Department of Museum Studies

Museological Review, 13: 2008

Contents

MUSEOLOGICAL REVIEW

A Journal edited by Students of
the Department of Museum Studies

Issue 13
2008

University *of* Leicester

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Editors:
Amy Jane Barnes
Anna Chrusciel
Mette Houlberg Rung
Jeong-eun Lee
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Anna Woodham

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Introduction

Museological Review has been a source of new thinking and, indeed, of experimental research in museum studies for well over a decade. Edited by the research students of the Department and featuring contributions from doctoral researchers, practitioners and established scholars, the journal presents investigations of the museum which continue to make new and valuable contributions to the evolving discipline that is museum studies.

The thought provoking papers within this latest edition of the journal are no exception. Each extends the ways in which we can think about museums, their complex relationships with communities, audiences and the State, through fresh, and often provocative, investigations of contemporary phenomena, policies and practices. Each approaches the focus of their research from diverse and distinctive perspectives which, taken together, provide a rich resource for those working in, researching and thinking about museums and galleries.

Now, in its 14th year *Museological Review* is about to enter an exciting new phase as an online journal, a development which promises to significantly increase and broaden its readership and extend opportunities for international debate. I wish the journal and its editors every success and look forward to future editions.

Richard Sandell
Head of Department
Museum Studies, University of Leicester
March 2008

Editorial

This, the thirteenth issue of *Museological Review* and the first as an online journal, considers the impact of Ideology, Power and the State on museums. The Editorial Committee hopes that readers will find this collection of papers engaging and inspiring. Together they demonstrate the diversity of current research in the field of museum studies, and are all the more exciting for representing the work of doctoral students and early career professionals.

Taking as her starting point, the nineteenth-century concept of *Bildung*, **Mette Houlberg Rung** (University of Leicester) explores the continuing link between the role of the museum and the State in the twenty-first century.

Also looking at theoretical perspectives in museological research, **Victoria Durrer** (University of Liverpool) examines the current Labour government's cultural policy, with regards to the utilisation of art museums as vehicles for social inclusion in the UK.

Saima Kaur (Leicester Arts and Museum Service) explores the construction of British Sikh identity through collections and exhibitions, and the need for museums to provide broader and more balanced representations of the communities they serve.

Marilena Alivizatou (UCL) examines the political and ideological dimensions of the *Museé du Quai Branly* (MQB) in its mission to 'see justice rendered to non-European cultures'.

Continuing the examination of contemporary French museums, **Mary Stevens** (UCL) traces the origins of the new French national museum of immigration (Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration), as a means of addressing tensions over immigration.

An exciting development for 2008 is the link-up between *Museological Review* and the virtual home of the Department of Museum Studies' research students, *The Attic*. Readers are invited to join us in the online forum [http://www.yabbers.com/phpbb/msattic.html] to discuss this issue's papers with the authors.

We would like to thank Dr Richard Sandell for writing the introduction to this issue, and Dr Viv Golding for her advice and support throughout the editing process. Special thanks also goes to Jim Roberts, Senior Technician/Webmaster in the Department of Museum Studies for providing vital technical support.

Our aim is for *Museological Review* in its new online incarnation, to continue to operate as a locus of cutting edge and experimental research in museum studies and allied subjects. The next issue of *Museological Review* is planned for publication in Spring 2009. Its theme will be announced via a call for papers that will be posted on the *Museological Review* website and *The Attic* weblog [http://attic-museumstudies.blogspot.com] during Summer 2008. Notes for contributors are available on the *Museological Review* website.

Amy Jane Barnes
Christina Lleras
Anna Chrusciel
Jeremy Ottevanger
Mette Houlberg Rung
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Jeong-eun Lee

Editorial Committee

Notes for Contributors

Aims

- To enable museum studies students and other interested parties to share and exchange museum information and knowledge.

- To provide an international medium for museums students and ex-students from around the world to keep in touch with a relevant centre of research.

- To bring to the attention of the practising and academic museum world, innovations and new thinking on museums and related matters.

Objectives

- To provide a platform in the form of a journal to be published per annum, for museums students, staff and others to present papers, reviews, opinions and news of a relevant nature from around the world.

- To widen up the constituency of the readership beyond the normal museological boundaries (e.g. to teachers, historians, artists, sociologists, environmentalists and others) in order to emphasise the importance of museums to society as a whole.

- To promote and advertise the research of contributors to as wide a public as possible via the journal and other means as the committee may from time to time decide.

Submission of manuscripts

The Editors welcome submissions of original material (articles, exhibition or book reviews etc.) being within the aims of the *Museological Review*. Articles can be of any length up to 5,000 words. Museological Review is published online as an open access journal. Contributors will not receive a fee a fee.

Four copies of the typescript will be required; three copies to the Editors and a copy for you to keep for your own reference. Make sure that all copies carry

late additions or corrections. ***It will not be possible for us to undertake or arrange for independent proof reading and the obligation for thorough checking is the responsibility of the authors' not the Editors.***

Contributions should be set as follows:

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- Sub-headings are welcome, although 'Introduction' should be avoided where this is obvious. They should be in bold and aligned to the left.

- Words ending in -ise or -ize: -ise is used.

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- Measurements are given in metric (SI) units, though Imperial units may be quoted in addition.

- Place names should be up-to-date, and in the Anglicised form (Moscow not Moskva).

- Italics should be used a) for foreign words not yet Anglicised, including Latin; b) for titles of books, ships, pictures etc.; c) very sparingly, for emphasis

- Quotations should be set in single quotation marks '...', using double quotation marks "..." for quotes within a quote. Quotations of more than two lines of typescript should be set on a new line and indented.

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- Organisations and companies take the singular, e.g. 'the Royal Academy is...'.

- First person tense should be avoided.

Illustrations/Figures/Tables: Papers can be accompanied by black and white photographs, negatives, line drawings or tables. All illustrations etc. should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are referred to in the text. **Please note that they must be fully captioned and supplied as separate files. Do NOT include illustrations in MS Word files.** Contributors are requested to discuss illustrative material with the Editors at an early stage. If there is any requirement for special type (e.g. Arabic, Greek, scientific or mathematical symbols) this should be supplied as artwork. All artwork must be scanned and submitted on disk Photographs must be scanned at 150dpi (lpi) minimum, line art at 100dpi (lpi) minimum, and fully captioned

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This should be at the end of the paper, arranged alphabetically by author, then chronologically if there is more than one work by the same author. Use the inverted format as follows:

Connerton, P. (1989). *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cook, B.F. (1991). 'The archaeologist and the Art Market: Policies and Practice.' *Antiquity* 65: 533.

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Art Museums and Creative Citizens

Mette Houlberg Rung

Abstract

This article discusses the role of the art museum today in relation to the political, educational and civic role it had when it was conceived in the eighteenth century. It is argued, using the concept of *Bildung*, that the museum played a part in educating the public to become moral and democratic citizens and in this way the art museum was linked to the State. But today the concept of *Bildung* has been challenged and developed by Danish researchers Lars Geer Hammershøj and Lars Henrik Schmidt into the concept of self-formation. Against this background the article continues to explore if there is a link between the role of the museum and the State today. It is argued that with the increasing focus on visitor oriented museum practice, the museum is becoming an ideal space, where individuals can practice their self-formation, and become ideal creative citizens and workers in the so called knowledge society or innovation society.

In the last forty years the relationship between the development of the modern art museum and the modern state has been explored. Closely linked with the emergence of the nation state, part of the art museum's purpose was to create democratic citizens, promote national identity and inspire moral behavior (Hooper-Greenhill 1993, Macdonald 2003: 1-3, Sheehan 2000: 83-137). Today the function of the museum is changing, but does this mean that the museum has freed itself from the State and political values? In other words, can the development of the museum be seen as part of a political or civic programme, as it was over 200 years ago? And is the museum's role still to shape individuals in a certain way, in order to prepare us for a specific type of society?

The theoretical perspective from which I wish to investigate these issues is through the development and re-actualization of the concept of '*Bildung*'. The modern understanding of *Bildung*, was created on the basis of aesthetic theories from the Enlightenment and was applied to institutions such as the museum, in order to describe and understand the educational purpose they should have. Today the notion of *Bildung* has been re-conceptualized by the Danish social analysts Lars Henrik Schmidt and Lars Geer Hammershøj and we are now talking about **self**-*Bildung* or **self**-formation. By taking into account the radical process of individualization in late modernity, this theory is rethinking the way we shape and develop our self, and how this is done in

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relation to society, as well as considering the consequences it will have on the future (Raffnsøe 2004: 3). It is pertinent to consider these changes in the idea of *Bildung* in relation to museal practice, since it was through this concept, the shaping of the modern people took place in the museum. As I will explain below, it was through ideas of *Bildung* that museums could function as 'civic engines' or 'civic laboratories', shaping and educating the people, so they could operate in and contribute to society in a specific way, which was beneficial, if not crucial, for the modern nation state (Bennett 2005: 522).[1]

To briefly anticipate my point: I will in this article argue that the underlying principles of the new concept of self-formation can be seen in relation to the kind of society, which Western states today are promoting and expanding. The transformation from industrial society to a post-industrial society, where focus is on innovation and creativity, demands a new type of individual. The concept of self-formation can explain how this individual behaves and is shaped. Simultaneously with the development of society, museological practice is changing. This is not surprising of course, since the museum is not an isolated institution, but in a reciprocal relationship with other institutions and disciplines, which mutually influence each others' theoretical and practical developments. However, with the increasing focus on visitor oriented museum practice, the museum is becoming an ideal space, where individuals can practice their self-formation, and become ideal creative citizens and workers in the so-called knowledge or innovation society.

I will begin with a discussion of *Bildung* and self-formation and the relation to museal practice. Then continue to discuss the characteristics of the post-museum and how, using the concept of self-formation, it can contribute to the education of the creative employee.

Bildung and Self-formation in the art museum

The rise of the modern art museum in the eighteenth century was built upon the Enlightenment's neo-humanistic values about education of the public and establishing a feeling of national community. It was conceived as a space, which could be used by the people to develop and become educated, forming themselves through the objects and displays (Hooper-Greenhill 1993, Sheehan 2000). Or as Tony Bennett explains:

> '..the spheres of art and culture came to be regarded as a special realm providing a set of resources which, in the following conduct of various kinds of work on the self, would result in a harmonization of the diverse aspects of the individual's personality. The fusion of these ideas with the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century culture of sensibility led to the views that frequent contact with art would result in more refined codes of personal conduct. It would help knock the rough edges off an individual's behavior, promoting a softness and gentleness of manners' (Bennett 1995: 877-787).

This process of harmonization of the individual is the main key when trying to understand the educational purpose of the art museum in the eighteenth century. In Germany this process was named '*Bildung*' and was conceptualized in the beginning of the nineteenth century by the politician and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt. The concept was used in the development of many cultural institutions, as well as the formal school system (Sorkin 1983: 55-57). *Bildung* means 'general education' or 'self-development' in English, however it is missing a proper translation. The concept describes the process where the individual transcends into society to develop herself. Martin Swale explains:

> 'The word *Bildung* implies the generality of a culture, the clustering of values by which a man lives, rather than a specifically **educational** attainment. [..] *Bildung* becomes, then, a total growth process, a diffused **Werden**, or becoming, involving something more intangible than the acquirement of a finite number of lessons' (emphasis in the original) (Belore 2006: 108).

The theory of *Bildung* was formulated on the background of the philosophical and aesthetic ideas of among others Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller, who connected artworks with beauty and morality, and considered them as a way people could be exposed to and absorb universal human values (Böhm 1927, Kant 1969). The art museum was thus seen as a place, where people could develop themselves and be moulded into a moral universal human being and a responsible citizen. For Humboldt personal development and being a political citizen was the same: '..the man whose sensibility is thus cultivated and developed displays the full beauty of his character when he enters moral life' (Sorkin 1983 p: 68).

The concept of '*Bildung*' was visible in museum practice throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries and still is today. An example is from Copenhagen in 1938, where the 'Committee of Organizing Museum Lectures for the Unemployed' wrote a small booklet about the benefits the unemployed would gain from visiting a museum:

> 'The aim was to develop participants into active employees. They should not only see and hear, but also contribute themselves. They should **sense** some of the life, which was prior to their own and learn from this what joys and sorrows, struggles with victory and defeat, daily work and the strong ties of family history, have meant for the development [of mankind]. They should **feel** some of the strength, which has carried mankind in its efforts to permanently make the development progress. In this way they would not only acquire more knowledge themselves, but also **get more strength** to resist the hard struggle of time' (Komitéen til Afholdelse af Museumsforedrag for Arbejdsløse 1938: 7-8) [my translation and emphasis].

What is apt here is the universal moral strength and union with history that the museum visit will transmit to the unemployed through a certain sensation

or feeling provoked by the artworks. The quotation above is an example of how *Bildung* worked in practice and shows how *Bildung* is a transcendence of the self into something larger and how the person absorbs the universal values presented in the museum, to become a better functioning individual. The museum operates in this way as a 'civic experiment' as Bennett calls it, and serves to transform the visitors (Bennett 2005: 528). I have discussed the development of *Bildung* in relation to the art museum more in detail elsewhere (Houlberg Rung 2007), but will here just underline that the individual was thought to develop from a particular person from a certain class, background etc., to become an educated man, with universal morals and values. This movement from the particular to the universal is, as explained below, fundamentally different from the development, which takes place in self-formation.

