



Brief Analysis On The History Of The Museum And The Possible Nonwhite Museum

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ABSTRACT

The essay deals with the history of the museum in order to understand its role in the current time and, this way, point to a possible shift to become a more egalitarian institution. In order to do so ideas of Pierre Bourdieu about Habitus are briefly analyzed, mainly within the frame of an understanding of the origin of the museums. Moreover aspects that shape our understanding of the museum are presented in the following chapters such as its origin by the hand of what it meant circulation inside this institution and how this evolved to both a not representative institution and thus to the search for egalitarian conditions. This way the essay proposes an approach to the museum as a factor in the consolidation of a national identity, to finally address current examples and challenges of the museum in our time. Lastly the essay discusses a possible “nonwhite museum” in our time.

Key Words: Museum. History. Institutional Critique. Nonwhite Museum.

RESUMO

O ensaio discute a história do museu com o objetivo de entender sua função no tempo atual, e assim entrever uma possível mudança para se tornar uma instituição mais inclusiva. Para tanto, as ideias de Pierre Bourdieu sobre o Habitus são brevemente analisadas, principalmente no contexto de uma compreensão da origem dos museus. Além disso, os aspectos que moldam nossa compreensão do museu são apresentados nos capítulos seguintes, como sua origem pela mão do que significava circulação dentro desta instituição e como isso evoluiu para uma instituição não representativa e, portanto, para a busca de condições igualitárias. Desta forma, o ensaio propõe uma abordagem ao museu como um fator na consolidação de uma identidade nacional, para finalmente abordar exemplos e desafios atuais do museu em nosso tempo. Por fim, o ensaio discute um possível “museu não branco” em nosso tempo.

Palavras-chave: Museu. História. Crítica Institucional. Museu Não Branco.

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF HISTORICAL ASPECTS

As discussed by Bourdieu (1984, p. 166), the habitus or system of dispositions is the shape of both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification “*principium divisionis*” of these practices. Such habitus is not always conscious and is thus beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will. (BOURDIEU, 2010)

On the other hand the museum as an institution was precisely built upon such habitus from the perspective of the generative principle of classifiable judgments as this paper aims to briefly reflect on. However, in spite of the expectation on the habitus to change with time, Bourdieu understood it as immutable, presupposing the ideology of the dominant to be the dominant ideology, and thus limiting art to the protection of the form and concepts of the aesthetic needs of the Bourgeoisie. (KASTNER, 2008)

Our examination on the habitus, upon which to a certain extent the museum emerged, considers Gramsci’s statement that such habitus can eventually be influenced by artistic works and other cultural productions that can also (but are not predestined to) participate in the penetration of recalcitrant people. (KASTNER, 2008)

This permeation may well be regarded as part of the symbolic work, which for Bourdieu (2010), is a prerequisite for a transformation of symbolic power relations.

As well as although the institution of the museum has changed its habitus and thus the habitus in the art consumption of its public, this pace results slower when compared to the speed of change of the societies they refer to. And this way we can talk about an institutionalized censorship in face of multiculturalism that impedes an appropriate consolidation of a national identity which considers migration as part of its foundation.

In order to be able to question the impossibility of change of the artistic institution is necessary an examination of aspects such history, policies, and thus acquisitions and exhibitions.

In this paper we will however focus on the general aspects that may have constituted what seems to be impossible to achieve, this is, a change of institutions with a tumultuous history, to which we raise the fundamental question in face of the cause of disregard of the globally blooming post colonial studies and theories since the 20th century.

What is equal to say that in spite of a bias of the museum of shaping dominant ideologies we aim to support the also existing will of a more inclusive museum.

This effort is necessary as it constitutes the symbolic value of a so-called nation, which can be inferred from the fact that artworks produce, together with meaning, value, an action that occurs now not within determined social fractions that either adopt or reject the symbolic and material value of artistic production but as a task of the museum.

It is in face of this that the museum is at the same the result of the habitus, understood as immutable satisfaction of the demand of the dominant ideology, as it is agency, this is, production of habitus. This is a consequence of the gradual but nevertheless turbulent opening of the museum's doors since modernity and aims to

answer the question who defines not only what art is but what capital and symbolic value certain artifacts represent at the scale of a nation.

It is within the frame of the museum that the habitus is imprinted in the shape of its reserved right, or its historical agency, of its practice on censorship, and off course this opposes to concepts such as visibilization practiced before art pieces and thus artists, as well as ultimately before its public.

