words established narrative forms on the one hand, and our everyday narratives of self on the other hand. The difference could be understood in the following way: while immersed in watching the screen or reading a book you are, in many senses, always ‘outside’ the story. By contrast, you can walk right into a narrative environment becoming physically, emotionally and intellectually immersed in narrative space. This is, nonetheless, different from everyday experience. The paper asks what are the key differences between the experience of established narrative forms, the experience of narrative environments and the experience of everyday narrative construction of self?

Although these three broad forms of narrative can be differentiated, they nevertheless share common qualities such as the construction storyworlds in our imaginations. In an effort to identify commonalities and differences between the three, this paper will analyse two narrative environments, one predominantly linear and more inclined towards literary, theatrical or film structures, and another more related to a public space in the city where visitors may move freely and encounter parts of the spatial narrative in a non-prescribed sequence, more like our everyday experience. One of the clues to the difference between a narrative environment and the everyday may stem from the intentionality implicit in design, in other words, how narrative environments are deliberately designed and built with a particular intention to communicate a story to specific audiences or prompt storytelling among visitors. The paper applies a range of theories to the case studies in order to posit some of the distinctive characteristics of spatial narratives. The theories include those developed by Jerome Bruner about narrative and identity; theories of the dynamics of narrative by A.J. Greimas; Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theories of embodied perception; and critical thinking about space in the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Bruno Latour. The discussion in the paper

aims to enable designers of spatial narratives to deepen their understanding of their principles and methods and to expand and develop their practice.

Tricia Austin

is a PhD supervisor, author and design researcher. She is Course Leader of MA Narrative Environments at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. The post-graduate programme pioneers’ collaborative practice among architects, spatial designers, communication designers, and curators in the development of novel proposals for socially-engaged cultural, commercial and urban environments.

Tricia co-devised the series of international summits *Re-envisioning Exhibition Design* <re-xd.org> The series started with *Chaos at the Museum: Designing for Audience Participation* in London, 2014. The second was *Chaos at the Museum: infiltrating the urban fabric* Buenos Aires, 2016. Tricia and her colleagues are currently planning the next event on *Embracing the Unexpected* in Washington DC 2019. Tricia co-curated and spoke at the international conference *The Future of Museum and Gallery Design* in Hong Kong, 2015. The conference gave rise to an anthology *The Future of Museum and Gallery Design: Purpose, Process and Perception* to be published in 2018 by Routledge. Tricia co-edited the book and provided a chapter *The Designer’s Role in Museums that Act as Agents of Change*.

Tricia has lectured in Europe, Asia and South America and led a number of collaborative projects with universities and governmental organizations across the world. She was a co-investigator on the €2m EU funded project “City and Art” in 2007-9. From 2011 – 13, Tricia was the UK lead on EU-PA, a two-year, EU funded, multidisciplinary project to develop culture-led city regeneration methodologies, involving multiple stakeholders and producing exemplar case studies in the UK, Italy, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

Anselm Franke

(Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin):

Beyond Institutional Critique.

What is an Essay Exhibition?

In curation, thematic framings are always inherently problematic and often meet resistance from artists and/or their material itself. Thematic exhibitions are frequently mapping meaning onto works of art in a way that reduces them to carriers of unambiguous messages, thus disregarding the aesthetic and polysemic character of artworks and frequently their immanent “politics” as well. Exhibitions that seek to make purely artistic or formal arguments, on the other hand, often amplify the institutional divisions and mystifications by which art history is severed from its political contexts. What are other ways of doing justice to the aesthetic character of art, without reifying institutional purifications and myths? The problem is not one of legitimacy or illegitimacy of narrative frames – but the lack of an adequate framework and curatorial methodology how such narratives become relevant to aesthetics and yet might reach beyond disciplinary confines. Is it possible to conceive frames and enact forms of narration that set an oscillation between meaning and material into motion: where both narrative and history, and art, perform a form of critique and mutually displace and animate each other?