Self-formation

The two Danish social analysts Lars Hammershøj and Lars Henrik Schmidt have re-thought the concept of *Bildung* taking into account the philosophical development, which has happened in the twentieth century. Hammershøj summarizes the two new conditions that he finds problematic for the *Bildung* tradition:

> 'The first condition has to do with the radical individualization process and the second could be called culturalization. These conditions seem to fit in well with the late modern concept of formation of the personality. Firstly, formation of the personality is per definition 'without authority' and is therefore interesting in relation to the 'self-socialization' of the late modern individual. Secondly, formation is an aesthetic practice of the self, concerned with the unfolding of the personality. This happens today as the individual's transgression of itself, and the experiences made in various culturalized communities' (Hammershøj 2003:.443-444).

These conditions mean that the type of *Bildung* described above must be reconsidered. The understanding of the notion of both the self and society have changed, and so has the relationship between them. First of all, universal values or ahistorical truths do not exist and therefore the individual is the starting point for everything. She is responsible for choosing her own values according to what she finds most relevant and interesting. As Foucault writes: '..we have to create ourselves as a work of art' (Hammershøj 2003: 98). Secondly, there is not one stable culture, where these values are found, the individual slides in and out of different networks or cultures for inspiration (Hammershøj 2003: 101-115). With *Bildung* the individual transcends into society and absorbs the values and strives to become like the perfect universal human being (the Greek citizen). In self-formation the individual transcends into society, interprets and evaluates the values presented, for then to return to herself and incorporate, what she can use. The formation of the self is

therefore a movement from the universal towards the particular, in the sense that in the self-formation process, we try to shape ourselves as uniquely and original as possible. Compared to *Bildung*, self-formation does therefore not have an ideal to strive towards, but instead is a continuous process of change, where the ideal keeps changing according to what seems original or interesting to the individual at a particular time. This has been called an 'original attitude' (Lieberkind 2005). But what does this mean for the art museum? In the time of *Bildung* its role was to present the artworks, which would give people a universal education and morality. Now, seen from a self-formation perspective, it is up to people to take what they want from the artworks according to what they find interesting and relevant in their constant task of shaping an original self. It is important to emphasize that self-formation is a **tendency**, which Hammershøj and Schmidt, through their social analysis, have found emerging in Western society, and it is therefore not institutionalized or highly visible yet. However, if the developments in the museum are compared with the ideas in self-formation, they point in the same direction.

Self-formation and the museum in the twenty-first century

Just as the tradition of *Bildung* has been re-conceptualized, so has museal practice. In the last thirty years a development towards a more visitor orientated, interactive and interpretative museum has taken place. Many museologists have discussed this, but in particular Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, who describes this as a paradigm shift from the modern museum to the post-museum (Hooper-Greenhill 2001, Hooper-Greenhill 2000). These developments are made on the same theoretical foundations as self-formation and are as such part of a larger epistemological turn, which has happened across disciplines. In relation to self-formation and museology, what is relevant is the rejection of universal values, which had been introduced with post-modernism. This means a stronger focus on personal learning and contextualized knowledge. To this debate the self-formation theory can contribute with the explicit articulation of how an individual is today (or tomorrow), and how and why she uses a social setting such as the museum. Seen from a self-formation perspective the many changes, both practically and conceptually, which have been made in the museum in the last decades, fits very well with the self-formation theory, however, in order to cater for the self-forming individual, there are still many opportunities for the museum.

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that the museum is still relevant and useful even though the belief in the grand narratives and in *Bildung* has disappeared. The individual needs input from society to form herself and it is in the social relations with both the museum and the interaction with other museum users, that she can form herself and get confirmation about who she is as a person. This means that we can assume that future museum users will be very motivated to visit museums and engage in exhibitions, since the art museum will be the perfect place to be exposed to new viewpoints and ideas, which are essential for the self-forming project. This inner

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motivation or drive is very specific for self-formation, since the self-formation project is related to the person directly and not to outer demands for a better behaviour or canonical knowledge, which might not interest the individual. Following these thoughts, the museum could become a place, which sustains, inspires and enhances this inner motivation for self-formation. That this is already happening can be seen in many projects across Europe and the U.S. An example, which highlights just how institutionalized the self-formation of the individual is becoming, is ICOM 2007, where one of the themes was called 'Public Institutions, Personal Learning'.[2] The museum encourages people to use the collections in their personal learning and self-formation.

However, one theme or a few sporadic projects is not the same as changing the role of the museum in general. Further developments in the line of self-formation, could be for the museum to actively acknowledge the role as partner in a dialogue or as a contributor to a debate. This would not only imply a self-reflection from the museum's side, but also a turn towards issues and matters, which would be relevant and interesting for museum users (Houlberg Rung 2007). But if this is the direction museological practice should follow, how does the way the museum encourages people to behave and form themselves, correspond with the type of citizens we need in Western societies today? Said in another way, what kind of individual is the 'civic machine' (the museum) producing today?

Innovation Society

Knowledge society, experience society, innovation society; these are some of the concepts developed in order to describe the new type of society, which has emerged in Western societies in recent years. The Danish government formulated the challenges of this new society this way:

> 'We must compete on knowledge. On ideas. On the ability to adapt and find new solutions. Our security in the future demands that we become better at creating new knowledge and new ideas. We must enhance the individual Dane's possibility for unfolding himself. We must make Denmark a leading knowledge society' (Haubro 2006: 3).

It shows the way society has changed from a focus on production of products, to a focus on new knowledge and innovative ideas. The production process itself is being outsourced to other countries, where labour is not so expensive. The constant generation of new ideas demands creative, independent and original employees, who continually renew their abilities and adapt to new situations. These employees have been described by Richard Florida as the 'Creative Class'. Florida calls human creativity 'the ultimate economic resource'(Florida 2004: xiii) and in his book 'The Rise of the Creative Class', he argues that nearly a third of the workforce in the US is involved in creative jobs. His main task in the book is to expose the factors which draw creative

people to certain areas: Technology, Talent and Tolerance, and he argues that the places, which supply these factors, will attract the creative class (Florida 2004: 8-12). But what is interesting about the creative class is that the skills that they need in order to be innovative and creative in their work, are the same as those the self-forming individual is developing and applying in social interactions in, for example, the museum.

As described above self-formation is an inner motivated creative activity, where the individual is forming herself and holds an original attitude, constantly seeking to develop herself through social experiences and relationships. This is precisely what the creative class is doing in their job situation. These individuals are driven by an inner motivation to constantly form themselves and their jobs have become part of this process (Haubro 2006: 3). The inner motivation is very different from the requirement of competencies or lifelong learning, which companies also demand from their workers. Today the employee still needs skills, but what is essential, is that she can apply and combine them in new and creative ways. It is not so much about requiring specific skills as it is about being in a constant state of inspiration or change or, you could say, to have an 'original attitude'.

It is interesting to see how the quest for lifelong learning, which was very important for museums only a few years back is slowly being replaced or supplemented with projects where museums users themselves define the process and the input that they get from a museum visit. An example of this is the Art Labs for young people, developed at the National Gallery in Copenhagen, Denmark. Here a large group of young people participated in the conceptual and practical development of a section of the museum specifically designed for young people. Today ten of these young people, called Art Pilots, are working in the labs, designing events and communicating art to other young people. This process of user-driven innovation, was of course beneficial for the museum to ensure that Labs would be interesting for the target group, but more importantly it also highlighted the way young people work and how they use a museum. This showed a very personal approach to the art works, which is also reflected in their choice of the annual theme: 'where do I fit into the picture'. They are not pursuing specific skills, but instead looking for an arena, where they can develop and perform themselves on the basis of the input they get from their engagement with artworks.[3]

In this way, the shift from production society to innovation society mirrors the shift from *Bildung* to self-formation in the museum. As I described above, this can be seen as part of a general epistemological turn, which has developed the last decades across disciplines and sciences, where focus has turned to the individual and the personal. However, theoretical and philosophical developments can be supported and endorsed by the state, and in this way they can have more or less influence on the decisions and changes, which happen in society. The innovation society is built upon self-forming and inner motivated employees, and it is imperative for the State to teach people how to

become creative and innovative. In this context, the museum is an institution, which encourages and inspires self-formation by designing a space where people, in a social setting, are exposed to experiences, which require a response and judgment and by this establishes a forum for creative self-formation.

I have in this short article wished to point out the similarities between the self-forming individual and the creative employee in the innovation society, and by this get closer to an understanding of whether the museum today can been seen as a 'civic machine', which produces individuals with qualities that the State needs. Of course this is a black and white question, perhaps just as the conclusion that the museum in the seventeenth century was a civic machine, is a too simple an answer. However, based on the discussions above, it is interesting, in the light of the *Bildung* tradition, to acknowledge that there are still connections between the ideology of the state and the type of individuals that the museum inspires people to be.

Notes

[1] The thoughts in this article are a further development of a paper presented at the conference: 'NAMU - **Making National Museums'** in Linköping, Sweden in February 2007. The paper is available in the electronic conference proceedings on http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/022/017/ecp072217.pdf

[2] See ICOM programme: http://www.icom-oesterreich.at/2007/CECA_en-1.html Visited 13th of October 2007

[3] See http://ungeslaboratorierforkunst.dk/index.asp?key=1

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Biography

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Theoretical Perspectives in New Labour's Cultural Policy: Art Museums as Vehicles for Social Inclusion

Victoria Durrer

Abstract

Particularly since the nineteenth century, art museums have been described by politicians, philanthropists, academics, and arts administrators as institutions with the potential to civilise, educate, and socialise society (Duncan 1995; Bennett 1998a). However, the inaccessibility of the arts and art museums to a wide public has prompted much debate on their role in society (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991; Bennett 1998b; Harrison 1993). With respect to UK cultural policy, this can be seen as a change from stressing excellence in the 1950s (Hewison 1995) to access and participation (and promoting democracy and equality) in the 1960s (McGuigan 1996) to market oriented service provision (and the promotion of the economy) under Thatcher (Kawashima 1997). Since Labour came to power in the UK at the election of Tony Blair in 1997, the arts have been specifically tied to the term 'social inclusion'. 'Social inclusion' is a term in the current Labour administration's social policy and references an aim to address poverty in a more holistic way by assisting those who may be shut out from participation in mainstream society due to economic, social, political, or cultural means. Policy directives, such as those presented by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (1999; 2000), argue that increasing access to these institutions can boost a person's self-confidence and self-esteem which can lead to greater chance of employment, educational attainment, social networks, and life enjoyment. Deborah Stevenson (2004) has argued that cultural policies, such as these, demonstrate Labour's operationalization of theorist Raymond Williams' (1958) anthropological view of culture, stated in the mid-twentieth century. However, in doing so, such a process continues to privilege traditional forms of art and elitism in institutions in the sense that it can be understood as an effort to 'civilise' those who are deemed marginalized or excluded. This paper will argue that Labour's use of art as a tool for social inclusion not only employs Raymond Williams' more anthropological interpretation of culture, but also that of Matthew Arnold (1867-69), who in the nineteenth century presented a more elitist view of culture - a view that coincided with politicians' use of art museums as a means of "elevating" the working classes.

Key Words: social inclusion, cultural policy, Raymond Williams, Matthew Arnold, art gallery

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Introduction

Particularly since the nineteenth century, art museums have long been described by politicians, philanthropists, academics, and arts administrators as institutions with the potential to civilise, educate, and socialise society (Duncan 1995; Bennett 1998a). However, the inaccessibility of the arts and art museums to a wide public has prompted much debate on their role in society (Bourdieu and Darbel 1991; Bennett 1998b; Harrison 1993). With respect to UK cultural policy, this can be seen as a change from stressing excellence in the 1950s (Hewison 1995) to participation (and promoting democracy and equality) in the 1960s (McGuigan 1996) to market oriented service provision (and the promotion of the economy) under Thatcher during the 1980s and early 1990s (Kawashima 1997). Since Labour came to power in the UK at the election of Tony Blair in 1997, the arts have been specifically tied to the term 'social inclusion'.

'Social inclusion' is a concept used in the current Labour administration's social policy, and references an aim to address the eradication of poverty in a more holistic way by assisting those who may be shut out from participation in mainstream society due to economic, social, political, or cultural means. Belfiore (2003; 2004) has explained that the (forced) need to prove the possible economic contributions that culture could make to society during the Thatcher years, which stressed 'value for money', has now been joined with the potential role that the arts can play in promoting social inclusion and cohesion. These objectives are the same as the social betterment called for via the arts in the nineteenth century (Belfiore 2004). For Labour, government funding of the arts should be inextricably linked with social policy aims for social inclusion. While emphasising social concerns, Labour's current cultural policy does attempt to also address economic and aesthetic or artistic excellence concerns; all of which are reliant on both the understandings of culture put forth by Matthew Arnold (1993) and Raymond Williams (1958).

Perhaps part of the result of the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots that seemed to have increased greatly during the reign of the Conservative government from 1979 to 1997 (Walker and Walker 1997; Lister 1998) and as part of the effort to improve the economy through increasing employment and boosting urban regeneration in light of rapid globalization, Labour stepped forward in 1997 espousing policies now deemed, and arguably so, part of a 'third way' agenda (Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998). The focus is largely on the economic potential of cities, communities and people (Powell 2000; Evans 2001; Lister 1998) through the use of tourism, new iconic cultural buildings (Plaza 1999; Garcia 2004) urban branding (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004) and cultivating a 'creative class' for the knowledge economy (Florida 2002), but delivered via language that emphasises 'aspiration' and 'opportunity' (DCMS 2005; SEU 2005) as well as issues regarding the responsibilities and the rights of citizens (Blair 1998; Powell 2000).

