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## Museum Concept From Past To Present And Importance Of Museums As Centers Of Art Education

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### Abstract

The present study aims to examine the concept of museum and the transformation of museums to centers of education in its historical development. Museum, as a concept, comes from the 9 muses each possessing a different ability and source of inspiration (Calliope- the muse of epic poetry; Clio-the muse of history etc). Open and enclosed spaces (gardens and inside temples) dedicated to these 9 muses were called museums in Ancient Greece. However, The Museum of Alexandria, established in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C, was the first museum that presented collection, exhibition, preservation and classification missions for museums in the historical development. A comprehensive archive was developed in Alexandria by visiting all settlements in the Mediterranean to collect artifacts sometimes through copying sometimes by seizing by means of pillages. In this sense, the Museum of Alexandria is the temple of the thought to bring together all cultural indicators of the world in the same location.

Medieval collections were the means to collect cultural treasures and to pursue what is different to display them. With the discovery of the New World and the resulting conquests to faraway lands, not only the land but also the universe of images of The Other was conquered. Museums with their Cabinets of Curiosity, that display everything that is extraordinary and rare, living and nonliving, are exalted to mysterious settings. Along with the Renaissance-the conveyor of the Ancient Greece and the messenger of the modern world view- museums transformed into visual encyclopedias established with a philosophy of classification and documentation rather than sorting the mysterious objects or the living things. In this sense, the museums have started to develop as service facilities that contribute to the progress of the society instead of settings that only collect and store objects. While Palazzo Medici built in 15<sup>th</sup> century laid the foundations of the modern museum, arts and science started to transform into academic structures. Now, the most precious artifacts of history are presented in the museum setting in a chronological order. The function of object based information usage started to be dominant in the 18<sup>th</sup> century along with the establishment of the institutional structure and the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought the provision of services to educate the working class that started to rapidly increase in the cities as a result of industrialization and the museums have obtained the mission of training citizens as well.

As a result, museums stopped being the indicators of wealth for rulers and the bourgeois in the history and started to gain importance as educational institutions. Hence, modern museums are settings in which research towards the preservation of cultural heritage is undertaken on one hand and training, publications, knowledge-document centers, performances, meetings, discussions and workshops are provided on the other.

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Key words: Muse, Cabinets of Curiosity, National Museum, Universal Museum, Modern Museum Studies, Information Services

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today museums have progressed from being mere spaces where art and science products are displayed and all treasures of the past are conserved to being informal educational areas and tools for communicating the mass culture. Museums, consisting wide base libraries, project development facilities, art ateliers and display rooms and with presentation techniques addressing the products comprehended not only with two or three but with five dimensions, are turning into educational areas which enrich social life. “The type of relationship that the Art and especially Nature and History of Science Museums have formed with children and their families not only proved that an object in a museum is not only for observation but also unearthed the field called museum pedagogy. These spaces salvaged from only being the temples of muses....are questioning the fundamental means of observing and learning” (Çalikoğlu, 2009:7)

## 2. CONCEPT OF MUSEUM

Museums, “past guardians” of ancient objects or treasures, are generally known to be locations or buildings where art and science artifacts are preserved, kept and meet the viewers. When examined in more detail, museums are organizations with the mission of investigating the production of humanity along the ages from the viewpoint of science and art to enlighten them about the history in addition to being spaces that present and conserve the treasures of science and art and the under and above ground treasures. International Council of Museums in their meeting in 1955 defined museums as “permanent organizations in the service of society and its development, open to public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” and in their 1962 meeting the Council focuses on the mission of education in the definition of museums as “permanent organizations that preserve and exhibit collections consisting of objects with cultural and scientific value for research, education and enjoyment purposes” ( Atik; 2009: 120). Sözen and Tanyeli define museums as “organizations open to public established to exhibit artistic, cultural, historical or scientific artifacts permanently or establishments that carry the properties listed above” ( Sözen, Tanyeri 1987: 168) Riviere emphasizes the educational role of museums as ICOM does and portrays museums as “permanent organizations working for the benefit of the public by carrying collections of art, science, history, health and technology to preserve, study, assess and exhibit the cultural values as a whole in order to develop aesthetical enjoyment and education in public” ( Riviere, 1962:22-23).