To this end, exhibitions first have to become “fully literate” (Bruce W. Ferguson). What has been termed the “essay exhibition”, which embrace both documentary material and works of art, is a systematic attempt in this direction. An essay exhibition is qualified by a self-reflexive approach to thematic framings and an immanent critique of the objectivism and positivism that pertains to the format of a museum exhibition, with their implicit equations of the visible with the knowable. In this form of exhibition, art thus becomes a way of “research”, systematically exploring the limits of positive knowledge by resisting the closure of symbolic systems performed in the institutional frame. Essay exhibitions thus reject narrative innocence and instead speak of the history of representational practice. This form of exhibition is an attempt in the integration of knowledge, traversing different forms of knowledge, different disciplines, and seeking to un-ground the ontological partitions that underwrite them. They turn a “theme” into a historical stage, where “knowledge” of the object is countered by a reflection on its construction by the

subject, and the construction of that subject by the institutional parameters. The “essay exhibition” works primarily through constellations in which transforming frames of perception and interpretation and mutable subject/object relations, including those displaced by or produced by the encounter with art, are the material of history.

Anselm Franke

is a curator and writer based in Berlin. He is Head of Visual Art and Film at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), where he co-curated *The Anthropocene Project* (2013–2014), and the exhibitions *The Whole Earth; After Year Zero* (both 2013), *Forensis* (2014), *Ape Culture* (2015), and *Nervous Systems* (2016), as well as *2 or 3 Tigers* and *Parapolitics* (both 2017), among others. In 2012, he curated the 11th Taipei Biennial, and in 2014 the 10th Shanghai Biennial. Franke's exhibition project *Animism* has been presented in Antwerp, Bern, Vienna, Berlin, New York, Shenzhen, Seoul, and Beirut in various collaborations from 2010 to 2014. Previously, Franke was a co-curator of Manifesta 7 and a curator at KW Berlin and director of Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerpen. He completed his PhD at Goldsmiths College London.

Hans Peter Hahn (Goethe-University Frankfurt): The Museum as Place of Fragmentation. A material culturalist's view on the Transformative Power of Museums

Museums have always been challenged by two contradictory missions. On the one hand, museums are considered to be places of preservation and conservation of rare material objects. On the other hand, museums receive considerable funding because they are perceived as important public instances of local, regional or national identity building. In the light of these two objectives, it becomes understandable that it has recently been possible to found new museums without corresponding collections. The will to manifest a collective identity is stronger than the task of dealing with existing and very often quite problematic collections. In the light of this museological dilemma the mixed fate of material objects in the collections, both in the magazine and in the exhibition, can be better explained. It is something almost impossible to preserve an object without changing its material structure. Preservation of things means changing, whereas collecting always means separating objects from the original context and defining a new context which refers to message of the museum and the meaning of the collection as a whole. Museums do not only transform objects (instead of preserving them), but they also create new meaning and value by defining the specificity of a collection and enhancing the message attached to this material assemblage.

Looking at the itinerary of an object, the path from a cultural embedding to a collection, and – in some cases only – to an exhibition can be explained by the logic of the threshold. The threshold is a kind of selection process by which some properties of the object are given priority whereas many other properties of the very same object are negated and often even materially destroyed. Whereas the museum professional would not hesitate to claim the status of being “part of a collection” as an achievement with regard to the value and meaning of an object, this claim is much less evident when one compares the object embedded in whatever culture and a similar object stored on a shelf in the museum's storing room. The aim of this contribution is to make some of the limitations of the museum idea clear and thereby call the professional community to a more conscious and reflective approach to what is the character and what are the potentials of museum collections.

Hans Peter Hahn

is Professor for Anthropology with special focus on Africa at Goethe University of Frankfurt/M. His research interests are oriented towards material culture, consumption and the impact of globalization on non-western societies. He edited a book on “Consumption in Africa” (Lit, 2008) focussing on understandings of household economies in Africa. He participated in a research programme on globalization in Africa (2000 – 2007) investigating the many roles of “global goods” in West Africa.