With regards to culture policy directives, such as those presented by the UK government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (1999; 2000; 2005), it is argued that increased access to art museums can boost a person's self-confidence and self-esteem which can lead to greater chance of employment, educational attainment, social networks, and life enjoyment.

This paper will argue that New Labour's use of art as a tool for social inclusion not only employs Raymond Williams' (1958) anthropological interpretation of culture (Stevenson 2004), but also that of Matthew Arnold (1993), who in the nineteenth century presented an elitist view of culture. Although these interpretations have been referenced together in policy directives (Labour Party 1997; Selwood 1998) and academic journals discussing cultural policy (Stevenson 2004; Bennett 2005), they are typically presented in an either/or understanding rather than operating in tandem with each other. Examining the contradictions within New Labour's cultural policy, as seen through these two theoretical lenses, sheds light on the ways in which culture can and has simultaneously encouraged economic, social, and aesthetic gains.

This paper will begin by presenting how both Matthew Arnold's and Raymond Williams' interpretations of culture have been reflected in and in turn reflect the political and social uses of art during their times. The oppositional nature of these theories will be unpacked. Next, the paper will describe Labour's social exclusion and inclusion policies. Attention will be given to that Government's encouragement of cultural institutions to embrace strategies of social inclusion through cultural policy, particularly through the bodies of DCMS and Arts Council England (ACE). Finally, the paper will argue that this encouragement reflects both Arnold's and Williams' conceptions of culture.

In this discussion, gallery and museum will be used synonymously to mean publicly funded art institutions that have permanent art collections and special exhibitions. The 'arts' is a reference to the field of the arts (Bourdieu 2000) or the 'art world' and is here understood as an aspect of culture. With regards to 'arts for social inclusion', 'for social inclusion' is here defined as: 1) projects/activities that are funded under government-directed aims for social inclusion, 2) projects/activities that practitioners articulate as part of a social inclusion agenda, and 3) projects/activities that are targeted at groups labelled socially excluded.

'The best that has been thought and said'

In his publication *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-69), English cultural critic and poet Matthew Arnold (1993: 62), put forth that culture 'is a study of perfection… perfection which consists in becoming something rather than having something, in an inward condition of the mind and the spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances.' It is 'the best that has been thought and said' (Arnold, 1993: 63). In this way, Arnold was arguing for the idea that culture in being 'perfection' was the best representation of all of mankind. For Arnold, high

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culture represented mankind's most profound ideas and as such stood as the ideals to which all of mankind should aspire to be and to achieve. He advanced the idea that culture had the power to heal the ills of society. Seen in a political way, it could, according to Arnold, be used to 'elevate' society, and the masses, to the level of perfection that culture, or high culture, stood for.

Influenced by the French education system, in 1861 Arnold wrote an essay entitled *Democracy* in which he set out to discuss a key problem he saw existing in England. Essentially, the issue was how to maintain high cultural ideals. He did not see democracy as being represented in political institutions nor economic ones; but rather as a collection of cultural values (Collini 1994). He argued that since the eighteenth century these cultural values had declined, becoming more philistine. In order to promote a democratic society, cultural values needed to remain in the highest order, celebrating what he determined to be 'excellence' in the arts and culture: 'great' poetry and scholarship for instance. The government, in his view, could play a larger role in promoting these ideals (Collini 1994). For example, Arnold was concerned with the way in which the State could represent and put forth ideals of high reason and serve as a disseminator of intelligence and laudable instincts — representing the 'best' of what has been thought and said (Bennett 2005). Arnold's writing focused first on English society's antagonism toward the State´s ability in promoting high cultural (democratic) ideals and second, on the middle classes as the future of the country (Collini 1994). In *Democracy* and *Culture and Anarchy*, he critiqued what he saw as the English middle class' narrow intellectualism, small-minded qualities of aesthetics, and its complacency. Arnold was concerned with the way in which the State could represent and put forth ideals of high reason and serve as a disseminator of intelligence and laudable instincts — representing 'the best that has been thought and said' (Bennett 2005).

There is some confusion in the existing critical literature on Matthew Arnold as to how influential his ideas were to his contemporaries. Collini (1994) argues that many in the higher echelons did not enjoy Arnold's criticism as Victorian society was enjoying a boom of self-confidence. Yet, Bell (2000) has noted a number of critics contemporary to Arnold who stated that his ideas and in fact his poetry were so grand as to appeal to only the most 'cultivated' of readers. Further, Bell (2000) has explained that the ideas put forth in *Culture and Anarchy* were constantly called upon by those in positions of power, as they legitimised their role within society. Bennett (2005: 463) explains that Arnold's literary criticism — his role in making judgments — established him as a 'cultural authority'.

It is significant to note that Arnold was not alone in thinking that high culture, aesthetics, and similar ideals had an important role to play in society at the time — Arnold's ideas were reflected in and reflective of their time. Reform Bills (1832, 1867) extended the voting rights of middle and working class males. A fear of what might happen to society when its decisions could be made by a different majority of voters abounded (Bennett 2005), and Arnold's

poetry as well as *Culture and Anarchy* attempted to address 'anarchy' in the 'era of the crowd' (McWeeny 2003: 93). Philistinism and intellectual laziness had no place in such a time. People, it was argued, had to hold to high cultural ideals to maintain the best knowledge and thought as well as to promote an equal and cohesive society (Arnold 1993; Bennett 2005).

While Arnold may not have agreed with instrumental uses of art, as he found them, particularly in terms of economics, too 'mechanical' (Bennett 2005: 456), his writing coincided with attempts by nineteenth-century politicians and museum officials (Bennett 1998b), such as Henry Cole (1884), to widen the audience for art appreciation in order to address the growing number of voters, increase the economic production of the country and improve the morals of the masses. Duncan (1995) has explained that during this time public art museums in Europe were products of a government that claimed it provided the right things for its people. Those in power who possessed enough cultural capital and distinctive taste to truly appreciate art (Bourdieu 2000) believed that art museums could express the goodness of a state or the civic-mindedness of its chief citizens who often donated objects or funds toward the construction of museums (Macdonald 1998). These ideas are apparent in Arnold's (1993) arguments regarding the role of the State. For example, in the debate over extending the hours of London's South Kensington Museum into the evening, then-Superintendent Sir Henry Cole (1884: 363) argued that opening the museum in the evening may provide working men an alternative to the 'gin palace'. He also argued that opening the museum on Sundays might help in preventing the workingman's temptation to commit sins (Weil 1997).

The benefits of art for the working classes were viewed by individuals like Cole and political figures at the time as something that would almost magically happen — an effect that would be exerted on the individual as viewer, rather than as a thinking, reacting being. Collini (1994: 5) has explained that Matthew Arnold (1901) was greatly concerned with the 'spirit' of people and often referenced a state of mind that was simultaneously emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically possessing of one's experiences and way of life. He stated, 'What the English public cannot understand is that a man is a just and fruitful object of contemplation much more by virtue of what spirit he is of than by virtue of what system of doctrine he elaborates' (Arnold 1901: I, 208). The effect that high art or culture might have on affecting this state of mind, particularly on that of the working classes, can be seen in a contemporary magazine that stated upon the opening of a new section of the Victoria and Albert Museum (then South Kensington Museum) in 1858:

> 'The anxious wife will no longer have to visit […] taprooms to drag her […] husband home. She will seek for him at the nearest museum, where she will have to exercise […] persuasion […] to tear him away from the rapt contemplation of a Raphael' (Cited in Physick 1982: 35).

This idea, in turn, demonstrates that museums stood as representations of

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power and political authority — symbols of higher learning and elitism (Duncan 1995) and institutions in which great culture could be preserved and shared with the public (Arnold 1993). For example, when he was Prime Minister in 1856, Lord Palmerston made the case to Parliament for the establishment of a National Portrait Gallery and explained that gallery visitors who viewed portraits of noble and respected individuals would be led to replicate their 'noble actions' (Cited in Hooper-Greenhill 1988: 224). In viewing these objects depicting politically sanctioned individuals, thus becoming politically sanctioned objects themselves, museum visitors might somehow walk away with an inspired feeling to commit (politically/socially) 'worthy' actions. As a result, the museum, which protected and preserved great culture, was viewed as a vehicle through which many government officials articulated themselves as able to affect social behaviour as well as establish/confirm a set of racial, ethnic, cultural, and moral norms through a task of self-education and improvement (Bennett 1998b).

Culture, Arnold argued, was a means to promote democratic participation, implying that without the influence of high culture, or high ideals individuals might not be able to make the 'right' voting decisions (Arnold 1993). In response to the extension of voting rights, Henry Cole stated in 1867 that people needed to be led away from public houses and he knew no better way than to 'open museums freely to them' (Select Committee, para. 808: 730). Through the vehicle of museums, the arts were not only a means of promoting mainstream democratic participation in society and influencing individuals to make the 'right' voting decisions, but would also encourage them to (i) be more productive laborers, thus promoting the economy, and (ii) have better morals thus promoting a more civilized society as a whole. So, as Matthew Arnold (1993: 63) stated, culture thus had an 'important function to fulfill' for society.

Arnold's view of culture is somewhat problematic in its exclusion of aspects of daily life, such as language, common traditions and rituals, and popular culture (Gallagher 1992); in essence, Arnold's view is quite elitist. For Arnold, culture cannot be possessed (Bennett 2005), but represents a pursuit of 'perfection' (Arnold 1993: 62). Arnold (1993: 79) argued that culture should not be taught 'down to the level of inferior classes'; rather, standards must be adhered to so that the best knowledge could be more widespread and 'make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light' (Arnold 1993:79).

Culture is Ordinary

Unlike Arnold (1993), who asserted that culture should be created and protected by the higher echelons, Raymond Williams (1958) thought that popular culture should be embraced. Culture, and perhaps more specifically literature, was not something that was or should be sacred, as Arnold (1993) suggested, but instead revealed the toils of time and place. Culture was about, and reflective of, society—or the process and relationships that occur

within it (Williams 1979). He welcomed the idea that traditional culture might change as its audience widened. In 1958, Williams (1989a: 6) defined the term *culture* in its more anthropological sense, explaining that 'We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life—the common meanings; [and] to mean the arts and learning—the special processes of discovery and creative effort'. Williams (1989a) combined these two aspects of culture to examine a context of personal meanings concluding, 'Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind' (Williams 1989a: 6).

The flexibility of Williams' (1958) definition of culture, incorporating high arts and learning with that of aspects of daily life can be seen alongside a historical context focused on social and economic changes. Collini (1994) has stated that the mid-twentieth century was a time when the traditional concept of culture put forth by Matthew Arnold came into question. Recruitment to institutions of higher education widened and traditional understandings of 'high culture' were seen to be reflective of the unjust relations between the sexes, classes, and races (Collini 1994). The separation of traditional high arts and learning with that of the 'ordinary' became less clear with the emergence of Pop Art (Hewison 1995) and community arts (Harding 1995) as well as new grassroots arts museums (Kawashima 1997) with exhibitions that were intended to be more representative of society (Moreno 2004).

This mingling of high culture and the ordinary was also reflected in concurrent cultural policies, which were focused more on 'social access' (McGuigan 1996: 54). In 1967 the Arts Council of Great Britain's (ACGB) Royal Charter emphasized the organization's duty to increase the accessibility of arts to the public across regional and class boundaries (Belfiore 2002). In the ACGB's Annual Report of 1976/77, Secretary General Roy Shaw defined community art as 'the activity of artists in various art forms, working in a particular community and involving the participation of members of that community' (ACGB 1977: 2). Artist David Harding (1995) explains that Shaw's definition demonstrates the belief that community art was a democratization of legitimized culture, showing an early link in the ideas of Arnold and Williams in the way that those in State positions were keeping hold of what was the best culture by choosing to incorporate community art in its discussion of Art. This is also seen in current DCMS (2007a) and ACE moves to research participation in less institutionalized, voluntary arts activities. As Allen (1995) has pointed out, the arts may not have fully embraced the idea of being all-inclusive in order to guard standards of 'quality'.

The Role of the Arts and its Institutions in Social Inclusion:

The term *social exclusion* is as problematic (Levitas 2005) as the term *culture* and even more so when the two are put together. The term originated in France in 1974 to describe an underclass that fell outside the State's social insurance policies (Silver 1995). The idea entered the UK in 1979 with Peter Townsend's publication *Poverty in the United Kingdom*. Where *poverty*

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addresses a lack of material resources that aid one's participation in society, *social exclusion* is argued to be a more thorough definition of a process of being kept out of the political, social, economic, and cultural structures that govern one's integration into society (Walker 1997).

Labour's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, now Social Exclusion Task Force— SETF since June 2006) explains social exclusion as:

> '…what can happen when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing so that they can create a vicious cycle in people's lives'.[1]

Social exclusion is not a linear process, but a cyclical one that can be passed through generations (SETF 2006). The issue of process is inherent in government and academic descriptions of social exclusion. More specifically, it is often seen as a breakdown between individual, society, and the state (Levitas 2005). Some people may be socially excluded in one way, and not in others, and each individual has a unique experience of exclusion (Newman, McLean and Urquhart 2005). The use of the term social exclusion is argued to account for individuals' inability to carry out their social roles (Townsend 1979; Levitas 2005). These could be that of parent, producer, or even consumer.

