

Museology as a Pedagogy for Heritage

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Presentation

This essay presents some parameters for the study of Museology and its respective contribution for the constitution of preservationist processes, biased towards heritage education.

From the decoding of some parameters that delimit this applied discipline's action and reflection field, the text presents some paradigms, which have stimulated its epistemological construction and have guided its social functions.

These paradigms are considered responsible for a new methodological order within the scope of the museum and, further, for the new commitments that these institutions have taken up.

Museology's Theoretical-Methodological Principles:

A few arguments

Museology has emerged and has been organized as an area of knowledge, precisely to frame the technical, theoretical and methodological aspects regarding the constitution, implementation and evaluation of the processes that societies establish for the selection, treatment and diffusion of memory indicators. It is, therefore, one of the areas of knowledge that deals with the framing of heritage property, and their professionals are memory education agents.

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The museological framing format – the museum / museological processes – in its turn, has a history that, on being unveiled, has contributed for the comprehension of the mentalities of the agents mentioned above, as well as has taken up the decoding of the nature of this phenomenon and the corresponding technical demands.

Museology, in its interdisciplinary dynamics, has collaborated in the museums' refinement of their representation forms and in their establishment as places of contestation and cultural negotiation¹.

Museums are not the storehouse of reality, nor places of old and lifeless things, as well as not temples for the consecration of a few individuals. The museological institutions are neither an entrepreneurial business nor a school, neither a recreational club nor church. However, the museological processes feature characteristics that may be confused with these previous approaches, but they also feature characteristics that allow delimitations of its constitutive aspects, its forms of action and its social functions.

Despite some stumbling blocks, there is a growing awareness, even in Brazil², that the museological institutions play a relevant role in contemporary society and that, for the performing of its basic functions, they need technical support and methodological procedures adequate to the challenges they face.

Museology can be seen to feature an analyses trajectory that would place it amidst the applied disciplines. It is, therefore, an area of knowledge that establishes the cognitive and affective links between heritage references and the different segments of contemporary society.³

From the definition minted by Gregorová (1980), reworked by Zbynek Stranský (1980) and Waldisa Rússio Camargo Guarnieri

(1981), and systematically appropriated by diverse specialists, one can say that the interest of this area of knowledge is geared towards a fact that has concrete existence: the study of the relation of humanity with its reality. However, it has become necessary to delimit this study in relation to humanity with its heritage universe, that is: a perspective cut out from reality, a selective framing of reality and a preservationist itinerary.

This delimitation is not only formal, but, on the contrary, it guides museology's *raison d'être* and indicates, at the same time, its universe of scientific problem framing.

In this way, this discipline's great concern is geared towards two problems. On the one hand, the need to identify and understand humanity's individual/collective behaviour in the course of time, in face of his or her heritage; and, on the other hand, to develop the processes in order to allow, from this relationship, heritage to be transformed into inheritance, and this one, in its turn, to contribute to the necessary construction of identities (individual and/or collective).

Considering that heritage is a set of property identified by Man from his or her relationship with the Environment and with other humans, as well as the very interpretation exerted out of such relations, one finds out that, at first, the museological universe is infinite. Next, it is possible to separate Museology's specific interest target and understand that diverse branches of knowledge are already interested in the other aspects.

It is noticeable, then, that although this phenomenon takes up many formats, from collectionism to the museums, from these to the ecomuseums, it is possible to detect the continuity of the same phenomenon; humanity elects facets (material and immaterial) of its life universe and preserves it to perpetuate it. This human attitude that

originates collections and finds in the museums its great institutional heirs, is Museology's *raison d'être*.

From the point of view of a museological gaze aware of the contemporary Museology trends, it is possible to state that this applied discipline has been interested in the understanding of the relationships between societies and heritage, as well as that its application propitiates the transformation of heritage references into cultural inheritance. The different museological thinking trends (MENSCH, 1994 and FATTOUH & SIMEON, 1997) indicate that the paradigms of this area of knowledge today touch experimentation and the analyses about the relations that are established between Man (the different segments of societies) and the Object (from the collections to the diverse memory indicators), within a Scenario (museum space), as defined by Waldisa Rússio Guarnieri (op. cit., 1981).

This disciplinary vocation has been responsible for ruptures in the museums' theoretical-methodological universe, but, equally, has supported the continuity of consecrated museological models⁵. On the one hand, the ruptures have been responsible for the emergence of new museum forms that widen the perspective of museological action, and on the other, the maintenance of traditional forms has driven stimulating institutional revitalisation processes.