## 3. DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS: FROM THE MUSES OF ANCIENT GREECE TO MODERN ART MUSEUMS

Origins of museum concept date back to Ancient Greek myths. Museums in Ancient Greece were defined as “adobes of the Muses” (Artun, 2006:11). The origin of the word museum comes from the

Greek word “Museion” ( İnel, 1998: 24) which means the temple of the goddesses called “Muses”. According to these myths, the word “muse” derived from the word “men” meaning wisdom, thought and creativity means muse (source of inspiration). According to mythology, Zeus, the King of the Gods and the Goddess of Memory Mnemosyne had nine daughters each with a specific skill and inspiration: Euterpe, the muse of music; Erato, the muse of love poetry; Calliope, the muse of epic poetry; Clio, the muse of history; Melpomene, the muse of tragedy; Polyhymnia, the muse of hymns; Terpsichore, the muse of dance; Thalia; the muse of comedy and Urania; the muse of astronomy. Although there were muses in many areas from music to dance, from theatre to history, there were no muses in plastic arts (painting, sculpture, ceramic etc) because in Ancient Greece painting and sculpting were not considered pure art at the time but seen as handcrafts or *techne*. Structures or artistic activities dedicated to these nine muses such as temples, festivals and poetry were called muses.

The collection of objects with artistic values was first undertaken by the Greeks. Along with colonization movements, buildings called “Theasuri” (Treasures) were built in centers with political and religious significance (Yücel, 1999 : 19). The first development that can be cited as the nucleus for the museum concept is the Great Museum of Alexandria. In 3 BC after conquering Egypt, Alexander the Great planned to establish a city carrying his name that “would be the center of Hellenic culture in these lands and ordered that a library for the muses to be built to bring good luck to the city” (Artun, 2006:13). This ancient library built by Greek Ptolemaios Soter Dynasty in 306- 285 BC was known as “musaeum”. Literary works owned by all emperors at the time were reproduced and books in all ships that visited Alexandria port were pillaged to have thousands of handwritten manuscripts. Library of Alexandria also consisted of a part called museum. “Museum section...the part where artists, philosophers and scientists freely did research under the guardianship of the dynasty; the part where intellectual, spiritual and philosophical production was undertaken was called the museum” ( Madran: 2009: 66). In this sense, “The Great Museum of Alexandria is the first center for the design of dream, to collect all words and symbols from Hindu, Mesopotamia and Ancient Greek civilizations and maybe from the whole world” (Artun, 2006:15). The origin of modern museums started to be built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century dates back to The Library of Alexandria in terms of classification approach.

Centuries after the Ancient Greek approach filled with “the rational”, the approaches to museology retreated into the irrational, magical and mystical brought by the Middle Ages. Western countries brought back all the interesting flora, fauna and crafts discovered during their expeditions undertaken to new continents and decided to create collections from these imageries to display their conquests. These collections existing all through the Middle Ages are called Cabinets of Curiosity. Cabinets of Curiosity are composed of all pillage materials that are obtained such as living and nonliving things, natural and artificial materials, dried plants, stuffed birds, unicorns, and embryos in short all mysterious objects collected together without rational classification criteria. The cabinets deemed the ancestors of the museums are the collections that belong to the pre enlightenment period and “since they did not carry a scientific form, the objects they sported were scattered in all directions and the museum in the sense we understand now is born” ( Artun, 2005: 10).



Figure 1: Musei Wormiani Historia, (Kopenhag Ole Worm Museum), from *Museum Wormianum*, 1655.