Put in this way, social exclusion in Great Britain implies a fear on the part of the included that something might happen to society if not everyone can participate fully in the mainstream. A number of scholars argue that this fear is closely linked to the need for a successful market economy (Levitas 2005) and dependency on consumption (Saunders 1993) and/or participation (Townsend 1979) as a key role of citizenship, which is argued to be achieved via the mechanisms of education (Wagner 2007) and paid work (Lister 1998). This idea has also been articulated as a fear of the State's loss of control over the mass public (Sandell 1998, 2003), which has Arnoldian (Arnold 1993) implications in Labour's cultural policy, namely that by disseminating ideals through culture, individuals may be able to better perform those necessary social roles.

Richard Sandell (1998) has delineated an interpretation of the various aspects of social exclusion: first, economic aspects; second, social aspects that involve the importance of social participation; third, political aspects, such as issues of citizenship; and finally, cultural aspects involving issues of access to cultural organisations and activities. It is in the last point, which specifically addresses culture, where the arts can be seen more clearly to play a role; however, it is claimed by policy makers that all points are relevant to the arts (DCMS 1999, 2000).

Since Labour's establishment of SEU in 1997, cultural policy has played a role in addressing the issue of social inclusion. In a 1998 report entitled

Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, SEU identified the problems of social exclusion and formulated policies for these problems based on comments from eighteen Policy Action Teams (PATs). These teams were made up of officials from government departments at the time as well as experienced practitioners. They were asked to consider integrated ways in which 'problems of poor neighbourhoods' or social exclusion could be addressed. DCMS set up one team, known as 'PAT 10', which considered the possible role of museums and galleries in tackling these issues. As a result of findings from the PAT reports, SEU (2001) devised an action plan, *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan*. The role of DCMS in the efforts to lessen the gap between deprived areas and the rest of England is presented there in the form of distributing funding fairly and setting out social inclusion targets for arts organizations (SEU 2001).

The Labour administration argues that celebratory urban labels such as European Capital of Culture and institutions like art museums, can help combat social exclusion through economic capital — the creation of jobs through tourism (Garcia 2004; Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004). Further, it is argued that as public spaces for the consumption of culture, art museums can serve as democratic and open forums in which socially excluded audiences can access cultural capital (Bourdieu 2000) and participate in mainstream activities, thus becoming socially 'included' (Jones and Wilks-Heeg 2004).

The DCMS and ACE have published a number of directives calling for art museums to specifically address social inclusion. One of the key early documents, the DCMS's *Centres for Social Change: Museums, Galleries and Archives for All* (DCMS 2000), set out policies that museums, galleries, and archives could adopt in order to accomplish this aim. These have included mainstreaming social inclusion; promoting wider access via use of the Internet and outreach projects; forming partnerships with outside organisations and developing projects in partnerships that address social exclusion; acquiring collections more reflective of the diverse public; and further developing the role of galleries, museums, and archives as 'agents of social change' (DCMS 2000: 5). Such objectives are suggested to be carried out by targeting socially excluded groups and promoting their access to these institutions via marketing (DCMS 2000).

In the past five years, there have been a number of academic articles (Appleton 2001; Sandell 2002; Newman, McLean, and Urquhart 2005) and studies (GLLAM 2000) published investigating the delivery of social inclusion policies within arts institutions. Long and Bramham (2006) and others (Newman and McLean 2004; West and Smith 2005) have problematized the use of culture for promoting inclusion, as they do not believe that simply combating exclusion means that inclusion has resulted. The lack of clarity on understanding social ex- and inclusion that exists in political and academic arenas can also be seen within the arts (Newman and McLean 2004a; Mason 2004; West and

Smith 2005). This ambiguity inevitably creates inconsistency amongst practitioners as to how to address the issue of social exclusion and a continued debate on what the role of art museums in general can be in society (Newman and McLean 2004). Nevertheless, DCMS annual reports make explicit references to widening access and participation to culture (DCMS 1999, 2000). Combating social exclusion was not only addressed in the directive *Centres for Social Change: Museums, Galleries, and Archives for All* (DCMS 2000), but was also included in two of DCMS's six objectives in 2001 (Creigh-Tyte and Stiven 2001).

Tensions

As part of her work on Labour's cultural policy, Stevenson (2004) has explained that, with respect to social inclusion, the policy has inbuilt contradictions. These contradictions revolve around interpretations of culture as well as ideological understandings of social inclusion (Levitas 2005). She states that these tensions arise through Labour's operationalization of Raymond Williams' (1989a: 6) anthropological understanding of culture—an understanding that has underpinned much cultural policy and planning within the Labour party over the past thirty-odd years (Stevenson 2004).

It is argued in this article that Labour's cultural policy regarding social inclusion actually incorporates the oppositional and contradictory understandings of culture put forth by Raymond Williams (1958) and by Matthew Arnold (1993). Through a more anthropological understanding of culture, Labour policies have promoted wider access and participation in terms of the consumption of art museums. Yet, at the same time, Labour has augmented the role of the State in social inclusion strategies and publicly funded art galleries in disseminating high cultural ideals that can create a more democratic and equal society—an Arnoldian understanding of culture (Arnold 1993).

Participation in and access to the consumption of art museums has had to confront changing ideas regarding its exclusive nature (Duncan 1995). As PAT 10's Executive Summary (DCMS 1999: 5) stated, 'arts … bodies which receive public funds SHOULD be accessible to everyone [and] actively engage those who have been excluded in the past' (emphasis added). Attempts are being made by DCMS and ACE to promote participation as well as a wider inclusion of individuals' culture (Williams 1989b). Since Stevenson (2004) has made a strong case regarding the connection of these policies to Williams' interpretation of culture, only a few examples will be cited here. In the consultation paper *Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st Century Life* (2005), DCMS asserted that museum collections should be more reflective of diverse communities and play a larger role in citizenship and the strengthening of community identity. PAT 10 (DCMS 1999: 10) called for the incorporation of more 'small-scale community initiatives' in funding streams.

The ACE has also promoted widening participation within the arts, not only in its recently held *Arts Debate*[2] online, but also in its investigation of more

socially-engaging and participatory art projects regarding social inclusion conducted by Jermyn (2001, 2004). Projects involved, for example, digital arts, textiles, painting, and writing with groups such as older people living in sheltered accommodation, young families, prisoners, or the homeless, groups that are labelled in government policies as 'socially excluded' (SEU 2001). Further, DCMS (2000; 2005) has upheld museums as centres for dialogue which may lead to increased social cohesion as well as places in which volunteering, education, and training can occur. While these are economic aspects of social inclusion, they are also argued to promote citizenship and community identity as well as one's quality of life through increased social networks and lifelong learning (DCMS 2007b)—issues stressing the more equal, democratic society for which Arnold (1993) also argued.

DCMS has also recently made a move to investigate the practice of the arts by non-professionals by commissioning the first national research into voluntary arts activity, which has occurred through the joint effort of DCMS and ACE beginning in 2007 (DCMS 2007a). The research is intended to provide more statistical data as to how people participate in the arts possibly outside public funding as well as further promote Government engagement with that activity. The fact that such activities are beginning to be considered more strongly within Government funding is arguably reminiscent of Williams' (1958) more all-encompassing understanding of culture. Such a research project also shows that DCMS and ACE are taking an interest in understanding the kind of cultural activity that may not be mainstream or provided by the State. This attention seems to be welcoming of the kind of change to the art establishment that Williams (1989b) argued naturally occurred when audiences and artistic practices are widened.

However, beneath this more inclusive consideration of culture is an Arnoldian one. Government bodies' attention to varied and less institutionalized aspects of culture also implies the State's interest in maintaining a watchful role of those activities, protecting the best knowledge that Arnold (1993) argued should be maintained. While there has been a move in the policy literature toward increasing participation and involvement in creative activity (DCMS 1999, 2000, 2005), Arnoldian viewpoints that privilege culture as a means of bettering society are still apparent. Collini (1994: 116) and Bennett (2005) have stated that Arnold's ideas that culture could 'heal' or 'suppress' social problems underpins much twentieth century educational thinking and activity and is even apparent in the tone behind the establishment of the BBC and the British Council. Such a tone also exists in Labour's cultural policies on social inclusion with regards to art museums.

DCMS documents emphasise the consumption of cultural activities rather than their production (Long and Bramham 2006). Indeed, Arnold (1993: 79) argued that culture was delivered through 'great men' — 'apostles', not the masses. Bennett (1998b) has already pointed out that such Victorian ideas of bettering the working class by allowing them access to the consumption of

art museums are replicated in DCMS actions. An example is in the PAT 10 (DCMS 1999: 6) report which found that 'arts…can contribute to neighborhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities'. DCMS (2000, 2005) stresses museums' ability to give people space for reflection, a place to better understand their past and their situation in the present. These findings recall the Arnoldian view that maintaining and promoting high cultural ideas would further a democratic and ordered society for the 'anarchic' masses (Arnold 1993). In addition, these spaces of reflection evoke Arnold's (1901) references to the ways in which high cultural ideals could affect one's spirit — emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically — and in turn one's experiences and way of life (Collini 1994). DCMS (2005: 10) has further stated that cultural institutions are an 'essential part of the infrastructure of the kind of society of opportunity that [Labour] is trying to create'. The role of the State Arnold saw in promoting high ideals (determined by an elite few) is echoed in such a statement.

Arnold's (1993: 79) ideas that 'the great men of culture' could carry forward the best knowledge can also be heard in statements about maintaining excellence in the arts. As James Purnell, the current Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport (2007) stated at a recent speech at the National Portrait Gallery, 'We want our art to be the best, our museums and collections to be the greatest …everyone should have the chance to get a taste for the best, to expect the best, to engage in the best way they can'. As Arnold himself may have claimed, excellence or high ideals can make the culture of the country world class (Purnell 2007), which can then create a truly democratic society. Cultural policy, according to Purnell (2007) is established through a pyramid form: participation is at the foundation, followed by education, and at the peak is excellence. Arnold (1993: 79) disagreeing with what our contemporary culture understands as 'dumbing down', argued against 'teaching down to the level of inferior classes', stating that 'ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses'. Rather than promoting popular culture through the language of 'excellence,' as Williams (1958) argued for, Labour, like Arnold, contends that a level of standards must be maintained and disseminated. Purnell (2007) explained that world class status cannot be achieved without providing access to the arts for everyone. Arnold, too, felt that high culture should be brought 'outside the clique of the cultivated and learned' so that the 'social idea' of democracy and equality could be achieved (Arnold 1993: 79), but only in those forms deemed worthy by an elite few. Williams' (1989b) ideas of truly welcoming change in even traditional art that occurs when audiences change or widen are not necessarily expressed in these statements.

Conclusion

In *Beyond Boundaries* (2002), ACE Chief Executive, Peter Hewitt, explained that the Arts Council was making the case for greater recognition of 'the civic, public, and democratic value of the arts' (ACE 2002). The case for the economic

value of the arts has also been made by authors such as Garcia (2004) and Stevenson (2004), and in policies by DCMS (2005). Beneath these ideas are conflicting understandings of culture that at once seem oppositional, but are actually closely intertwined (Belfiore and Bennett 2007), and unavoidably so.

The dichotomised character of art museums as national or local elitist status symbols, and public institutions, like the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, has inevitably created a debate as to how open or limited the public's access can be to the objects, representations, and discourses held within the museum. Newman and McLean (2004) argue that this has been seen as both an altruistic and coercive use of culture.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate how changing directives in cultural policy are reflective of and reflected in changing opinions of culture's, and specifically art museums', role in society. We have gone from Matthew Arnold's (1993: 79), more elitist and civilising vision of culture as a means to elevate individuals to a level of 'sweetness and light' seen through the early form of cultural policies that were implemented in the nineteenth century, to Raymond Williams' (1958: 6) understanding of culture as the 'common meanings….as well as the arts and learning', shown not only in Arts Council policy of the time (McGuigan 1996), but also in changes within the arts and society. Today, under New Labour, the connection that policy bodies like DCMS (DCMS 1999, 2000) make between the arts and social inclusion incorporate both of these interpretations. Culture is at once of and for everyone (Williams 1958) and in the State's encouragement of socially excluded individuals' engagement with the culture selected for public funding, a better society is argued to be made available (Arnold 1993), economically and socially. Thus, Labour's cultural policy is dependent on the contradictions in Arnold and Williams' interpretations of culture in order to promote various economic, social, and aesthetic achievements.

Notes

[1] www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/

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Biography:

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The Politics of Self Definition: the monitoring of Sikh identity and culture
Saima Kaur

Abstract

This paper uses various examples to explore the construction of Sikh identity in some of UK's museums. The analysis shows how many of the exhibitions and collections focus too narrowly on the orthodox versions of the faith at the expense of broader narratives. It aims to contextualise how these narratives came to be constructed through colonialism and postcolonial experiences and their lasting impact on the community's internal and external identity. By proposing broader definitions of Sikhs, it attempts to provide the reader with a more balanced view of the community; a view takes contemporary realities and evolving identities into account. The paper proposes that it is an awareness of these realities that can help museum become more reflective of the communities they serve.

Over the past decade museums have engaged with community cohesion and social inclusion agendas in an attempt to democratize their institutional practices, promote social integration and express society's cultural diversity (MLA 2007)[1]. With reference to cultural diversity, a recent report by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council argues it is 'both dynamic and organic where definitions change according to the global socio- political language being used at any one time' (MLA 2007).