In one way or another, and through different paths, both ruptures and changes have contributed to the consolidation of Museology and have allowed for the multiplication and the widening of the museum action (as preservationist, communicational and educational processes). It is worth highlighting that, for the different museological process models, two structuring procedures bases prevail. At first, the safeguarding priorities emerge (conservation of the materiality of heritage property and the management of the corresponding information) and, as a consequence, there emerges the

communication impositions (exhibition and educational action). The basic operatory chain of such processes can be applied to the different models, with distinct arguments and methodologies. While the safeguard procedures render evident the selective aspects in relation to the whole of the heritage property, the communication procedures explicit the interpretative options regarding the cultural/memory indicators/collections references.

There rests the first great problem regarding the museums' preservationist role, and, by consequence, also an issue for the mental organisation of museological thinking, that is: the need to tie up with more solid links the relations between the heritage universe and that which is today shared as cultural inheritance and that will be carried into the future.

In this sense, Museology has conceptually advanced in the last few decades. It suffice to mention the considerations on Community Heritage⁶ and Integral Heritage⁷ that has pointed to the museums' extramural responsibilities, or, further, to the notion of Heritage Reference⁸ taking up the place of the exhausted Collections, and, in this way, allowing for an objective future for the preservation of material culture and of the specimens from nature, at least as far as it regards the processes of incorporation into the museum.

However, the gap between these conceptual advances and the lack of methods and techniques capable of guiding these new perspectives is perceptible. Thus, the second problem related to the theme is identified: the urge in establishing new parameters for professional training and continuing professional development of those who already participate in museological processes.

The Operatory Chain of Museological Procedures: a few principles

One of the possibilities for the comprehension of the procedures' operatory chain is accepting that Museology is linked to the "memory management" (MENESES, 1992) and that, in this sense, it must be recognised that this management presupposes a new cultural and educational work, which attributes to heritage new uses and new meanings. Therefore, the traditionally established museums around collections must rely on professionals able to fulfil their roles, that is: understand that the object is an information support and therefore it should be preserved alongside other information means.

Thus, the basic activities linked to the collection, conservation, documentation, storage, exhibition, cultural-educational action and evaluation must be related to two great blocks, mentioned above: safeguard and communication of memory indicators. The performance of these two blocks is linked to ethical problems regarding the use of patrimonial inheritance, to issues of how a society tackles and establishes a dialogue with its cultural traces – even if the museums are universal - and, above all, linked to the comprehension of the educational vocation of all the museum tasks. It is, therefore, the imposition and the establishing of information management criteria contained in the museum intervention universe, of interpretation of what is being the target of such management, and, in special, of the proposition of the museological processes as pedagogical actions that indicate and delimit the readings about heritage.

The identification and delimitation of the range area of museological thinking and practice, submitted to the preservationist set of problems, indicate the need for mentally living together with the

issues linked to the signs, images and symbols, that is: the recognition, interpretation and diffusion of the meanings and significations of the memory indicators. One enters, therefore, the documental and the witness character fields of the heritage segments that are the targets of the musealisation.

It is recognised that, however, the museological intervention corresponds to a well-delimited context within the heritage universe: that from which emerge the objects and the artefacts. The notion of preservation as the structuring basis for museological thinking, is permeated by problems linked to the “things” made or transformed by humanity. And... “Object is all that exists outside Man, here considered as an unfinished being, a process. This unfinished being, this process conditioned by its environment, capable of creating, perceives the object existing outside himself; not only perceives, but also gives it a function, changes its form and nature, creates artefacts”. (GUARNIERI, 1990, p.8).

Museology is concerned, therefore, in managing and conserving this information (and in organising new information manners), by means of the elaboration of exhibition discourses and pedagogical strategies. The mental structures that consolidate this discipline interact with preservationist ideas and concepts in a very singular way. The safeguard and communication processes, inherent to the incorporation into the museum process, particularise museology’s preservationist focus, imprinting their own character and dynamics.

According to Shanks and Tilley (1987), the process of incorporation into the museum is the elaboration of an aesthetic system for the creation of meanings. This definition verticalises another aspect of museological discipline: this epistemological universe is guided by the notion of preservation, is organised by its

inherent characteristics to the management and administration of memory, but deals, specifically, with the consolidation of a communication phenomenon. This, in its turn, regards to the elaboration of experiments and its theoretical construction features an effective dependence of practical experimentation. In this way, another of Museology's characteristics emerge: its identity of applied discipline that also features the potential for the creation of values and meanings.

However, these actions' generator and basic principle is preservationist⁹. Memory indicators and cultural references are selected and elected for perpetuation. This property is taken care of for its maintenance. Corresponding documents are organised for the control of what is being conserved, and, finally, what has been preserved is exhibited and one educates by means of what has been kept, with the aim of awakening societies' sensitivities for new preservationist action, from the interpretative processes regarding cultural heritage.

These processes approximate, in a singular way, the interpreted objects to the interpreting gazes, and the museums, in this way, have the potentiality of transforming evidence-objects into dialogue objects.