In this respect cultural policies have been adapted to the different roles the museum has been historically called to play, which will be addressed in more detail in a following chapter.

Historical transformations of the museums call for a reflection on a strengthened presence of the museum as it represents a lively room for debate of our time, which simultaneously poses not minor difficulties in the practicalities of the functioning of the artistic institution, which in the present represent a death sentence of museums' mere existence.

It is our objective to address these topics from the point of view of the historical emergence of the museum as well as from the perspective of the role of the museum in the current time.

We aim to inquire how Bourdieu's ideas of the habitus practiced by the different social fractions' art consumption (*Distinction*, 1979) can be reverted within the frame of the artistic institution in the shape of the museum, at the same time that we will thus apply this analysis to the examination with respect to the marking absence in museums of artworks from artists of outside of the center.

2 ORIGINS OF THE MUSEUM

The origins of the museum could be both interpreted as the development of the classificatory human capacity by the hand of the will for possessing rare and inspiring objects.

In this respect Marx writes that "man is initially posited as a private property owner, i.e., an exclusive owner whose exclusive ownership

permits him both to preserve his personality and to distinguish himself from other men, as well as relate to them”. For Marx ([1833–1834?] apud BOURDIEU, 2010, p. 277) “private property is man’s personal, distinguishing and hence essential existence”.

Tracing in the past, the principle of the museum of being the place dedicated to exhibiting art, memories of the first objects to be installed inside the museum, date from a first wave in the 15th and 16th century, where art and miracle chambers were founded as very early forms of the museum in the centers of early-modern Europe. Here, objects of different origin and purpose such as antiques, books, natural materials, curiosities and exotic or technical devices were presented, as well as works of art were among them. (BAUR, [2010] apud BREUER, 2012)

This could even mean that the origins of the museum were marked by the finding and exhibiting of objects, both representative and foreign to the immediate culture where they were presented. This way we can infer that it also was upon the fascination for the exotic that the museum first emerged.

One of the reasons why collections came into being and why new collections emerged was the ever-evolving division and ordering of exhibits, which crystallized in more and more special collections, designed according to a certain criteria. The museum evolved hand in hand with curatorial transformations defined by the time in terms of a shift from the universal scholar to the specialist scientist. This way the all-encompassing miracle chamber lost increasingly importance and most of the art chambers were integrated into museum complexes or its artifacts were divided into different collections and special museums. (KÖNIG, LEIN; WALZ, [2000] apud HERZIG, 2010) It is from this process of emergence of the museum as an institution that the institutionalization of the works of art origins.

From this institutionalization three purposes of the museum can be traced that will be briefly analyze as a way to understand the

complex role that museums are called to play. These topics are: public circulation in museums, consolidation of a national identity and the encounter of the present time with history.

3 PUBLIC CIRCULATION IN MUSEUMS

A public circulation as in today's museum already took place in early private collections and art chambers of the fifteenth century. However, the admission was only allowed to a limited number of visitors and selected persons; the entrance fee was usually paid in the form of a gift that represented a contribution to the completion of the collection and the decision regarding the access to a collection and which exhibits were allowed to the visitor, was reserved to the collector.

In addition to private art tours, some public houses and public visits in some private houses took also place. For instance, Pope Sixtus IV (1414–1484) regularly invited Roman visitors to his collection of antiquities on the Capitol in 1471, which inspired many of the collectors of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in the following centuries, who guided art lovers through their intimate, small museums. (MARX; REHBERG, [2006] apud HERZIG, 2010)

However, a general opening of aristocratic art collections, libraries and gardens did not begin until the second half of the fifteenth century, where also the universities began to develop own collections for the purpose of research and science.

The first public museum opened around 1661, as an initiative of the University of Basel at the north of the Alps, which acquiring the *Amerbach Collection* with a large number of paintings, drawings, engravings, coins and antique rarities offered to the viewer in Basel for the first time a comprehensive insight into art. (GROTE, [1994] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 53)

Moreover, in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries extensive private collections were established in most of the European dynasties (DONATH, [1911] apud HERZIG, 2010) which led to a second

museum boom in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century, and whose origins were the gradual opening of private, mostly princely collections. (BREUER, 2012)

The history of the museum is marked by the gradual opening of the museum's walls meaning this a transformation of princely collections to the modern and public museum. The museum was and is subject to a constant change and these dynamics are reflected in history. (RAFFLER; FLUEGEL, [2007] apud BREUER, 2012, p. 59) Its transformations are interpreted as a mirror of a nation and from a symbolic perspective it is from this arena that the consolidation of a national identity takes place.