The starkest example of the changing definitions of cultural diversity is evident when comparing the ideology of the nineteenth century European museum to those present in contemporary British society. Historically the nineteenth century saw the heightening of European exploration and exploitation of the world beyond its shores. Expeditions to promote trade in far flung countries soon resulted in conquest of various overseas territories and the establishment of numerous European colonies. It was during this era that objects collected through varius legitimate and illegitimate means began to be pooled together to be displayed in newly established ethnographic museums.

Here, objects were collected and placed in strict taxonomies to construct seemingly coherent hierarchies in which European art and culture was ranked as the most noble and sophisticated. At the bottom of the heap were the

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cultures and traditions of the colonial subjects who were often deemed to be inferior and regressive, requiring the civilizing force of their new rulers. These seemingly rational and universally recognized categories reflected the values and ideals of the era and became tools legitimizing the often brutal and expensive aspects of colonial rule (Walsh 1992, Black 2000, and Hooper - Greenhill 2000). As a consequence the 'distinctions between the West and the Rest gave rise to a method of epistemic jurisdiction encased in observations, measurements, categorization, spectacles and cabinets of curiosities' (Puwar and Raghuram 2003: 24). Under these circumstances cultural diversity was a tool to uphold Eurocentric views of racial hierarchies and reinforce power structures that empowered the West at the expense of the 'rest'.

The end of colonial rule saw the beginning of a new post- colonial era during which the previously accepted understanding of cultural diversity began to unravel. Many people who had previously lived involuntarily under British rule now intentionally chose to migrate to Britain in search of economic prosperity. Consequently the process of migration and movement saw the crossing of old physical and imaginative boundaries. This gave rise to a new British cultural, economic and political landscape. Initially these new migrants were metaphorically positioned outside the boundaries of British culture and occupied the place of the 'other'. At best they inspired curiosity and warmth, at worst hostility and racism. However over the years such boundaries have been systematically transgressed giving rise to more complex social, cultural and religious identities that occupy new spaces beyond the simplicity of the 'home' culture and the 'adopted' culture (Bhabha 1994, Chambers 1990).

Over the course of time, the second and third generations growing up in post colonial Britain have taken the liberty of reconfiguring older traditions to reflect their evolving Diaspora identities. According to Cohen, Diaspora is described as communities living together in one country who acknowledge that 'the "old country"- a notion buried deep in language, religion, customs or folklore - always has some claim to their loyalty and emotions' (McLeod 2007:207). However it is critical to note that many people from the second and third generation never experienced migration or may have little affiliation with their ancestral 'home'.

Museums operating in this social landscape have to comprehend and interpret these vast and complex definitions of cultural diversity. Added to this is the ongoing need to cater for the new incoming communities which reiterates MLA's statement that cultural diversity is truly organic and dynamic.

It becomes clear that the understanding of cultural diversity has evolved from one based on assumptions of inferiority to one that is more multifaceted and celebratory. However cultural diversity has also developed a dangerous strain that articulates a trend that cannot be ignored or remedied through easy measures. According to a recent report,

'Extremism, both political and religious, is on the rise as people become

disillusioned and disconnected from each other. Issues of identity have a new prominence in our social landscape and have a profound impact upon race relations in Britain' (Commission for Racial Equality 2007).

Under these circumstances, in order to continue to connect people across religious or political divides, museums have a profound duty to be spaces that attempt to reflect a multiplicity of community identities that go beyond easy explanations.

The aim of this paper is to explore this issue in relation to the UK's Sikh community. Using a range of case studies the arguments will attempt to explore how museums have reflected Sikh identity in exhibitions and their collections. It hopes to highlight the subtle ways in which the community's true complexity continues to be ignored at the expense of the more orthodox versions of Sikh identity. The arguments will point to the role of Sikh history and the community in constructing, monitoring and safeguarding its public image. The paper will attempt to define the impact of these subtle interventions on the ongoing definition and understanding of this community within museums and the museum visitor.

The relationship between the British and Sikhs

According to the 2001 census data there are approximately 307,000 Sikhs currently living in the UK.[2] A prominent scholar of Sikhism defines a Sikh as one who reveres the ten successive historical Gurus and accepts that the spiritual authority of the Guru now lies in the sacred scriptures known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*. A Sikh upholds the sanctity of the *Gurdwara* as a sacred place of worship free from caste affiliation and gender bias. While in principle the lay Sikh generally rejects smoking or hair cutting, the orthodox observe these practically upon taking initiation into the *'Khalsa'* fold. This inner commitment is physically manifested by wearing the five K's and following certain codes of conduct.

Sikhs living in India and abroad express their religious identity in many guises. For instance, while the ideal calls for a rejection of caste, hair cutting and gender bias, all are in play and are commonly regarded as unavoidable. McLeod remarks that as a community 'however dominant the *Khalsa* mode may seem' it is never the norm. In fact 'the majority consists of the liberal, the lax, and the ambivalent' (McLeod 2002: 41). This last point is key to future discussions as it highlights the dominance of certain modes of identity at the expense of the actual complexity of the majority.

Historically, the relationship between the British and the Sikhs goes back to the colonial era. As part of their empire building exercise, the British arrived in Punjab during the 1800's, eventually annexing it in 1849 (Stronge1999). Most of the early Sikh objects in museums were collected during the colonial era as examples of fine craftsmanship, folk traditions and colonial power. These predominantly include actual and decorative arms and armour, folk

embroideries and items from the Sikh king Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court (ASHT)[3]. One of the most comprehensive collections from this era exists at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Nitingale and Swallow 2003).

The majority of Britain's current Sikh population moved from the north Indian state of Punjab to Britain in the 1950's and 1960's. A significant proportion also arrived in the 1970's from East Africa, having originally settled there generations earlier to work in the British colonies. Alike many others from the Indian Subcontinent, Sikhs became economic migrants in response to the short supply of labour in post war Britain, working primarily in the transport and manufacturing industries.

Present second and third generation Sikhs are testimony to how successful early migrants were in establishing Britain as their new home. Within the space of a few decades the newer generations, who collectively form the bulk of the Sikh Diaspora, have formed an identity distinct from their ancestors. Owing to the diversity of experiences, they give rise to a 'confluence of narratives [that are] lived and relived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re- memory' (Brah 1996: 183). Accordingly, museums operating in a post colonial context have to acknowledge that the experiences, knowledge and perspectives of the Sikh Diaspora can be collective and individual, fixed and fluid. This can be applied to their religious outlook and affiliations as well as their relationship with their ancestral homes and British society.

Representation of Sikh faith in museums

Having briefly charted the relationship between the Sikhs and the British and evolving post colonial identities, the paper will concentrate on the location and manifestation of these aspects within museum practice.

As the primary definition of a Sikh is someone who follows the Sikh religion, the first aspect to be explored is the representation of the Sikhs and their faith in museums. The case studies will be used to locate the dominant narratives presented and question whether museums effectively engage with the complexities within the Sikh faith.

The most direct example of this is St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, Glasgow where religion is used as an 'interpretive framework by which the whole of the collection can be understood and appreciated by the wider community' (Dunlop, Kelly 2007). The museum's section on Sikhism is part of a wider, permanent display exploring faith through ritual objects and social history. The Sikh objects on show include four of the five K's, a steel bowl used during the initiation ceremony, a steel bangle worn by Sikhs, a *chauri sahib* used to ritually fan the sacred scriptures and two models of Sikhism's most revered shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India. Additional objects include a *Vaisakhi* festival banner made in Scotland to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the *Khalsa* and a modern painting depicting the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak.

On one hand the collection and the choice of ritual objects seeks to capture the essence of Sikh religiosity. The painting of Guru Nanak and the model of the Golden Temple portray two of its most popular and enduring images. In turn it could be argued that the community objects capture the changing dynamics and lived experiences of the Sikh community in Glasgow. However on closer inspection the majority of the objects, such as the four K's, the steel bowl, the iconography within the painting and the *Vaisakhi* banner, relate primarily to the rituals and symbols associated with orthodox Sikhs who are initiated into the *Khalsa*.

This would not be an issue if it reflected the majority of the Sikh community. In reality they only form a small, but highly visible section of the community. This example exemplifies McLeod's argument that the *Khalsa* mode dominates the public image of Sikhs at the expense of its actual ambiguities. These ambiguities include Sikhs with uncut hair not initiated into the *Khalsa* fold and those lay Sikhs with cut hair who may follow their faith privately or on key days and festivals. Although adopting the *Khalsa* mode is seen by some Sikhs as the ideal to work towards, it is in not indicative of the aspirations of the majority (McLeod: 2002). The emphasis on the *Khalsa* ideal in museum collections is not singular to the example discussed. It can also be seen graphically in the Sikh Museum, Leicester where a series of paintings and weapons dominate the collection. Each painting depicts highly charged scenes from Sikh history showing certain historic figures, mostly men, defending the orthodoxy of the Sikh faith in the face of great persecution. Although an excellent tool to learn and celebrate Sikh history, the underlying message reiterated in each painting is likely to leave an uneasy feeling of guilt for the sizable Sikh visitors who do not uphold these ideals.

Arguably this is also true of 'Sacred Spaces', a photographic travelling exhibition created by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1999 (Nitingale and Swallow 2003). The exhibition covered numerous aspects of the Sikh faith such as charity work, gender equality and festivals. The selection of photographs used in the Sikh Museum was dominated by a series featuring numerous images on how to tie a turban. The choice of photographs quietly re-emphasising the message that the Sikh faith is dominated by men with turbans, effectively ignoring others within its fold.

Control of Sikh religious identity

However, the following example explores how depicting discrepancies between the real and the ideal can become the subject of community intervention and control. This was evident when St. Mungo's used an archival photograph of a Sikh family as a contextual image in their gallery. A leader of one Gurdwaras complaining on seeing this photograph as it depicted a 'Sikh family' in which the father figure had cut hair. Following discussions it was agreed that the image would be removed, something that the curator felt 'in hindsight was a pity as the personal story of why this man felt he had to cut his hair could have been told' (Dunlop, Kelly 2007).

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Although this may appear to be a minor example, it encapsulates the difficulties museums face when publicly acknowledging Sikhs who do not keep the 5K's and adhere to the ideal image propagated by community leaders. Despite following guidelines of good practice and consulting with the community, museums can be compromised by community leaders who fiercely guard their group's public image. It is important to note that this particular museum takes an active and community led approach to understanding the Sikh faith. The museum acknowledges that 'it is not possible to be neutral but we try to be as balanced as possible' (Dunlop, Kelly 2007). In this particular scenario, not reaching a compromise may have alienated the very group the museum wished to engage.

Another difficulty highlighted in this example is the power of museums as places that legitimise certain identities and histories over others. According to Philips they can 'contribute to the formation of universalistic ideologies and nationalistic power structures that inform societies' (Phillip 2003: 155). Although this may seem like a large claim for any small scale exhibition reaching only a small cross section of the audience, the quote indicates that exhibitions can become key markers of the production and construction of cultural identities.

Therefore publicly displaying the non-Khalsa image may be construed in some quarters as museums legitimising the rejection of the faith's ideals. This would fly in the face of the ideology promoted by many cultural institutions such as *Gurudwaras* that promote 'inter generational transmission of cultural norms and values' in an attempt to keep historical traditions and ideals alive (Thandi 1996: 231). Conversely, not representing religious ambivalence museums continue to reinforce the dominant discourses presented by a religious minority. Hooper –Greenhill points to two choices available to museums. Either 'enter the arena , fight for the power to impose meaning and definition, or stay out of the game and allow others to impose meaning and to define limits' (Hooper- Greenhill 1992: 9).

Contemporary collecting

Aside from the issues highlighted by the permanent displays at St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, how does contemporary collecting of Sikh faith objects reflect the complexity of Sikh identity? One example of contemporary collecting can be seen at Birmingham Museum Art Gallery where new additions to their Sikh related collection have been made between 1999 and 2006. These additions include several articles of the 5 K's, a turban, numerous Sikh flags, audio examples of devotional music and a watercolour of one of Birmingham's main Gurdwaras (Jaffer 2007). This contemporary collection fixes Sikh faith within context of the 5k's. Popular elements are highlighted, this time through music and flags, and community banners added to reflect the local Sikh community. As a collection these objects highlight the easily identifiable, populist and tangible aspects of Sikh faith and practice.

However, unless the aim was to collect objects that express the ideals of the faith and the main community symbols, these contemporary collections do not cover any new ground. It seems a lost opportunity to express Sikh identity beyond its dominant religious definitions. The collection does in no way reflect the fact that being a Sikh in the Diaspora is as much about your faith as it is about your social, cultural and political identity. For instance, the religious symbols of the *khanda* and *Ik Omkar* 'decorate walls, doors and windows in Sikh homes, shrines and shops, and also are embroidered on garments and set in earrings and necklaces' (Guninder Kaur 1999: 34). Furthermore, it is not uncommon to see young Sikhs sporting these symbols as tattoos. Other aspects of Sikh faith identity are evident in the 'images, symbols, newspapers, calendars' through which community traditions, values and changing ideas are transmitted (Axel 1996).