He is speaker of the research training group “Value and Equivalency” at Goethe-University. In this context, he participated in the organization team for several exhibitions on “ambivalent valuations of things”, on “human action and materiality” etc. He recently initiated another research project dealing with the scientific benefits of digitized collections of objects. His focus is on the polyvalence of material culture in society. This applies for collections in particular as they quite often achieve a salient importance in fields significantly different from the initial motivations for collecting. Considering the frequent shifts of research paradigms with regard to collections, one can say that the surprise of unexpected scientific discovery is systematically built-in with such an endeavour as collecting things for scientific purposes.

Hahn's recent publications include an edited volume on the *Obstinacy of Things* (Neofelis 2015) and on *Marcel Mauss' writings on money* (Suhrkamp 2015). His last book length publication deals with the history of ethnographic collections in Germany and the mixed fate of exhibition principles (*Ethnologie und Weltkulturmuseum*, Vergangenheitsverlag 2017).

Suzana Milevska **(Politecnico di Milano):** **Shameful Objects, Apologizing** **Subjects: On participatory insti-** **tutional critique and productive** **shame**

It is urgent to discuss and challenge the systemic and structural conditions that motivated and enabled the museums and other institutions to collect and store objects charged with difficult historic and cultural background, both in terms of macrohistoric and microhistoric narratives. However, it is even more urgent to develop appropriate strategies that could address the contentiousness of such objects (or whole collections) with carefully drafted aims and projections of expected outcomes. Particularly important is the attempt to anticipate the effect that these strategies could have on the implicated communities from which these objects originated, or the institutions which collect and display them. One cannot ignore or circumvent the shameful objects in museum collections when dealing with these issues, but the question remains how to deal with them in a constructive way. The concept of “productive shame”, initially proposed by Paul Gilroy for the complex processes of coming to terms with a grim colonial and imperial past, is particularly relevant for addressing the questions such as: How can one deal with the personal and collective memories of “paralyzing guilt” after dreadful atrocities and genocides? How can such negative experiences be transformed into “productive shame” (not only for the perpetrators, but also for the victims and witnesses)? I want to argue that in order to accomplish the revelation and deconstruction of the museum structures and political conditions necessary for inducing collective affects of productive shame, the critical artistic discourses of institutional critique gradually shifted from individual artistic projects towards participatory and collaborative artistic practices prompts a unique cross-disciplinary inquiry into the productive potential of the affect of shame, apology, repatriation and restitution of unlawfully obtained objects, and other ways of distancing from the difficult past.

Suzana Milevska

is a visual culture theorist and curator from Macedonia. Her theoretical and curatorial interests include postcolonial critique of the hegemonic power regimes of representation, gender theory and feminism, participatory, collaborative and research-based art practices. Currently she is Principal Investigator at the Politecnico di Milano (Horizon 2020, TRACES). From 2013 to 2015, she was the Endowed Professor for Central and South European Art Histories at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and she taught at the Visual Culture Unite at the Technological University in Vienna. She was a professor of history and theory of art at the Faculty of Fine Arts – University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje and she initiated the Centre for Visual and Cultural Research at the Research Institute “Euro-Balkan”. Milevska was Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in Library of Congress (2004). She holds a PhD in Visual Cultures from Goldsmith’s College. Her curatorial project *The Renaming Machine* (2008 – 2011) addressed the politics of renaming, rewriting histories, and the overwriting memory in art and visual culture. Milevska initiated *Call the Witness*, a project focusing on contemporary Roma artists (included Roma Media Archive, exhibitions at BAK Utrecht, and the *Roma Pavilion*, 54 Venice Biennial, 2011) and curated the *Roma Protocol* (Austrian Parliament, Vienna). Milevska’s publications include *Gender Difference in the Balkans* (VDM Verlag, 2010), and the readers *The Renaming Machine: The Book* (P.A.R.A.SI.T.E. Institute, 2010), *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency* (Sternberg Press, 2016), *Inside Out – Critical Discourses concerning Institutions* (co-edited with Alenka Gregorič). In 2012, Milevska won the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory.