On the other hand, the creation of a separate area for public art appreciation strengthened the belief in the autonomy of art. (GROTE, [1994] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 56) But this autonomy had nothing to do with the one that Theodor Adorno thought, as for Adorno the place of art works as its own and not the place of art in relation to any social function, that is, not inside a Museum as a commodity. It is in light of this that Adorno (1970) conceived the autonomy of art as a utopia, considering the fact of the appreciation of artworks inside a museum as the result of the dynamics of a questionable culture industry.

Nevertheless, the public approach to art facilitated a different kind of autonomy as art gained a new meaning regardless of its social, political or religious function and the museum took on new tasks and developed as a source of pleasure and education. (GROTE, [1994] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 56) Or as Ernst Ulrich Grosse analyzes already in 1902, a public art collection can serve essentially three different purposes: an aesthetic, regarding the simple appreciation of art; a practical, in face of the stimulation and education of artists and craftsmen; and a theoretical, before the scientific research and orientation. However, as these various purposes require very different means, some of which are quite opposite, no museum can at the same time and to an equal degree serve them

all, and it is therefore necessary to make a choice between them. (GROSSE, [1902] apud HERZIG, 2010)

For the present time, the relation between museum and public is not cloudless. The museum selects through social barriers, through design and conception of the course and viewing direction, thanks to which the length of stay of the visitor is determined. Similarly too much restricted scope and lack of accessibility hinder individual access to the work of art. (BREUER, 2012) In the same direction, Pierre Bourdieu dealt with the social conditionality of the consumption of culture and the museum in his research. In the 1960s, Bourdieu's first visitor surveys show how the museum atmosphere intimidates unskilled visitors.

In the current time, *The British Cultural Diversity Group Studies* examined the reasons why people with migrational background as well as people belonging to minorities were the last likelihood to visit a museum in the present time and found that Minority groups regarded exhibitions and programs as devoted to white culture; "they found staff to be cold, distant, and intimidating; as well as the composition of museum staff and boards of directors was unrepresentative of minority groups". (KOTLER, N.; KOTLER, P.; KOTLER, W., 2008, p. 169)

This is as well affirmed by Andrea Fraser (2008) as she recognizes how the museums far from becoming less elitist have become vehicles for the mass-marketing of elite tastes and practices. For Fraser a discussion around positions like inside and outside, public and private, elitism and populism might assign political value to certain conditions which often "fails to account for the underlying distributions of power that are reproduced even as conditions change and they thus end up serving to legitimate that reproduction". (FRASER, 2008, p. 415)

An example of this is the enormous expansion of museum audiences, that are celebrated under the banner of populism, but that as a consequence influenced the continuous rise of entrance fees,

excluding more and more lower-income visitors and the creation of new forms of elite participation within increasingly differentiated hierarchies of membership, viewings, galas, the exclusivity of which is broadly advertised in fashion magazines and society pages. (Ibid)

However, the nature of the museum has changed drastically since the 19th century. Until well into the 19th century the museum was an institution of connoisseurs for connoisseurs, members of a social elite for the very elite; the objects were valuable, spectacular and well preserved; the presentation was probably illuminated, sensibly arranged but sober. In the 19th century, the situation began to become more confusing, followed by reforms, such as the extension of the opening hours in favor of the working population –a development that was accompanied by fierce debates, in which the scenario of a storming of the museum temples by uncivilized peoples was regularly invoked. (BAUR; BENNETT, [2010] apud BREUER, 2012, p. 60)

This exemplifies the museum as mirror of a nation; the spot where social and symbolic struggles take place constituting thus an adequate arena to analyze social process and subsequently a social space from where it is possible to impact society at large.

4 CONSOLIDATION OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY

The presence of museums in the centers of early modern Europe interplayed the consolidation of a national identity. This is, they constitute a consequence as well as play an active role in the symbolic production of the national identity. However, this feature should be practically further approached in order to understand the contemporary production of the notion of nation, moreover one against a nationalism akin to superiority, racism and sectarianism.²

.....
2 Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers (1972)

At the end of the 18th century, the Louvre was erected in Paris, which like no other, represents a transformation of princely collections and the historical development of the modern and public museum. On decree of the National Assembly, as a sign of the revolution, the former city palace of the French kings opened its doors on August 10, 1793, and presented its collection to a larger audience for the first time. (BREUER, 2012)

The opening of the private art collections, which had been held to this time, aroused an immense interest in art and widened the opportunity to create new values among the population.