Arguably when this museum collected objects predominantly expressing the Sikh faith, it chose to sidestep the diverse guises under which the faith enters and interacts with popular culture. When this example was relayed to a leading propagator of Sikh heritage within the Sikh community, he made it clear that the faith should be kept distinct from Punjabi culture as the two had their own equal but separate place (Singh, S 2007). There are many others who go as far as stating Punjabi and popular culture pollute the purity of the Sikh faith (Singh, G 2007). This once again poses the problem of how museums should proceed if their chosen approach is counter to that recommended by the vocal minority. Perhaps one approach would be to create 'multi vocal' exhibitions that include diverse community and museum perspectives. Despite the danger of these exhibitions creating confusion for the visitor due to their multiple perspectives, they can also help 'make complexity and contradiction comprehensive and stimulating' (Phillips 2003: 166)

Preserving histories

The paper has thus far focused primarily on the expression of the Sikh faith in museums and the potential difficulties they can face when presenting it in non-orthodox forms. The discussion will now explore how colonial rule helped construct a reformed and widely accepted version of Sikhism. This examination aims to inform museum practitioners of the historical construction of the Sikh faith in an attempt to alert them to various issues that arise when the ideologies of the past clash with those of the present.

The British administration arrived in Punjab in 1849 with a 'unidimensional vision of Sikhism, namely a people of the Book, obliged to maintain the five external symbols of a reformatory religion which was anti- caste and anti-ritual' (Oberoi 1994: 213). To their dismay and confusion they found people with multiple and fluid religious identities who had never neatly defined themselves as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. They were as likely to follow the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as those of local saints and founders of folk religions. Religious teachings were communicated through oral traditions to

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the mostly illiterate rural population who were themselves keen to adopt any practices that would help appease unknown malevolent forces and protect their families from harm (Oberoi 1994).

Traditional Punjab had been a predominantly rural region. Self sufficient villages structured upon caste divisions were presided over by feudal hierarchies. With the entrance of the British, the focus shifted toward economic prosperity, education within the British system of thought and the gradual rejection of any 'regressive' folk traditions. Most of these transformations took place between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries. Many of the changes brought forward by the British administration later formed the basis of religious reform movements, the most prominent being the Singh Sabha movement, which was primarily led by educated men from the Indian elite (Oberoi 1994).

The major and lasting consequence of this ideological shift was the reconfiguration of broadly accepted religious definitions and cultural identities. For instance, the British Army insisted on their numerous Sikh soldiers bearing all the physical markers of an orthodox Sikh. This was an attempt to play on their religious distinctiveness and draw on the martial iconography present within the Sikh religious teachings (Fox 1985). By the mid twentieth century religion became a marker of communal identity and a forceful political tool. 1947 saw the most horrific manifestation of this change when India's partition saw the country divided on religious lines.[4] Religion was also used as an identity marker by people who migrated to post-war Britain. New arrivals from Punjab drew upon their religious identity to indicate their distinction from Punjabi Hindus, Punjabi Sikhs or Punjabi Muslims. In this context, being a Sikh was as much about following Sikhism as a word to define your social, political and cultural identity. This remains true for the current generations who use the term 'Sikh' to express identities broader and more complex than those relating to religion.

Perhaps not surprisingly these histories from over a century ago continue to have relevance on the current Diaspora Sikhs living in the UK. According to one of the leading researchers on Sikh history and heritage 'Sikhs in the UK are also the product of almost three generations of post-Singh Sabha revivalism and reversing some of the ingrained attitudes about religious diversity and connections with other faiths is extremely difficult' (Madra, A 2007). In practice this means that the standardized museum interpretation of the Sikh faith is matched with the community's explanations of its own religious identity. As explored previously, they both frame Sikhs in the dominant male *Khalsa* mode sidestepping the diversity of Sikh identity, including those linked to caste and gender.

Although no one would deny a community to define itself on its own terms, the problem arises when repressed histories of the past are revealed in the contemporary world. The following example gives an insight into the clash of ideologies that can take place when deeply held religious beliefs of the present

clash with those of the past. The example refers to an incident that took place in 1999 when Sikh volunteers from a prominent *Gurdwara* in Birmingham embarked on a project to re-gild the most revered of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Restoration work was to take place on original plates crafted and gilded between 1803 and 1809 by craftsmen employed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Although tarnished, they were in no way damaged and were important examples of unique Sikh artistic heritage. However during the project, the volunteers tore off the original plates and had cheaper reproductions made. These new plates were re-gilded before being placed back onto the building. This process not only damaged the original plates and the building itself, but profoundly changed the nature of the work they wished to preserve. During this same project the volunteers were accused of painting over ancient wall murals underneath the gold work and having changed any panels which depicted 'Hindu' Gods. These issues were brought to light on a Sikh heritage website which led to the author of the report being intimidated and threatened by some members of the voluntary group (Madra, A 2007). These issues were also recently highlighted in a report on BBC Radio 4.[5]

The initial point highlighted in this example is the Sikh *Gurudwara* authority's, known as the SGPC, alarming lack of sensitivity to issues of heritage and conservation. Even when these issues were brought to light and challenged, it became obvious that the power in such matters remains in the hands of the powerful few. Beyond this it draws attention to the lack of knowledge about the complexity of Sikh identity prior to the reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Prior to this era the interaction between Hindus and Sikhs was the norm and white washing over its material evidence is the equivalent of white washing history. Removing references to 'Hindu' Gods seeks to erase any allusion to a past where religious definitions were more fluid and their boundaries more permeable. Consequently it denies modern Sikhs, scholars and the wider community access into appreciating faith outside the modern framework and the ability to generate inter-religious understanding. It is also possible that although this may be a seen as a lack of knowledge in the general public, it is an active form of the denial of the past by the *Gurudwara's* authority.

However this issue does not only concern Sikhs in India, but also those in the Diaspora who usually define their identity in terms of their distinctiveness to Hindus or Muslims. Ample evidence of this can be found by logging onto some Sikh websites with a largely youth profile who seem to spend much of their time arguing about issues of Sikh identity, getting particularly heated if their religious distinctiveness is questioned.[6] As a founding member of a Sikh Youth Camp acknowledges, 'History can be a very contentious area as historical practices of Sikhs are often used to argue religious points' (Singh, G 2007).

So how would museums engage with these issues, especially if their collections give evidence of a Sikh identity contradictory to the dominant

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ideology? First and foremost museums must acknowledge the fact that they can be profoundly influential places to articulate, explore and debate these conflicting identities, new or old. They can also use these opportunities to question prejudices and facilitate inter cultural understandings, thus promoting the pluralistic approach to cohesion, equality and difference. 'Pluralism is a framework of interaction where groups show sufficient respect and recognition of one another, that they co- exist without conflict or assimilation' (MLA 2007). Despite this desire to facilitate meaningful debate to create channels of understanding, the response would remain unpredictable owing to the particularities of any museum's collection, its interpretation and the community's response.

Engaging with wider narratives

The discussion thus far has considered the ways in which museums have explored Sikh religious and cultural identities. It aimed to show how these representations can get unwittingly entangled in religious ideology, community politics and historical narratives. To put the case studies thus far in context, it is important to acknowledge museums that are engaging with Sikh culture and identity beyond its religious aspects.

The most influential exhibition thus far has been the V&A's 1999 exhibition 'The Arts of the Sikh Kingdom' which celebrated three hundred years of the birth of the Khalsa. This exhibition was the first of its kind to explore the era of 1849 to1900, the history of Punjab after its annexation by the British. It was also the first to feature video footage and contemporary photography from the 1999 Vaisakhi celebrations held at the site of its inception in Anandpur Sahib, Punjab (Stronge 1999).

Modern collecting has emphasized the recent histories and contributions made by the community through the recording of migration stories. These migration and community contribution stories have also been explored in the 'Coming to Coventry' exhibition at the Herbert Museum, Slough Museum's 2006 exhibition 'Punjab to Slough' and the current community project underway by Tyne and Wear Museum. Certain 'hidden histories' have also begun to be recovered, such as the historic relationship between the Sikhs and the British and the role Sikh soldiers played in both world wars. This is especially true of the work done by the Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail who have attempted to locate and link museum collections deemed to have links to Sikh art and history (ASHT).

Despite covering a relatively broad spectrum of narratives, none of the histories directly engage with the more difficult aspects of political or popular Sikh youth identity. For a sizeable proportion of Sikh youth, their political identity is shaped by the rise of Sikh ethno-nationalism in Punjab during the 1980's which continues to inform the ideology of many Sikh student organisations and youths today. The unfortunate effect of this has been the creation of an

insular identity that expresses itself as hostility towards people from Hindu or Muslim backgrounds. On the other hand, within the sphere of popular culture, many Diaspora Sikhs employ a wealth of cross cultural references to remix and reinvent folk traditions of the past. For instance popular Punjabi songs are now as likely to fall into the genre of Bhangra as they are R n' B and Hip Hop thus transgressing the traditional boundaries of Punjabi culture.

Perhaps most significantly there is a woeful lack of exploration of Sikh women's roles, traditions and histories within museum collections and exhibitions. This is partly due to the patriarchal nature of the Sikh community where nearly everyone in power is usually male (McLeod 1991). Redressing this balance will require an approach that does not simply insert new voices into the dominant discourse, as the leading post-colonial feminist Spivak warns us that this approach will merely uphold the status quo (Morton 2003). Many museums hold a small but important collection of folk embroideries which could be employed to reveal some of these missing narratives.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the impact of certain religious ideologies on the construction and monitoring of Sikh identity in museums. Through its various case studies it also aimed to express the difficulties faced by museums when attempting to represent the complexities of Sikh identity, especially when the religious definitions spill into culture, politics and history boundaries. It argues that although museums should continue to be informed by their communities, they must also attempt to explore Sikh identity in all its complexities and contradictions. Finally it proposes that museums must acknowledge their powerful role in shaping community identities and use this force to reveal the community afresh to itself and others.

Perhaps it is worth remembering that currently 'exhibitions often bear the burden of being representative of an entire group or region'. But as opportunities to link up with national initiative, partner museums and the community grow, 'each exhibition will be just one assertion of an ongoing debate' (Karp and Lavine 1991: 6).

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/asserts//N/
ndp_cultural_diversity_doc_7016.doc

[2]   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.aso?id=460

[3]   http://www.asht.info/index_original.html

[4]   During the partition an estimated million people were killed and 10 million were displaced from their homes.
       http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1751044.stm

[5]   http://www.punjabheritage.org/categories/material-heritage/brummies-bodge-sikhs-holy-shrine.html
       http://www.asiansinmedia.org/news/article.php/radio/646

[6]   http://www.sikhproblems.wordpress.com
       http://www.5knet.com

[7]   http://www.boss-uk.org

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The politics of 'arts premiers': Some thoughts on the *Musée du Quai Branly*.

Marilena Alivizatou

Abstract

The *Musée du Quai Branly* (MQB), France's new national ethnographic museum was the vision of a man of politics, the country's former President, Jacques Chirac. Drawing on data gathered over several weeks of fieldwork in the period July 2006-February 2007, as part of my ongoing doctoral research at the MQB, I explore the political and ideological dimensions of the museum's rhetoric *vis-à-vis* the art and culture of the 'non-West'. As such, I examine how the museum's mission to 'see justice rendered to non-European cultures' is translated in museum-work. At first, I assess the processes that led to the foundation of the MQB, by exploring the 'museumification' of ethnographic material culture based on the poetics and politics of the MQB's ancestors, the *Musée de l'Homme* and the *Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*. I then move on to question how the political will to re-imagine the relationship of France with its former colonies is pursued in the MQB's exhibitions, programmes and events. What emerges from my fieldwork is on the one hand that the MQB's narratives are strongly dominated by the curatorial voice and are, thus, rooted in Eurocentric conceptualisations of the 'exotic other' viewed through the prism of 'aesthetic universalism'. Parallel to that, however, my research so far reveals that the museum through its different activities critically engages with the political and ideological calls for an inclusive postcolonial museology.

Keywords : *Musée du Quai Branly*, arts premiers, French ethnographic museums, cultural representation, aesthetic universalism, postcolonial museology.

Introduction

This paper is concerned with the concept of 'arts premiers'[1] and the foundation of France's new and controversial museum, the *Musée du Quai Branly* (MQB). 'Arts premiers' is a neologism that has replaced the politically incorrect 'primitive art' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 166) and has been employed over the last decade with both aesthetic and political connotations alluding for some even to the indigenous peoples movement (De l'Etoile 2007). The MQB opened its door to the public after much debate and anticipation in June 2006 and according to the former French President Jacques Chirac 'stemmed

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from the political will to see justice rendered to non-European cultures' (2006: 6). As will be discussed throughout this paper, the appropriation of 'arts premiers' by Jacques Chirac and his entourage has been instrumental in the conceptualisation and making of the MQB. In this sense, the MQB was the brainchild of a man of politics, rather than an institution brought about by contemporary academic research in the field of Anthropology/Ethnology. The examination of the political connotations of 'arts premiers' and the way this is manifested in the MQB are among the main *foci* of this paper.

Built in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower and along the Seine and designed by Jean Nouvel, one of France's most prominent architects, the MQB is a lot more than a traditional museum. In terms of its overall conceptualisation, it is reminiscent of the Centre Pompidou that houses the *Musée National d'Art Moderne*. It is versatile and multifunctional offering not only permanent exhibitions, but also a wide range of live performances in the purpose-built theatre, events, programmes, temporary exhibitions, a rich library/ documentation centre as well as a hip café and an expensive restaurant. Although in this respect it is quite similar to the Centre Pompidou, what differentiates it significantly from the museum/cultural centre designed by Rogers and Piano is its subject matter and the content of its collections. As opposed to the Centre Pompidou which presents different manifestations of primarily European modern art, the core of the MQB is a collection of 300,000 mainly nineteenth and early twentieth century artefacts from Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas. This collection, which is the reason why the MQB was erected in the first place, has been one of the sources of controversy surrounding the new museum and underscores France's colonial past.