Derek R. Peterson (University of Michigan): The Uganda Museum and the History of Heritage

This lecture will concern the history of collecting at the Uganda Museum. The Museum, and the heritage industry more generally, has had a vital role to play in the history of governmentality in Uganda. In the early 20th century the Ugandan state used the Museum as an apparatus of colonial rule. In the museum's halls dangerous and upsetting objects were placed out of bounds, outside the public eye. After Uganda's independence in 1962 the Museum was, for a brief time, repurposed, and tasked with the work of recording the distance traveled between the colonial past and the bright future. Today, under the government of President Yoweri Museveni, heritage is a source of marketable value, and an array of entrepreneurs are producing heritage commodities. The incorporation of African cultural production is a welcome source of revenue, but it also encourages monopolist practices. The contemporary heritage economy has given kings, princes and other relics a central place in the marketing of cultural products. In this way the heritage economy poses a substantial challenge to the liberal promises of democracy.

Derek R. Peterson

is Professor of History and African Studies at the University of Michigan (USA). He is the author of two books, most recently *Ethnic Patriotism* and the *East African Revival* (2012), which won the Herskovits Prize of the African Studies Association. He has edited or co-edited seven books, including *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, Infrastructures* (2015). In 2016 Peterson was elected Fellow of the British Academy and awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in African Studies. In 2017 he was awarded the 'Genius' Fellowship of the MacArthur Foundation. He is currently writing a book about Uganda under the government of Idi Amin.

Mirjam Shatanawi (National Museum of World Cultures, The Netherlands): Europe and Islam: On the in-betweenness of collections

The point of departure of this paper is the idea of different types of museums, including the so-called universal museum, as a discursive chain. In other words: what goes in the glass case in one museum, goes out in another. In the 19th century, when museums transformed from multidisciplinary cabinets of curiosity into institutions that became more and more specialized, processes of inclusion and exclusion started to unfold. In the course of this development, western and non-western objects that once were exhibited together now became separated. Museums for western culture, among them museums of European art or antiquities and museums for non-western cultures, like Asian art museums and museums of ethnology, started to function as communicating vessels. In the Saidian sense, each type of museum was showing a self-image of Europe. This paper will examine this development and what it means for museums today. The main emphasis will be on Middle Eastern and Islamic collections. Made up of objects from 'in-between' regions, the destiny of these collections has illuminating stories to tell on how identity and culture are defined and negotiated.

Mirjam Shatanawi

is curator for the Middle Eastern and North African collections at the National Museum of World Cultures, The Netherlands. Among the exhibitions she (co-)curated are *The Sixties: A worldwide happening* (2015), *Sacred Places* (2014), *Escher meets Islamic Art* (2013), *Palestina 1948* (2008 – 2010), and *Urban Islam* (2003 – 2006). Her current research interests include the representation of Islam and Middle Eastern art and cultures in European museums. Her book *Islam at the Tropenmuseum* (Arnhem: LM Publishers, 2014) provides a historical analysis of 150 years of collecting Islamic artefacts at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam.

Raymond Silverman (Professor, History of Art, African Studies and Museum Studies, University of Michigan): Collaborative Futures: Museum, Community, Knowledge

What does it mean to collaborate, especially with source communities, particularly in the context of the museum? What are the social and political dynamics inherent in such collaborative museum work? If we think about exhibition as a process of translation, what is it that is being translated and how is it being translated? What are the challenges of exhibitionary translation and how might they be mitigated? Could such challenges perhaps be embraced to engender an appreciation for the complexities of cultural encounter in museums?

Drawing upon my experiences working with the citizens of Techiman, a community in central Ghana, to create a cultural center, this paper will consider collaborative strategies that require the sharing of curatorial authority and responsibility among those who represent and those who are represented. Such a model is predicated on the belief that there is a moral imperative to engage communities as co-authors in developing the narratives that are created for and exhibited in our museums. This is especially relevant for historically disenfranchised communities. I will introduce the concept of “processual museology.” It is a paradigm particularly applicable to institutions involved in collecting and exhibiting culture in which attention and value are given to “making” as an iterative process of translation and knowledge production. Ultimately, I will argue that we must embrace the social and political work that such collaborative undertakings entail as valued products of exhibition making.