It is for this reason that the demand for art and education from the bourgeoisie inspired Napoleon's government to use art as a political instrument: the depictions of Jacques Louis David (1748–1825) and others were for instance propaganda instrumentalized in order to glorify the emperor, at the same time that they constituted a medium to represent the nation and offered learning material and source of knowledge for the formation of the population. (WOLFF, [2005] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 54)

On the other hand, the cultural policy after the example of Louis XIV (1638–1715) became a guide for many sovereign personalities, such as Napoleon's collectivist activity or Hitler's dream of a *Reichsmuseum*. (WOLFF, [2005] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 95)

The museum's concept of a Global Museum developed by Napoleon attempted to unite the totality of knowledge under one roof and thus to free art from the tyranny of the rich. The fact that art was a continuation of the privileges of the upper classes was hold accountable, taken over by the will of benefit for the public. However, in the name of the nation, Napoleon hold the growing social claim of the right to public approach to art as a justification for rigorous art raids across Europe. (WOLFF, [2005] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 54) For the *Musée Napoléon* collections were confiscated, works from occupied countries were transferred and nationalized. The goal of liberating art and creating the institution of the museum did not

stop even in face of the goods of the church. In 1789 the nationalization of ecclesiastical art was adopted in a national assembly. Around 700 monasteries were dissolved and their art objects handed over to the museum. The parts of the Napoleonic collection, which have remained in French nationality, are now largely located in the Louvre. (WOLFF, [2005] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 54) In the eighteenth century the demand for a public collection was growing all over Europe, which, according to a modern understanding, could only be regarded as a state collection owned by the public authorities.

The visual arts, architecture and the theater became an instrument of public education and the museum became a public space of education for the whole people, as aesthetic enjoyment and its associated moral aspects should no longer be denied to a large part of the population. (TELESKO, [1998] apud HERZIG, 2010, p. 54)

At the turn of the 18th to the 19th century, a global wave of widespread diffusion began, leading to an increase in the number of museums around the world and they thus increasingly became a window to scientific advances and industrial performance. (GERMAIN, [1967] apud BREUER, 2012, p. 60)

The museum's history of the nineteenth century was influenced by changes such as the dispersion of the national cultural heritage throughout Europe, the secularization of the church's possessions, and the new understanding of the work of art. Through the further consequences of history, Napoleon's fall and the defeat of the French, many works of art returned to their former sites or to the art market, which in the eighteenth century experienced a lively upturn thanks to the English collectors. The French aristocratic collections were auctioned and due to this fact the market boosted. (HERZIG, 2010)

The development of an idea of the nation is associated with the fact that in metropolises and small provinces institutional collecting became a sign of prosperity and education, and the museum a sign

of symbolic property of a nation. The history of a country, its architecture, its regional heroes and artists, or typical economic and industrial branches, which were responsible for the development of a region, were presented in the local or open-air museum, a kind of historical museum. Additionally, an identity, a peculiarity in art, and an architectural history, were also sought as a national school in order to meet the craving of national value.

Travel guides described the collections, cabinets, picture galleries and private museums of various cities, and counted them among the tourist sights, attracting art lovers and travelers in large numbers since the nineteenth century. (POMIAN, [1998] apud HERZIG, 2010)

It is in light of this that museums have moved at a slowly pace towards a more inclusive program in order to satisfy the demands of an increasingly multicultural nation. However this pace results contrastingly slow compared to the changes that in this respect are in fact taking place in society, as we will address in a following chapter.

Lastly, the museum's purpose of serving as a bridge with history, poses no less difficulties.

5 THE ENCOUNTER OF THE PRESENT TIME WITH HISTORY

A discussion about the term museum implies to deal with a historical approach as the term is always renewed. This is so as the principles of order, genres and species, as well as names and concepts are defined and transformed under specific historical conditions.