Contrary to Middle Ages, in the period of the Renaissance museums recaptured the sense of the rational of the Ancient Greece. With the Renaissance, museums achieved the standing as being substantial elements in intellectual life in a humanist approach and they were no longer locations where lining and non-living objects and artifacts were exhibited. Palazzo Medici accepted as the conception of Modern European Museums revived museums by providing the museums with both chronological classification elements and aesthetical canon. The works in Palazzo Medici built in 1440 by Great Cosimo who started the Medici Dynasty in Florence were created according to the norms of classicism, the artistic approach of the time and the problematic of perspective was sought in the works which led to the decay of the worldview with the focus on the “other world” emphasized in the previous Gothic period. The works in the Medici achieved a norm that can be measured and calculated, that can have perspective problematic and that focus on how the nature and human body worked instead of portraying the other world. This power of reasoning increases the observation and assessment skills of the individuals in relation to the environment and art. The artifacts selected to be exhibited in the museum especially the works of Leonardo Da Vinci, Raffaello and Michelangelo all emphasized the central human structure contrary to paintings with religious themes ordered by the Church to exalt God. These works seen as the representations of the rational approaches of the Renaissance were transferred to Uffizi Gallery in the later years. The architect of Uffizi, Giorgio Vassari, was among the founders of *Accademia Dell’Arte del Disegno*, the first art academy in addition to being the art director of Medici collections. In this sense, both the enlightenment of the Renaissance and the establishment of the Medici museums supported the formation of relationships among the university, academy, library and the museum. However, although Uffizi Collection was opened to public as an institution at the time, it was not cited in the literature as the first library. “Institutionalization of museums in the formal sense starts with the Ashmolean Museum located in Oxford University in England as the first museum space open to public” ( Madran; 2009: 70). Along with the Renaissance and the information regimes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the leading museum in the transformation from the culture of collections to the memory rooms of the enlightenment period is the Louvre Museum in France. “Museums leading us as the perfect places for memory since the 18<sup>th</sup> century are among our theoretical instruments and in many respects they are the emblems for the aspirations rejuvenated by the Enlightenment” (Preziosi, 2006: 139). Louvre Museum is the location where art, historical civilizations and development gained a chronology, became institutionalized and the traces of the nation state were exhibited. The museum created by housing all the collections of the royalty in

Louvre Palace after the 1789 French revolution has destroyed the structure that attributed art works only to royalty and made them the property of the public. Other developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century declared as the golden age of the museums can be cited as the institutionalized establishment of the National Gallery (Britannia National Museum) and British Museum. “British Museum has the function of an encyclopedia or a dictionary based on historical facts. The ordering of spaces, the classification of objects, their exhibitions help comprehend the relationships among these objects and samples in a three dimensional world”. (Artun, 2006: 41). Museums in this sense “have started to obtain the context towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to store and exhibit items of cultural heritage instead of collections themselves” (Onur, 2012: 20). America followed in the footsteps of Europe in the transformation of royal museums to public museums in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Museum of Modern Art ( MoMA) in New York built in 1929 is the first large public museum of America and reflects the Western painting tradition. The first floors of the museum are allocated to Greek-Roman-Egyptian artifacts and upper floors house the works of the Renaissance period. With this distinct representation that divides Western and Eastern art. MoMa embodies an imperialist ideology. The most significant point of the museum approach of MoMa is explained in art critic Brian O’Doherty’s book “Inside the White Cube”. According to O’Doherty, new modern museums are “white walled, carpeted in grey or parquetered, with no décor” (O’Doherty: 2000: 15). The exterior sections of MoMA give the feeling of modernism as the interior where the paintings are mounted in specific areas with seating systems that enables the viewer to observe the work for longer periods. In the place of imposing columns of the British Museum or the National Gallery, there is the simple, plain and minimalist façade. “The gallery aims to provide a neuter environment to observe and reflect on the works of art. The visitors in MoMA do not only view and reflect, they also take compulsory introduction to art history ( Artun, 2006: 95). As opposed to MoMA’s stern classification in presentation and the simplicity in its architectural structure, Pompidou Museum built in 1977 in France has a more voluminous architecture and a public oriented presentation style and usage. Pompidou reflecting a futurist approach with the colorful installation pipes covering the exterior façade feature public libraries, art design ateliers, cinemas and collections which bring public and art together in addition its mission of bringing art, culture and education together.