Since its grand opening and throughout the decade that preceded it, the MQB has been the subject of heated debate between, among others, anthropologists, journalists and academics in France and abroad. Drawing on these debates, as well as on preliminary findings from my ongoing research at the museum, the aim of this paper is to assess some of the ramifications of the appropriation of 'arts premiers' in the museological discourse surrounding the MQB. In the course of the following paragraphs, firstly I examine the emergence of 'arts premiers' within the context of the MQB's ancestors, the *Musée de l'Homme* (MdH) and the *Musée des Arts D'Afrique et D'Océanie* (MAAO). I then explore the interpretations of the concept through the examination of the permanent and temporary exhibitions, as well as the assessment of programmes and events. This is followed by a discussion concerning the impact of 'arts premiers' on the understanding of non-European[2] art and culture and the examination of the challenges that are raised for the future.

Ancestral Stories: The *Musée de l'Homme* and the *Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*.

The permanent collections of the MQB resulted from the unification of approximately 250,000 ethnographic artefacts of non-European origin from

the *Musée de l'Homme* and the 40,000 artefacts from the *Musée des Arts d'Afrique et D'Océanie*. The site occupied until 2003 by the MAAO welcomes as of September 2007 the new *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire d'Immigration*[3]. The MdH although deprived of its ethnographic collections, is still open today to the public as a scientific centre and a museum concerned primarily with the biological and evolutionary study of humankind. These two institutions are not only regarded as the ancestors of the MQB in terms of divesting their collections to the new museum, but also have represented display-wise two different styles in exhibiting extra-European objects: the ethnographic and the aesthetic approaches (De l'Etoile 2007).

The MdH was founded in Paris after the 1937 International Exhibition. It replaced the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro* which was founded on account of the 1887 International Exhibition, but was regarded as outdated by the beginning of the twentieth century, because it lacked systematic classification and pedagogical orientation. It also became the home of the 3,000 artefacts collected by one of the most famous publicly-funded colonial expeditions, the *Mission Dakar-Djibouti* that took place in the early thirties. Being conceived by Paul Rivet, one of the founders of the *Institut d'Ethnologie,* the MdH represents a scientific turn in the display of 'ethnographic artefacts'. In this sense, the museum as a 'jumble of exotica' (Clifford 1988: 135) is substituted for the 'museum-laboratory'. This scientific turn in ethnographic museology has been attributed to the establishment of Ethnology/ Anthropology as a new field of study in French academia (Grognet 2001). As a consequence, the museum is not only a place where artefacts are conserved and exhibited, but at the same time a rigorous research centre, the employees of which carry out fieldwork around the world.

Judging from its name and overall philosophy, the aim of the MdH was to serve the study of humankind. The vision of Rivet was for the museum to be a scientific and educational centre (1948). As such, the study of the human species would span across space and time, covering all aspects of humanity from the first prehistoric remains to contemporary communities around the world (Clifford 1988). Based on that, the permanent displays ought to feature the most representative artefacts from ethnic or cultural groups of different geographical locations, so that the human species could be contemplated in its diversity and understood in its totality. As a consequence, the most strange and bizarre artefacts, previously considered as 'curiosities', that could not fit into predefined categories (i.e. cooking, hunting etc) were now excluded from the displays (Peltier 2000).

Artefacts from around the world were presented in the same type of glass cases following a system of geographical classification. Each distinct culture was exhibited in six cases: one offering an introduction with a synthesis of representative objects and photographs and the other five explaining different aspects of the lives of the specific people (Peltier 2000). For each cultural group the display themes were the same, so that the public could make comparisons between cultures. As such, the displays created an

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anthropologically filtered narrative that produced specific knowledge easily comprehensible by the visitors, in this way combining science and education. The 'exotic aura' that surrounded the badly lit and non-labelled objects at the *Musée du Trocadéro* had given way to the scientific/ethnographic way for exhibiting non-Western artefacts (Clifford 1988: 137-140). This approach would dominate the exhibitions of the MdH until the 1960s, when temporary displays emphasising the aesthetic dimensions[4] of collections would be presented.[5]

The foundation of the MAAO in that same period was instrumental in the change of the exhibitionary practice of the MdH. While the MdH was the vision of an anthropologist, the MAAO was the vision of one of France's most controversial intellectuals and politicians, André Malraux, who from as early as 1947 had published the first parts of his essay *Le Musée Imaginaire*. During his service as Minister for Culture (1958-1968) Malraux decided that it was time for the old *Musée des Colonies* in the *Palais de la Porte Dorée*, built for the Colonial Exhibition of 1931 to be replaced by a new museum dedicated to the presentation of the arts of Africa and Oceania. In this sense, the old building with its strong colonial architectural features would be retained, but the African and Pacific collections would be presented in a different light that would emphasise their artistic and aesthetic merit. The trophy-like presentation of artefacts that dominated the museology of the *Musée des Colonies* was abandoned and instead artefacts were displayed as works of art with little or no contextual information. Breaking away from the ethnographic/scientific approach, Malraux's conceptualisation of the MAAO inspired and consolidated in the years that followed the notion of 'arts premiers' in that it emphasised the beauty of the exhibited artefacts (De l'Etoile 2007).

Although the MdH and the MAAO represented two different mentalities and ways for exhibiting collections, as ethnographic specimens and as artworks, the two institutions shared a common background concerning the relationship of France with the non-European world. The colonial themes of the architecture of the *Palais de la Porte Dorée*, such as the frescoes with the stereotypical representations of people and resources from the different French colonies (Ageorges 2006), while in fashion when the building was erected for the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, in the years of decolonisation were a painful reminder of past cruelties and exploitation. Also, the MdH while driven by the aim to achieve a universal understanding of humanity, has subsequently been criticised as Eurocentric (Somé 2003) and simplistic (Peltier 2000) in its representation of the non-West. Besides, the ethical dimensions of the *Mission Dakar-Djibouti*, previously celebrated for enriching the African collections of the MdH and increasing knowledge on Central Africa, have recently been re-examined with significant scepticism (Clifford 1988: 137). Thus, the museological discourses of the MdH and the MAAO were in need of reinterpretation because they bore strongly the mark of France's colonial past.

In this context, the MQB project expressed the will to reinvent the relationship

of France with its former colonies by enabling the country to break away from 'the old schemes of domination' (Chirac quoted in De l'Etoile 2007: 25). The first step towards this goal would be the opening of the *Pavillon des Sessions* in 2000, an exhibition space in the Louvre dedicated to the minimalist presentation of about one hundred sculptures from Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas. The entry of these sculptures to the Louvre was conceptualised by Jacques Kerchache, one of the key actors in the foundation of the MQB and contributors to the concept of 'arts premiers'. To him and his involvement in the making of the MQB I shall now turn.

The *Musée du Quai Branly*: 'Arts premiers' in context.

Few people could doubt that were it not for Chirac and Kerchache, the MQB would not exist. In 1990 Kerchache wrote a manifesto in the newspaper *Libération* [6] that was instrumental in introducing non-Western artefacts to the Louvre. It was stressed that their absence denied the status of masterpiece to artefacts that were neither produced in Europe nor connected to the ancient, monumental civilizations and cemented racist ideologies that divided cultural groups. However, the fact that he had worked in the trade of African sculptures and had even been prosecuted by Gabonese authorities on smuggling charges questioned the good intentions of his declarations that for many were aimed at increasing the commercial value of non-Western objects (Dupaigne 2006). In this sense, Kerchache was one of the stronger supporters of the concept of 'arts premiers' that on a first level was based on the aesthetic appreciation of non-Western artefacts as being closer to a universal human truth.

Equally supportive of the 'arts premiers' movement was Chirac. His much discussed friendship with Kerchache that began in Mauritius in 1991, in conjunction with his personal taste for non-Western art played a great part in the realization of the MQB project. For Chirac the MQB would not only recognize the artistic value of artefacts from the non-European world, but it would also constitute 'a new manifestation of France's faith in the virtues of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue'[7.] As such, within the presidential discourse the scope of the 'arts premiers' movement extended to the 'peuples premiers' or 'first peoples' that over the past centuries of colonisation had suffered great losses and the urgency to safeguard their culture (De l'Etoile 2007; Amato 2006). In this spirit the MQB was conceptualised as a 'postcolonial museum' (Corbey 2000) that, based on the appreciation of the aesthetic dimensions of artefacts, would defend the diversity and equality of the cultural groups that produced them (Désveaux 2002). In terms of its museology the MQB would combine the scientific and aesthetic approaches[8] advocated by the MdH and the MAAO and develop its programmes and exhibitions based on both anthropological and art historical lines. This would entail sophisticated design and the use of new technologies, such as multimedia stations, video projections and sound installations in the permanent exhibitions. It would also require a rich programme of temporary exhibitions

and events, such as debates, public lectures, seminars and cultural performances.

More than a year after its opening, the MQB has not still convinced its audience in France and abroad about its new 'postcolonial' narrative. Voices of criticism are expressed from Canada (Amato 2006) to New Zealand.[9] For many, despite its postcolonial discourse on the equality of cultures, by treating European and non-European art as two polarities the MQB remains an ethnocentric (Choay 2006) and anachronistic institution.[10] Nouvel's architectural vision to build the museum within rich vegetation so as to evoke images of forest, as well as the incorporation of sounds of the jungle in the permanent exhibition are regarded as 'colonial clichés' about the 'dark continent'.[11] For cultural and museum critic James Clifford, the MQB is largely 'ahistorical' making little or no reference to the processes that led to the accumulation of all these objects in Paris and to ideas of cultural exchange and transmission (2007). While the museum is focused on the presentation of the artefacts, little is said about the people that created them and the purposes of their use and even less about their living descendants (Clifford 2007). As such, for many the MQB is more about France than about the cultures it purports to represent (Rees Leahy 2006).

In the midst of these debates, I conducted fieldwork at the MQB over a period of several weeks from July 2006 until February 2007. While the focus of my ongoing fieldwork in the MQB is the translation of the concept of intangible cultural heritage in the practice of the museum, from my first visit I understood that the notion of 'arts premiers' would be fundamental for understanding the philosophy of the new Parisian institution. During my research in Paris, several questions have been raised regarding the controversy surrounding the exhibition practices of the MQB and the intellectual and ethical implications emerging in museum-work.

Fieldwork at the *Musée du Quai Branly*: Moral Stakes and Intellectual Problems

The erection of the MQB, apart from being Chirac's contribution to the list of 'great presidential projects' [12], clearly demonstrates the will to reinvent the relationship of France not only with its former colonies, but also with the whole of Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas. It is, therefore, a political project that unites France with the rest of the world through the common denominator of 'aesthetic universalism'. As such, what emerges as one of the foundational principles driving the programmes, exhibitions and activities of the museum is the understanding that the peoples of Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas have historically produced artworks of universal beauty very different from European/Western art expressions, but nevertheless equally important in representing the diversity of humanity.

Upon arrival at the Quai Branly, Jean Nouvel's multicoloured suspending

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construction clearly dominates the site.[13] Germain Viatte, responsible for the museology of the permanent exhibitions, has stated that 'the presentation of the collection had to match the spirit of Jean Nouvel's architectural design, an impressive interior landscape full of mystery and surprises' (2006: 28). In this sense, the main area of the *Plateau des Collections* is a large unified space divided into four geographical areas: Oceania, Asia, Africa and the Americas. As remarked by the museum's director, 'each continent is introduced by a "take-off" area in which a number of emblematic and spectacular objects are grouped together' (Martin 2006: 8). While the aim is to highlight the aesthetic dimensions of the 3,500 artefacts on display, efforts have also been made by the curators and the exhibition developers to offer additional information through multimedia programmes and installations.[14]

From my first visit to the permanent exhibition, I sensed that what dominated the space was not just the aesthetic display of objects, but the overall atmosphere. For me, it was evident that much attention had been paid to create what Viatte described as 'an interior landscape full of mystery and surprises' in terms of lighting and the overall presentation of collections. Dark walls and display cases surround most of the objects that are illuminated by spotlights. In addition, the windows overlooking the Seine are covered by transparent images of tropical vegetation, thus the sunlight entering creates a sensation of being in a forest. This 'mysterious' atmosphere along with the different sounds and images of nature, or people in nature, produce an immersive environment quite different from that of traditional art galleries. It seems, therefore, that the permanent exhibition through the selection of artefacts and the 'mysterious atmosphere' alludes to the non-European continents primarily in the contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As such, 'arts premiers' emerges as the art of the people that have been largely unaffected by western industrialisation and are thus not only closer to nature, but to a primeval human truth.

The temporary displays of the MQB have been conceptualised on different terms to the permanent exhibitions. Held in two suspended galleries above the permanent exhibitions and at the *Galerie Jardin* on the ground floor these exhibitions offer alternative perspectives on the collections: Installations of contemporary art, such as Romuald Hazoumé's 'La Bouche du Roi', or Yinka Sonibare's 'Jardin d'Amour', and photographic exhibitions, like the collection of Désiré Charnay's pictures from Mexico taken during the second half of the nineteenth century, present different approaches on the people and art of the non-West. During my fieldwork, the two exhibitions that attracted most crowds were: '*D'Un Regard L'Autre*' and '*Qu'est-ce qu'un corps*?'