On the other hand, public museums have become the leading institution for the gathering of modernity, the synthesis of all previous collection types, and the place where they are exposed to the present day. (MARX; REHBERG, [2006] apud HERZIG, 2010)

In this respect it is necessary to insist in the maintenance of a kind of museum in which past and present meets and that thanks to the understanding of historical processes offers room for reflection and

debate of what constitutes us today. However, the approach to history becomes increasingly problematic as the social development of the present moves away at an ever-faster pace from historical cultures, cultures of origin, and the distance between them becomes ever greater and ever alien. (FLUEGEL, [2009] apud BREUER, 2012)

On the other hand it is precisely the history of the acquisition of art works that results difficult for the museum.

Such is the case of Germany moving slowly on returning museum exhibits to ex-colonies, as Angela Merkel should heed Emmanuel Macron's call for restitution to Africa through new unveiled guidelines on the restitution of objects from "colonial contexts" by the German culture minister, Monika Grütters, on April 2018. Grütters accepted the need to re-examine the provenance of objects amassed not just in the three decades in which Germany emulated other European states empire-building on the African continent, but during a colonial period defined as stretching back to the 15th-century *conquistadores* and into the present day. (BROWN, 2018; OLTERMANN, 2018)

Another case is the repatriation from Austria to South Africa of the human rests of *Klaas* and *Trooi Pienaar*.

This way, these three previously introduced concepts directly influence the functioning conditions of museums at the present time, which are briefly discussed in the following chapter.

6 CRISIS OF THE MUSEUM

As a step previous to an analysis on institutional critique in a future chapter, it is necessary to recognize not only practical difficulties faced by museums in the current time, as it is also needed to reflect on the fact that before the current crisis of capitalism the museums may eventually not survive if they do not adapt to the demands on profit of our time, but this way its very nature is menaced to disappear.

The crisis of the museum as an institution occurs due to the fact that on the one hand, the museum can be considered as part of a state apparatus, as Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum* describes. Here Bennett regards the history of collecting as containing less a historical analysis of the origin and development of the museum than a classification of the cultural policies of the 19th and 20th century. (BENNETT, [1995] apud BREUER, 2012) This way to understand the museum means to consider on which philosophical tradition each museum stands (eg church, tradition or pedagogical – political, didactic intention), being this the focus of the collection's policies.

Furthermore, the museum is also placed within an institutional framework and is also dependent on institutions, associations or political institutions. This means that every time the museum plans an exhibition, this is always faced with structural constraints. Compromises between imagination and truly feasible conditions are indispensable for a successful implementation and satisfaction of all actors. (BREUER, 2012)

Regarding the public as one of such actors Kenneth Hudson's article *The Museum Refuses to Stand Still* (2004) explains that

[...] The most fundamental change that has affected museums during the (first) half (of the 20th century) [...] is the now almost universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public. The old-style museum felt itself to be under no such obligation. It existed, it had a building, it had collections and a staff to look after them, it was reasonably adequately financed, and its visitors, usually not numerous, came to look, to wonder and to admire what was set before them. They were no partners in the enterprise. The museum's prime responsibility was to its collections, not to its visitors. (HUDSON, [2004] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 22)

Presently a museum is not just a place for its permanent collection but “a whole entertainment complex”. (GORLENKO, 2010, p. 28) The gradual opening of the museums’ doors, this sort of devotion to the public, influenced the opening of their walls, transforming the kind of exhibitions carried out, which represents a two-sided coin, as such processes occur within the frame of transformations of cultural policies. This scenario is described by Brian O’Doherty in *Museums in Crisis* already in 1972:

The situation of our museums, some threatened with permanent closure and others curtailing their activities and availability to the public, is evidence of a serious but characteristic dilemma: the greater the public interest, the greater the financial burden. (O’DOHERTY, [1972] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 28)

7 BLOCKBUSTERS

The pressure under which contemporary museums are to be located in order to reach blockbusters, is explained by Gludowacz, van Bennisen and van Hagen (2010) in “Global Art” as follows:

The public museums are under increasing financial pressure and becoming more and more dependent on collectors and gallery owners, all of whom are pursuing their own – primarily economic – interests. For this reason many museums are putting on shows aimed at drawing in large numbers of people. Success, so the reasoning goes, consists in having as many visitors to your exhibition as spectators at an international football game, and letting them set the cash registers ringing. This is a pretty dangerous trend. (GLUDOWACZ, van BENNIGSEN, van HAGEN, [2010] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 27)

According to the authors, further dangers of the trend of pleasing the public in order to make a blockbuster out of every exhibition would emerge by the failure to show important artists who don't have great popular appeal, and who are perhaps reserved and difficult to understand ([2010] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 27). This constitutes the core point of the lively mission of educating the public in contrast to a stagnated perspective that focuses on what already works.