Figure 2. MoMA, NewYork Museum of Modern Art      Figure 3. Pompidou Center, France.

#### 4. MUSEUM AND EDUCATION

Investigation of the development of museums from the Ancient Greece to 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that museums have progressed from merely exhibiting collections to being the centers for observation, learning and questioning. They no longer are in the status of being objects to be merely observed. It is possible to link museum and education to 16<sup>th</sup> century cabinets of Curiosity. As a result of expeditions and imperialist approaches of the Western countries, all living-nonliving objects and natural-artificial things brought back to Western countries from the lands of the “other” were exhibited in these cabinets which in a sense provided information about the history of nature, geology, ethnography, archeological findings, historical remains and religious documents. ‘Tradescent Ark’ now called “Science History Museums” was opened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by John Tradescent with the curiosities collected in his trips to faraway lands. In the subsequent years all the collection was donated to Oxford University. “The fact that these types of collections are seen as educational materials started after the establishment of the Ark and school principal Charles Hoole, in his book of 1660, mentioned the use of objects in education hence the education of museums of today” ( Onur, 2012: 166). American philosopher and educator John Dewey regarded museums as a part of knowledge process of the educational organizations. According to Hein “Early 20<sup>th</sup> century museum educators and administrators applied Dewey’s ideas and defended the museum education philosophy based on progressive educational movements” ( Onur, 2012: 168). One of the results of integrating educational activities in schools with museums actively is the Brooklyn Children’s Museum opened in 1899 in America aiming to develop children’s interests and learning styles. As opposed to formal learning methods in educational organizations which focuses on showing and presenting and in which students are expected to participate physically, museums promote museum based learning in which “students touch objects; discover houses and gardens climb the stairs... they use their senses and bodies as learning sources. The key to feeling different pleasures, recording concepts in the brain and developing skills and self respect is the formation of physical and bodily associations” (Onur, 2012: 190). In this respect, museums have obtained pedagogical, sociological and psychological content and “museology” as a science has started to develop in universities. Also transition from the passive educational systems consisting of rote learning and information transfer to more active educational systems which promote research, analysis and synthesis has supported the use of libraries and labs along with museums (Atagök 1999 : 16). In this context, modern museums are transforming into informal educational organizations.

#### 5. TODAY’S MUSEUMS AS CENTERS FOR ART EDUCATION

The fact that during the course of the time, museums undertake the task of providing modern education and training has immensely contributed to children’s bonds with art. Coming across art objects in museums from very early ages and getting involved in art activities will develop the aesthetical sensitivity and viewpoints of children. The share of today’s museum approaches is very substantial in the enrichment of children’s outlook to art. There are four important approaches in today’s museum concepts: virtual museum, touchable museum, mobile museum and foundation museum. “Museums in modern museology undertake their activities by taking the different segments of society into consideration. These activities are permanent exhibitions, temporary exhibitions, guided tours, dia-film demonstrations, discussions, seminars and atelier trainings” ( Keleş; 2000: <http://sosyalbilimler.atauni.edu.tr>). Art education through museums goes back to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century in the West. In developed countries museums and galleries frequently consulted by art teachers develop special training programs for the public. Similarly museums in Western Europe and America are turning into centers where social, cultural and educational activities are undertaken in order to give back to society and to develop the community. Ateliers in modern museum for example “provide the kindergarteners with realistic archeological objects and ask them to make these objects with the clay or play dough” (Şahan