The museological fact or Museology's object of study, have widened its horizons and changed its heritage framing forms, allowing for the experimentation of different work methodologies. However, these diversified forms and different procedures feature a common root: the socio-cultural reasons for incorporation into the museum.

The processes of incorporation into the museum are increasingly more elaborated and sophisticated, and can be understood by the needs that individuals and groups have in overcoming human transience. Museological studies seek to frame, on the one hand, the

investigations about the very essence of its phenomena and, on the other, seek to understand its socio-cultural intersections. In a wider universe, the discussions that have sparked interest of the museological area in the last few decades trespass all the issues inherent to the changes involving globalisation; they touch on problems pertinent to the memory built by museums, regarding the territories' occupation, appropriation and transformation; and seek to understand the unavoidable changes originating in the use of new technologies. Above all, Museology has given priority to the analyses of the place of the museum and of museological processes in this juncture, paying attention to the different characteristics of the distinct regions and heritage vectors.

The specialised bibliography and the set of themes of academic meetings of this area has demonstrated, as we pointed out, not only this interest, but, above all, the results from these confrontations. The museums have re-evaluated their forms and contents, have sought an approximation with the private enterprise, and are not intimidated in the moment of approaching social problems and cultural traumas of a collectivity anymore, as well as they seek to understand the expectations of different segments of society.

Despite all criticism, confrontations and discontinuities, museological processes have overcome these challenges. It is possible to state that, today, museums in all regions of the world organise grounded on two vectors. In the first vector are the institutions that deal with humanity's progresses, the valorisation of human action in the diverse areas. The other vector groups the museums that document and stand witness to humanity's horrors and societies' dramatic moments. In both vectors there is space for reflection, for the consequent heritage education and, above all, for the expansion of the processes of incorporation into the museums. However, the genesis of

such processes rests in fact on the museological fact, that, in its turn, must be conceived, experimented and evaluated from a process point of view.

It is appropriate to record that, in this way, the museological reference frame is established. The processes of incorporation into the museum (the systemic chaining of museological facts) are responsible for the awareness of the heritage's existence, taking it up as a set of signs that allow the identification of the individual in relation to itself and to the group to which it belongs, in time and space. These processes emerge from information, as well as treating and generating information, driving knowledge (affective/cognitive), the record of what is apprehended (sensation/image/idea) and the education of memory (systematisation of ideas and images), aiming the perception, the living together and the qualified use of heritage, in view of its valorisation and projection as cultural inheritance.

The museological fact evolves from memory (references/indicators) and in a process perspective collaborates with its protection and dissemination, and, thus, with its preservation. Museality is, therefore, the genesis of the museological fact that, in its turn, is the essential cell for heritage preservation regarding the objects, and collections.

For Stranský (op. cit., 1980), "...Museology is a distinct scientific discipline, whose object of knowledge is a specific relationship of Man with reality, expressed objectively in various museum forms in the course of History, and that are an expression and a partial reflection of memory systems. This distinct nature of Museology is that of a social science; it is linked to the sphere of the scientific disciplines of memory documentation, and that contributes to the comprehension of societies."

The justifications for museology's existence as an autonomous area of knowledge are always noble, for they regard the human trajectory, they interact with the environment, they feature links with Power, they contribute to the construction of identities, among many other aspects. One must not forget, also, that Museology, impregnated by the museum universe, maintains very close links with other scientific areas, as is the case of Natural History, Archaeology, Ethnology, History etc. Not to mention, evidently, its complicity with Art.

The processes of incorporation into the museum, seen from the central axis of the construction of this area of knowledge contribute to the selection, triage, organisation and conservation of the documental, testimonial and authentic nature imprinted on objects incorporated into the museum. They also build new values and meaning for these objects, by means of the elaboration of exhibitions and cultural and educational actions. In this moment, Museology's complicity with the areas of knowledge linked to the study of heritage property is unveiled, but, above all, its inherent submission to ideological issues. Another relevant aspect of its disciplinary edification also emerges: problems of special and particular order (museological text and context) impose, very clearly, on the general and universal postulates (General Museology).

It is appropriate to stress that, in the perspective of the museological studies pointed previously by Peter Van Mensch (op. cit., 1994), two major lines of approach can be detected. On the one side, the pragmatic-institutional definitions cover the whole of the mental universe, and, on the other, the concerns are attached to the understanding of the relations between humanity and object. This dichotomy of lines of thought has also demonstrated that Museology has been structured from distinct idea systems.

This way, and slowly, this area has been organising its mental structures' hierarchy, overcoming paradigms and facing the new challenges. Thus emerge issues inherent to the limits and reciprocities of this area with other scientific domains, as well as movements by intellectuals who point towards a New Museology.

The traditional museum phenomena correspond to the institutionally structured museums, which act from constituted collections and exert its social role through its scientific production and its communicational and educational intervention formats. In their turn, the new processes, which seek to act in extramural spaces, turn towards the community work perspectives.