In key of Adorno's ideas on culture industry, which covers an approach to an early institutional critique, Kenneth Hudson foresees pessimistic consequences of such dynamic for the works of art as consumer goods:

A very important feature of the majority of the museums today, in contrast to what characterized them in the mid-1940s, is the extent to which they have become visitor-centered. This amounts to saying that, as good shopkeepers, museum directors are slowly coming to think of the customers first and the goods on sale second. (HUDSON, [2004] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 24)

Additionally, the lack of economic autonomy of the museums, due also to the withdrawal of support from the state, is analyzed by Brian O'Doherty in terms of satisfying all interests:

The more the objects of private collecting reverted to public hands, the more inevitable it became that the economic interests behind that collecting would move to control the public houses of art. Museums are, or will soon be treated like entities in a conglomerate. Moreover, with a different sponsor for each ambitious exhibition, the museum becomes subject to a carousel of sponsors, each feeling entitled to have its interests acknowledged. (O'DOHERTY, [1972] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 28)

Prior to the crisis of the museum described by O’Doherty in 1972, it is worth remembering that since the end of WWII the number of museums in the world increased enormously. Three-quarters of the museums we have today were not there in 1945. This massive growth has been accompanied by a remarkable broadening of the types of museum available and by the creation of a completely different kind of public: During the past thirty years especially, the museum-going public has changed a great deal. Its range of interests has widened, it is far less reverent and respectful in its attitudes, it distinguishes less and less between museum and an exhibition, and it sees no reason to pay attention to the subject-boundaries so dear to academically minded people. (HUDSON, [2004] apud GORLENKO, 2010, p. 23)

However, more recent positions insist that fewer galleries are opening today than ten years ago, beginning a diagnose of the difficult times also museums, and because of this, are facing after the economic crisis of 2008.

This situation by the hand of a transformation in an increasingly reflected, educated and demanding public, permeates the discussion on the role of the museum in key of an increased egalitarianism that we will discuss briefly in the following chapter.

8 NONWHITE MUSEUMS

As shown above, according to Tim Schneider (2018) a growing arsenal of evidence suggests that struggling museums relying on blockbusters to cultivate loyal visitors which is the same as “terrible husbands relying on opulent gifts to cultivate stable marriages: The people they want to keep engaged aren’t actually showing up for them, just for the perks” And this makes the target audience much harder to impress the next time around.

In a Financial Times feature, James Bradburne, director of Milan’s Pinacoteca di Brera, used more dystopian language to address the same concerns. In his words, “We lost our way in the ‘80s when

directors were forced to use blockbusters to drive a museum's economy by increasing visitor numbers". (BRADBURNE apud SCHNEIDER, 2018)

Today, almost 40 years later, blockbusters are "cannibalizing" even some top-flight institutions, which use these high-stakes, high-visibility programming boosts as a "drug" to temporarily escape deeper problems. (BRADBURNE apud SCHNEIDER, 2018) For Bradburne a solution to this is to consider the museum as the performance of the stuff in your collection and not the collection per se. (BRADBURNE apud, SCHNEIDER, 2018)

Similarly, another practiced solution is the *High Museum* (Atlanta, USA) which dramatically improved its community resonance, has been shifting its programming away from blockbuster exhibitions, marketing the museum as a commons for activity rather than a cathedral of objects, diversifying its staff (including, crucially, at the docent level), and adjusting its admissions fees. The result? A tripling of its nonwhite audience between 2015 and the close of 2017. (SCHNEIDER, 2018)

On the other hand according to The Guardian, the Baltimore Museum of Art (USA) is breaking a taboo, auctioning work by Rauschenberg, Warhol and Kline in order to acquire more work by women and artists of colour.

Explaining to Artnet, Baltimore Museum of Art's Scotland-born director Christopher Bedford (apud ARMISTEAD, 2019) said: "I don't think it's reasonable or appropriate for a museum like the Baltimore Museum of Art to speak to a city that is 64% black unless we reflect our constituents."