[http://www.tebd.gazi.edu.tr/arsiv/2005\\_cilt3/sayi\\_4/487-501.pdf](http://www.tebd.gazi.edu.tr/arsiv/2005_cilt3/sayi_4/487-501.pdf)). In this context, students under the supervision of the educator meet with archeology and art history and gain skills such as observation and manual dexterity. The best example of creating new forms and developing aesthetical ideas by touching objects is the “Philadelphia Please Touch Museum”. “This museum organized exhibitions for children and reached out to groups in the slums. They taught and informed the children and their parents by letting the children play with the museum replicates carried in mobile trunks” (American Association of Museums in the Life of a City: 1995, Atasoy, 1998, 38.). This activity known as the “Philadelphia Initiative” is important in showing the effects of art and cultural organizations on the social and economic life of the city. Touchable museums both strengthen the communication between children and objects and serve individuals with special needs such as individuals with mental retardation, physical disability and visual problems. For example, an exhibition titled “Sculpture for the Blind” was organized in Tate Gallery in 1976 in London. Some of the works in the exhibition were gathered from collections and others were destined solely for this purpose. “Since the 1980’s, exhibitions are the starting point in the period to touch; especially in sculpture” (Hooper- Greenhill, 1999:160). MoMa organized touching tours for blind and partially sighted visitors with a small collection of sculptures by having the visitors wear protective gloves in the beginning of the 70s. In 1991, MoMA Education Unit organized a training program with a group of 25 blind and partially sighted and provided the sustainability of the program to learn by touching. One of the most noteworthy galleries that combine art, commerce and education with collections is the Saatchi Gallery in London. The gallery, established in 2008 by the Iraqi origin Englishman Charles Saatchi, an important name who directs and manages the modern art market, attracts attention with the simplicity of its architecture in the first glance. The students not only work in the modern art ateliers but also in the main sections where artworks are displayed. Saatchi Gallery carries the mission to present modern art to students and educate the youth about new artistic trends of post 60s. the Gallery also undertakes the mission of an artistic educational organization by providing school projects, gallery tours under the supervision of the educators, educational packages and ateliers that promote active participation. The Gallery continuously updates these activities in its website. School visits to the Gallery are organized with the cooperation of the Directorate of Education and students are given free guided tours.



Figure 4-5-6-7: Students visiting Saatchi Gallery and participating in art classes



## 6. RESULTS

Museums today are the tools for mass culture. The missions of museum do not only consist of conserving and exhibiting treasures and objects that provide us with information but include the provision of educational tasks. Museums sporting object centered and self enclosed approaches until the 19<sup>th</sup> century have headed towards human centered and outward looking approaches since the '60s influenced by the changing world, modern art views and new outlook to museology. Museums have proved that objects are not only for observation and created a new field called the museum pedagogy. They have started to get involved with more projects and keep close relationships with the community to contribute to the education, development and culture of the communities with the help of the shares they receive from the public organizations. Many museums today develop and present different programs that can interest various groups by getting to know viewer groups better since it is known that the viewer will integrate the messages with his/her own experience, will be involved with the objects and topics of interest and the messages created by the curator cannot be directly imposed upon them. Modern museums such as Tate, MoMA and Saatchi consider the development of programs that contribute to the education and enrichment of children among their fundamental functions. Many theoreticians emphasize the importance of museums in children's education with the advancement of concepts such as active participation in education, gaining experiences, environment, interaction and constructivism. Museum environments provide children with opportunities to learn by doing in a setting that contributes to their intellectual, physical, emotional, cognitive and social developments and they contribute to the acquisition of aesthetical taste from the very early years. In addition, museums present various documents related to culture aiming to train individuals who are more sensitive to the community and to the world and they facilitate the establishment of foundations for the development of personality, self confidence and citizenship. Museums play an important role in the integration of various groups in multicultural societies. In short museums are both social platforms that bring the region's artistic life and culture together with their exhibitions, concerts, wide based libraries and shopping centers and modern educational organizations that question the new methods to observe, learn through applications and obtaining artistic awareness.



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