This is a considerable widening of the epistemological horizons, within the same universe of concern, imposing, in this way, adequate methodologies.

Final Considerations

These museological studies have collaborated for the museums to take up new sets of arguments in order to guarantee their survival. Alongside its "social experimentation laboratory" characteristics, as has preached **George-Henri Rivière**¹⁰ in the 1970's; or the "mirror where society knows itself", in the words of **Hughes de Varine-Bohan** in the 1980's; the museological institutions have reached the end of the 20th Century as veritable trenches of appreciation and interpretation of reality, demanding and allowing a special "fruition time", which is not to be confused with the other times of contemporary communication means.

The organisation of Museology as an autonomous disciplinary area has already been proposed and decoded, and, in the discussion's present stage, can be presented from the following elements:

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- Postulates that map out the reciprocities between the object of study and the process perspectives;
 - Basic flowchart regarding the operatory chain of technical procedures and interdisciplinary actions;
 - Work instruments such as control schemes, technical procedure manuals, diagnosis proposals, among others;
 - Ethics code (regarding the museums, the associations and professional conduct);
 - Museological institutions rules and regulations;
 - Hierarchy of thought established and organised within a referential framework.

This set of academic reflections, documents and production, allows the consideration that museums are in process, and that the museological processes depend on the methodological approaches in order to face the necessary transformations, as well as the proliferation of specialised training courses in order for the perspectives of ruptures and transformations to be widened.

Therefore, Museology depends on the university space regarding the improvement of the new generations' critical capacity and, in particular, of the "arena" and "forum" debate perspectives particular to those spaces. The education for memory can be carried out from museological procedures and those, can collaborate, in a singular way, with the opening of routes for the pursuit of heritage abandonment, bringing closer the excluded and the forgotten.

Thus, museological discipline must be seen as a pedagogy that contributes, specially, to the qualified use of heritage and a preservationist living together with heritage references.

Notes

1- The consideration that the museum has undergone profound changes has been the central theme for a large section of contemporary intellectual production. For further details, *vide*, among many others, Bruno (1997), Chagas (1999), Hainard (1984), Meneses (1992), Moutinho (1989), Santos (1999).

Publications that have concentrated efforts on the issues inherent to museological changes: “Cadernos de Sociomuseologia”, issued by Socio-museology Study Centre of the Humanities and Technology Lusophone University (Lisbon/Portugal), which is about to reach its 20th issue, as well as the Brazilian publications “Cadernos de Ensaio” and “Cadernos Museológicos” (both issued by the Ministry of Culture) and the “Anais dos Encontros Museus Casa” by Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, also issued by the Ministry of Culture. Equally relevant to the theme is the publication “Publics et Musées”, by Direction des Musées de France (Paris). It should also be mentioned that other periodicals not specialised only in Museology have published articles that discuss these changes and museological ruptures such, as for instance, the Revista do Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia and the Anais do Museu Paulista (both published by São Paulo University - USP), Ciência em Museus (CNPq), Revista de Museologia (FESP), Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia (UNICAMP), Le Debat (Gallimard / France), among others.

It is important to record that these publications represent an editorial effort of the decades of 1980's and 1990's.

2- In this sense, it is appropriate to recall the speeches, orally delivered or published, by Maurício Segall and Waldisa Rússio Camargo Guarnieri, who always indicate the political –ideological bias of the museum actions.

3- There is accord among theoreticians on the applied character of this discipline.

4- It is appropriate to highlight that my academic interest has been established, on the one hand, around the comprehension of the constitutive aspects of museological phenomenon, and, on the other hand, the experimentation of work methodological models.

5- Museological model is understood as the compatibility (conceptual and methodological) between the vertices of the triangle that defines the museological fact as museology's object of study.

6- Community Heritage is understood as the set of property shared by a group of people within a delimited space and in the course of time, whose preservation is important to the cultural identity of the group.

7- Integral Heritage is understood as the set of property that must be preserved for the identity and integrity of the living beings.

8- Heritage Reference: element extracted from the heritage universe, significant in relation to a bigger group, and whose preservation can represent the universe referred to.

9- In several texts on Museology one observes that the idea of preservation is presented in a synthetic way, corresponding only to the conservation actions of cultural references and collections. Preservation is understood as the set of safeguard and communication actions and their respective socio-cultural insertions, regarding the awareness about heritage.

10 - Georges-Henri Rivière was one of the most expressive professionals of Museology's new thinking and new practices. The approximation with the distinct communities in urban territories and the ecomuseological experiences are some of his theoretical-methodological pursuits. Hughes de Varine-Bohan, equally, has had

and still holds a central role, in special because of his approaches on cultural animation as a political strategy for the routes leading to the community's quality of life.

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