According to the journalist Claire Armitstead (2019), despite talk in museum circles about the importance of being dynamic and mobile, quoting Bedford "it seems likely that many collections are not managed at all", and he added,

A significant proportion of acquisitions do not represent the deliberate and successful implementation of a

carefully worked out and discerning policy, but instead result from the acceptance of what are often random gifts and bequests, or from a patriotic determination to ‘save’ for the nation a great work of art that has suddenly and unexpectedly been sent to auction, and which might be ‘lost’ if sold to a buyer from overseas. (BEDFORD apud ARMISTEAD, 2019)

In this concern, senior curator Elinor Morgan said:

Through acquisitions and long-term loans, we are making an effort to feature more historic and local pieces rarely seen in contemporary museums as well as more works by women artists, artists of colour, and those working internationally. In addition, we are challenging conventional models of showing art by mixing chronologies and styles, disciplines and media and histories. (MORGAN apud ARMITSTEAD, 2019)

However, in the article *Decolonizing the Art Museum* curator Olga Viso (2019) points to the surging of commercial art market as another colonizing force, even as it has opened new economies for artists of color. For Viso there are now two incompatible art worlds: one committed to inclusion, artistic freedom and change, the other driven by money and entitlements and “when agendas collide, there are casualties”.

It is for this reason that for her if museums want to continue to have a place, they must stop seeing activists as antagonists. They must position themselves as learning communities, not impenetrable centers of self-validating authority, as “if they do not, museums run the risk of becoming culturally irrelevant artifacts. Now is the time to be open to radical change. The next wave of decolonizing [...] art museums must succeed, because to lose our capacity for empathy in a democracy is not an option”. (VISO, 2019)

This position opens the question whom the arts are really for.

The report *Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* in the UK, billed as “the first sociological study on social mobility in the cultural industries” (JEFFREYS, 2018), paints a picture of an exclusive industry whose workforce is unrepresentative of the wider population – socially, politically, and demographically. “If you think the creative industries should speak for a nation or a community then this report raises big questions”, says Dr. David O’Brien, one of its three lead authors.

The report (2015) is based on a survey of 2,487 culture professionals and it

strongly suggests that meritocracy is a myth. Women, people from working-class backgrounds, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) workers all face significant exclusions from an industry which is over-represented by upper middle-class white men. (JEFFREYS, 2018)

At the same time that “many in the sector really do have a distorted picture of just how unlikely it is for a working-class person to visit their institution,” says Dr. O’Brien. “Basically, you have a set of people who look very much like the audience that they are serving. We could consider the cultural sector a closed segment of society.” (O’BRIEN apud JEFFREYS, 2018)

To which Hadrian Garrard, director of *Create* says “It seems that there has never been a time when the arts reflected British society in an equitable way (and we hope to) contribute towards a shift in thinking and practice,” says Garrard. “For this to happen, it’s important that we acknowledge the privilege in our own organizations and recognise that the arts are not, as things stand, representative of the population as a whole.” (GARRARD apud JEFFREYS, 2018)

This analysis hope to keep insisting on Linda Nochlins 1971’s essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* “The arts,” she

writes, “as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male.” (NOCHLINS apud MCLAUGHLIN, 2018)

When it comes to building an egalitarian art world, visibility is secondary to the provision of opportunity, funding, and support. Without this, any artist – no matter how talented – will struggle to flourish. (MCLAUGHLIN, 2018)

9 CONCLUSION

The museums of our time face great paradoxes. On the one hand the history of the museum has been marked by the determination of a nation of demonstrating economical power even through the use of appropriated cultural goods. On the other hand the museum faces the responsibility for educating audiences in new languages, at the same time that it should satisfy sponsors and offer blockbusters. This should be related to historical processes but the history in the acquisition of many artworks remain questionable.

Similar, the circulation of popular classes in the museum has increased at the same time that the museum is still consolidated on the basis of the activities for the privileged.

These contrasting positions collude and as Bourdieu envisioned, this strengthens the dominant culture as the museums are expected to play safe and call to a greater (dominant) public.

It is for all these reasons that an institutionalized censorship upon which the museum operates is illustrated not only by the insistence on including certain repetitive kind of artworks –and thus artists– in order to play safe, what ultimately reflects on an censorship in face of the public for whom such institutions are meant work.

However, it is a fact that the museum is called to be open not only to the development of a vast artistic production, as well as it should similarly act in accordance with the needs of a diversified public. The museum is thus called to keep implementing changes, even

more, to do so at a faster rate, if it is meant to play a role in contemporary society as to become a more egalitarian institution and thus line up with the demands of our current time.

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