Raymond Silverman

is Professor of History of Art, African Studies and Museum Studies at University of Michigan. As a historian of visual culture, his research and writing explore the historical and contemporary visual practices of Ethiopia and Ghana. He is particularly interested in the movement of ideas and objects through space and time and the ways in which the transfer of knowledge shapes societies. Silverman’s work over the last twenty years has focused on the visual culture of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. His books include *Ethiopia: Traditions of Creativity* (University of Washington Press, 1999) and *Painting Ethiopia: The Life and Work of Qes Adamu Tesfaw* (Fowler Museum, UCLA, 2005). He is currently wrapping up work on a monograph titled, *Icons of Devotion/Icons of Trade: Contemporary Painting and the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia*.

Silverman also works in the field of critical museum and heritage studies, exploring “museum culture” in Africa, specifically how local knowledge is translated in national and community-based cultural institutions. He recently edited a collection of essays on this theme, *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges* (Routledge, 2015), and is now editing a volume that examines the significance of national museums in/for contemporary Africa. In addition to academic projects, he has curated exhibitions, and is currently working on an exhibition of contemporary arts in metal for the Ghana National Museum. He also has been collaborating with colleagues in the city of Techiman, in central Ghana, to develop the community’s first cultural center.

Kavita Singh (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi): Remembering and Forgetting in the National Museum

This talk focuses on three National Museums of South Asia: The National Museum of Pakistan in Karachi, the National Museum of India in Delhi, and the National Museum of Bangladesh in Dhaka. Shortly after gaining independence from British colonialism in 1947, both Pakistan and India announced the founding of their National Museums at almost the same time. Some decades later, the National Museum of Bangladesh was founded in 1971 after the former East Pakistan became South Asia's newest sovereign state. The dates of the foundation of these museums, so close to the nations' attainment of independence or liberation, immediately suggest a close relationship between political sovereignty and national self-representation in the cultural sphere.

When South Asia was partitioned and re-partitioned into separate countries, it was inevitable that each new nation would look at its history afresh and reframe it in a way that was useful for the nation-building projects that lay ahead. It was inevitable too that a shared history would turn into a divided heritage. It is often said that heritage construction depends on the production of collective memory; but as we shall see, equally vital to this process is the production of collective amnesia. Nowhere was this more clearly visible than in the galleries of the respective National Museums in which a broadly similar corpus of objects was foregrounded or marginalized, displayed or relegated to the store, in service of newly-forged national narratives.

Kavita Singh

is Professor of Art History and Dean at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she teaches courses on the history of Indian painting and the history and politics of museums. She has published essays on issues of colonial history, repatriation, secularism and religiosity, fraught national identities, and the memorialization of difficult histories as they relate to museums in South Asia and beyond. She has also published on Indian painting. Her books include the edited and co-edited volumes *New Insights into Sikh Art* (Marg, 2003), *Influx: Contemporary Art in Asia* (Sage, 2013), *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia* (co-edited with Saloni Mathur, Routledge, 2014), *Real Birds in Imagined Gardens: Mughal Painting Between Persia and Europe* (Getty Research Institute, 2016), and *Museum Storage and Meaning: Tales from the Crypt* (co-edited with Mirjam Brusius, Routledge 2017). She has curated exhibitions at the San Diego Museum of Art, the Devi Art Foundation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the National Museum of India.

Miguel Tamen (University of Lisbon): More Trouble With ‘Tangible’

Virtually all curators, most museum studies practitioners, and many art historians appear to think nowadays that art consists in tangible, material objects collected or gathered in special places through the agency of special people such as essentially curators. Much talk of materiality follows. However, they also feel reluctant to limit the kinds of things that can be collected or gathered like that, let alone to imagine that those special people can be dispensed with.

I will argue that there are important tensions between these various beliefs. I will claim namely that (i) the difference between collecting tangible and intangible objects is immaterial; that there is (ii) a connection between believing that curators are necessary and believing that art is conceptual; and that (iii) we should pay less attention to how we talk about art.

Miguel Tamen

(PhD, University of Minnesota, 1989) is Professor of Literary Theory at the University of Lisbon, where he co-founded the Program in Literary Theory, which he chaired for many years. He has also held visiting appointments at Stanford University and, again for many years, at the University of Chicago; and most recently an endowed visiting chair at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. He was a senior fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center and at the National Humanities Center. He is the author of nine books, among which *The Matter of the Facts* (Stanford UP, 2000), *Friends of Interpretable Objects* (Harvard UP, 2001), and *What Art Is Like, in Constant Reference to the Alice Books* (Harvard UP, 2012). He is currently finishing a book on association and the mind.

Andrea Witcomb (Deakin University, Melbourne): Engaging with cultural diversity as lived experience – the importance of place as a frame for exhibition seeking to engage with cross-cultural encounters in Australian museums.

The representation of cultural diversity in Australian museums is almost as old as the introduction of social history in the 1970s. By 1984, social history exhibitions were beginning to pick up on the theme of cultural diversity by focusing in particular on the contributions to Australia by post-war migrants. Coming after a period in which the official policy was one in which migrants were expected to ‘assimilate’ into the dominant culture, many of these exhibitions were concerned with identifying the contributions the various ethnic groups had made to ‘Australian’ culture. This meant that the concern was with valuing what made these groups different from one another and how those differences had ‘enriched’ Australian culture. In this presentation, I wish to explore the development of these representations through another focus – that of place. A focus on place, I want to suggest, enables an inquiry that is interested in cross-cultural relations rather than difference per se. What emerges is a concern with encounters rather than the maintenance of difference which, as Ghassan Hage points out, always runs the risk of maintaining existing social relations in which being different is to be outside of the dominant group. In focusing on place as a framework through which multiculturalism has also been represented in Australian museum exhibitions, I am interested in asking how this frame has helped to redefine relations between us and them, contributing to our understanding of Australian society as multicultural. To do so, I will look in some detail at three key exhibitions that can illustrate the ways in which we have dealt with cross cultural encounters in Australian cities – Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney which developed an exhibition on Sydney in 1984 which featured various places run by post-war migrants as part of the social fabric of Sydney, Jews and Italians in Carlton – an inner city suburb of Melbourne – which was a collaboration in 1992 between Museum Victoria, Museo Italiano and the Jewish Museum in Melbourne, and Migration Memories, a temporary exhibition at the National Museum of Australia that looked at

Notes

experiences of migration in two regional towns – Robinvale and Lightning Ridge. My analysis will involve paying particular attention to issues of voice – who is speaking, for whom and how – as well as how the visitor is addressed; how social interactions between different groups are represented; and how cultural diversity is understood as constituting place and therefore identity. One of my concerns is in finding out whether or not a focus on place has helped to engage with lived experiences of cross-cultural encounters, thus helping in order to shift debate beyond an exclusive concern with matters of inclusion and towards what it means to live with difference.

Andrea Witcomb

is Professor in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies at Deakin University, Australia. Her work engages with the ways in which museums and heritage sites interpret difficult histories and facilitate cross-cultural encounters. Her books include *Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (Routledge 2003) and, with Kylie Message (eds.) *Museum Theory* as part of the 2015 Wiley Blackwell *Handbooks of Museum Studies* edited by Sharon MacDonald and Helen Rees-Leahy. Andrea is in the midst of writing up a number of publications from an Australian Research Council funded project she led on *Collecting institutions, cultural diversity and the making of citizenship in Australia since the 1970s*. She is also co-leading, with Alistair Patterson, a project on the history of collecting practices in Western Australia called *Collecting the West: How collections created Western Australia*.

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