The first one was presented from 19 September 2006 until 21 January 2007 and dealt with the issue of how 'Europeans have perceived and depicted the peoples of Africa, Oceania and the Americas from the Renaissance until today' (MQB 2006). Starting with the cabinets of curiosity and the effort to scientifically categorise people of different races, the exhibition culminated with the appropriation of 'primitive art' by avant-garde artists of the early

twentieth century. It ended with highlighting how the recent exhibitions 'Primitivism in Modern Art' held at the *Museum of Modern Art* in New York and 'Les Magiciens de la Terre' held at the *Museum of Modern Art* in Paris were instrumental in bringing forth the aesthetic appreciation of non-Western artefacts in the late twentieth century context. The second exhibition examined from an anthropological viewpoint the human body. It compared bodily practices and representations from the areas of Papua New Guinea, the Amazon, Central Africa and Western Europe. Through the comparative approach to the depiction of the human body, the curator-anthropologist asks his mainly French/Western audience to 'view ourselves through the eyes of the others' (Breton 2006).

Furthermore, challenging and controversial topics for thought and discussion were presented in the programmes and live events that take place all year round in the Claude Levi-Strauss theatre. Alain Weber, a programme adviser who has worked for French cultural organisations and theatres, like the *Théâtre de la Ville*, prepared for the 2006-2007 season a programme of performances combining elements of the traditional and the modern. In this vein, a contemporary version of the Indian epic *Mahabharata* was performed by a Japanese theatre group in September 2006, while shamans from Siberia, some of whom travelled for the first time out of their regions, presented songs to the museum's audience in February 2007. At the same time, the philosopher, writer and essayist Catherine Clément organised within the context of the 'popular university' a series of debates with invited speakers on questions such as, 'Is there a single human family?', 'Can racists' opinions be expressed freely? What is the role of the law?'.

Judging from the above it becomes clear that the MQB is a lot more than the 'stereotypical' and 'superficial' representations of non-Western people that it is often accused of being. Drawing on the aesthetic appreciation of extra-European artefacts, it proposes a museological discourse that engages with the diversity of the manifestations of the art and cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas combining multidisciplinary insights and historical perspectives. This raises, of course, questions regarding the benefits and limitations of the way 'arts premiers' and 'aesthetic universalism' are translated in the MQB's work and poses significant challenges for the future.

Discussion: 'Arts premiers' in transit

Because of its evolutionist connotations, 'arts premiers' is not part of the official MQB lexicon (De l'Etoile 2007). However, it has dominated the debate surrounding the museum since well before the construction of the Quai Branly site. Initially used as a replacement for the term 'art primitif', the term was subsequently appropriated by Chirac and related to the politics of recognition *vis-à-vis* the world's indigenous peoples. Today, it is mainly interpreted through the Eurocentric notion of 'aesthetic universalism', the credo that all people around the world create works of art worthy of study and display. In this sense,

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one of the questions raised concerns the dynamics developing between 'all people around the world', or more precisely indigenous people and the museum: what is their role in the MQB and how strong is their voice in the museum narrative?

Among the things that emerged from my fieldwork is the acknowledgement that contemporary creation, particularly from the Americas, Pacific and Africa, is not part of the narrative of the permanent exhibitions. Although temporary exhibitions attract large numbers of visitors and are often more challenging and thought-provoking than the permanent ones, their duration is only for a few months; a fact that significantly limits their impact on the MQB's permanent museological discourse. Furthermore, with the exception of the paintings by Australian Aboriginal artists where acrylic paints and canvases have been utilised, all contemporary creation and use of 'modern' materials by indigenous artists is absent from the permanent exhibition. This absence reveals the MQB's unwillingness to acknowledge the influence and impact that late modernity had on traditional ways of living, and how people around the world actively respond to these changes.

Moreover, my fieldwork in the permanent exhibition reveals that the museological narrative is dominated by the voice of the curators, both in terms of display as well as interpretation. Consultations with native groups or tribal representatives concerning the significance, display and conservation of the collections are absent from the exhibition discourse. On the contrary, the display of the permanent collections follows the aesthetic categorisation of the French/Western curatorial perspective. However, this perspective is not didactic, nor is it excluding. It is based on an appreciation of artefacts as 'works of art', which justifies the assembly of all these different objects from around the world under the same roof. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see how the creators of the objects and their descendants feel about them and appreciate them not only in terms of their beauty, but also in terms of their spirituality.

Conclusions

The arts and culture of the extra-European continents have fascinated collectors for more than four hundred years. The will to understand different ways of living has inspired, amongst others, missionaries, governmental officials, anthropologists, artists and tourists and led to the creation of the first ethnographic museums, within the context of the first International Exhibitions. Highly embedded in nineteenth and early twentieth century colonialism, the two major French ethnographic museums of the twentieth century, the MdH and the MAAO represent two different ways in which France perceived the rest of the world and its relationship with it. Building on this fascination with the 'exotic' and 'mysterious', but also aiming to break away from the country's colonial past, the MQB was founded on the principle of 'arts premiers' that transformed the representation of non-Western people

from colonial subjects to universal artists.

From my preliminary research at the MQB, I have concluded that the museum is not as superficial as many of its critics claim. Rather it provides different perspectives and routes to come into contact with the arts and culture of Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas whilst also intellectually addressing wider social issues concerning the global movement of people. It has also demonstrated, however, that the permanent exhibition remains strongly rooted in Eurocentric conceptualisations of 'the exotic other' and through its universal aesthetic perspective significantly ignores contemporary issues regarding the people that the museum is supposed to honour in the first place. In an increasingly interconnected world, it seems to me that two major challenges are raised for the MQB. On the one hand, to establish profound relations with communities, both source and immigrant, connected historically with its collections in moral and ethical ways that benefit them in terms of educational, political and cultural rights; on the other, to inspire and support contemporary creators. It seems to me that the discourse on 'aesthetic universalism' is of little value and importance if it is solely focused on nineteenth century artefacts, cherished because they have been untainted by Western industrialisation. On the contrary, it could be reformulated to acknowledge how artists from different backgrounds around the world dialogue with their past and respond to contemporary stimuli.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   Literally, 'arts premiers' means 'first arts'. It has replaced the term 'art primitif' (primitive art) that was not considered as politically correct.

[2]   The terms 'non-European', 'non-West' and 'extra-European', although problematic, are used in this paper to define the subject matter of the MQB, which are the arts and culture of the people of Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas.

[3]   This is the latest Parisian museum dedicated to the history of immigration.

[4]   The appreciation of the aesthetic dimension of ethnographic collections is an essential characteristic of 'arts premiers' and 'aesthetic universalism'. This approach is fundamentally Eurocentric and constitutes an effort to 'assimilate' non-European artefacts in Western categories (Nederveen Pieterse 2005).

5   Among others, the exhibitions *Chefs-d'œuvre du Musée de l'Homme* (1965), *Arts connus et arts méconnus de l'Afrique noire* (1967), *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes* (1967) and *Chefs-d'œuvre des arts indiens et esquimaux du Canada* (1969).

6   This article signed by more than a hundred people, including politicians, art historians and anthropologists was entitled '*Pour que les chefs d'oeuvres mondiales naissent libres et égaux*' and appeared on the 15th of March 1990.

7   Chirac, J. 2004. Speech by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic at the reception in honour of the Amerindian Peoples.

     http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/anglais/
     speeches_and_documents/2004/speech_by_m_jacques_chirac_
     president_of_the_republic_at_the_reception_in_honour_of_the_
     amerindian_peoples.1741.html
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11   Chrisafis, A. 1996. *Chirac Leaves Controversial Legacy with Monument to African and Asian Culture.* The Guardian, April 7, 2006. http://arts.guardian.co.uk/news/story/0,,1749062,00.html [Accessed on 23 Sep 2006].

12   In this Chirac seems to follow the tradition of his predecessors: Georges Pompidou, who founded the Beaubourg; and Francois Mitterandt, who founded the National Library and the Pyramide of the Louvre.

[13]   Nouvel's building has been criticised because of its irregular shape and immense volume that clashes dramatically with its surroundings (Choay 2006).

[14]   However, many critics have found these confusing and often not directly related to the displayed objects (Clifford 2007).

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Immigrants into Citizens: Ideology and Nation-Building in the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*

Mary Stevens

Abstract

Opened in Paris in October 2007, the new French national museum of immigration (*Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, CNHI) is intended to 'alter perceptions of immigration and contribute to social cohesion'. In looking to a museum to forge new modes of citizenship the French government is renewing with nineteenth-century ideals about their social utility.

This article traces the origins of the CNHI, in order to explore how and why and why policy-makers begun to consider a museum as an appropriate means to address tensions over immigration. It then draws on observation of the development and planning process, conducted in the context of the author's PhD, to document how official discourse about the museum was inflected by challenges from the museum's own staff, public opinion and the artists with whom the CNHI sought to work. A change in government in 2007 positionned the CNHI increasingly at odds with the official discourse it was intended to promote.

The future of the CNHI should be followed closely by all those concerned with the nebulous relations between politics and culture and the capacity of museums to contribute to a social policy agenda. For whilst they may appeal to policy-makers as a (relatively) cheap and highly visible fix, the diversity of actors they engage means their ideological destination is hard if not impossible fully to determine.

Keywords: migration museums, citizenship, governance, France

It has become a commonplace of museological literature to position museums within an 'ideological economy' (Bennett 1995: 68) in order to draw attention to the ways in which the disposition of material culture can generate or reinforce particular discursive regimes. In recent years this function has been explored in museums in two distinct ways. On the one hand, many long established institutions have taken on board the institutional critique (see Fyfe 2006: 38) and worked hard to call their ideological operation into question, particularly with regard to their complicity in the subordination of colonized peoples, by means of a variety of practices, including artist installations (Corrin 2004). On the other hand, new museums have been

established with a view to exploiting this potential, and furthering specific policy agendas. One might include institutions such as the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in this category. Indeed, it has been argued that such institutions testify to a revival of the nineteenth-century role of museums as civilizing instruments of the state (Sandell 2003: 45). Certainly, a growing awareness of the capacity of museums to provide a space for a public discussion about the construction of difference (Sandell 2006: 174-5) has generated calls for a conscious reorientation towards social policy goals; David Fleming, director of National Museums Liverpool since 2001, has even gone so far as to argue that social inclusion should become 'the driving force that overcomes all others' (Fleming 2000: 223).

Whilst in France funding for cultural institutions is not as closely tied in with this agenda as it is in the UK, the general tenor of the debate is very similar (see Looseley 2004). Moreover, in a context where a very public debate has been taking place about the legacy of colonialism and how to tackle divisive inherited prejudices (see for example the articles in issue 16 (2006) of the journal *Contretemps* entitled 'Postcolonialisme et immigration'), museums have once again been pushed to the fore as 'differencing machines', reconfigured dispositions of material culture that can be brought to bear on conflicted racialized differences (Bennett 2005: 12). In the ensuing game of ethnographic museum musical chairs (Lebovics 2004: 143-77; De l'Estoile 2007: 13-5), of which the closure of the *Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie* (MAAO) and the transfer of the *Musée de l'homme*'s collections to the new *Quai Branly* are the most well known manifestations, one radical development has attracted less international attention: the creation of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* (CNHI) (national museum of immigration).[1] Yet, as its location in the *Porte dorée* palace, the old home of the MAAO built for the Colonial Exhibition of 1931 as a permanent museum of the colonies makes clear, the CNHI is both a key component of this post-colonial reorientation, and perhaps the most overt expression of the museal turn in social policy in France.[2] As such it is worthy of more exploration.

Opened on 10 October 2007, the CNHI is intended to 'alter perceptions of immigration and contribute to social cohesion' (CNHI 2005: 2).[3] In the first two parts of this article I will consider how and why in France a migration museum emerged as a key component of a social exclusion agenda. More broadly however I wish to draw attention to the limits to the use of museums as tools of social governance. For museums are more than just policy documents; rather, they are complex internally differentiated entities, structured through processes of bargaining and negotiation, as the work of museum ethnographers has made clear (see for example Handler & Gable 2002; Macdonald 2002). As a consequence they are hard to subordinate to a single objective; however strong the museum's ideological destination, its dominant

discourse is always up for debate. In the third part of this article I will show how the *Cité*'s 'museum message' (Handler & Gable 2002: 10) has evolved

Photo taken by the author on the occasion of the inauguration of the CNHI on 10 October 2007, around 11:30am. On the far right one can see the remnants of a public demonstration of support (see below).

through a series of challenges to the policy agenda it was intended to enact. I will conclude by using the French case to illustrate the extent to which even the most tightly controlled institution may find itself occupying a very different position in the power-knowledge nexus if and when the broader policy context starts to shift around it. Because the museum has only recently opened, I am not in a position in this article to discuss visitor responses, although reception will no doubt form the subject of significant future research, both inside and outside the institution. Nevertheless, the shift in attitudes of politicians, activists and commentators, identifiable through the media and described below, underscores the importance of situating any reception study in the broader political context. First however, some additional background is helpful.

1. Background

In the autumn of 1989, in the aftermath of the celebrations for the bicentenary of the French Revolution, the historian Gérard Noiriel, author of a book that had a appeared the previous year entitled *Le Creuset français* ('The French melting-pot') (Noiriel 1988), received a visit from the ex-footballer, lecturer and activist Zaïr Kedadouche. Kedadouche, whose parents were Algerian, cut his political teeth in the civil rights movement of the early 1980s. By the time of his meeting with Noiriel he had shifted his allegiance to the right-wing RPR party (the party of Presidents Chirac and Sarkozy, since 2002 the UMP). Kedadouche had been much impressed by Noiriel's book, which analyzed the absence of the history of immigration from French collective memory and

called for some form of public recognition for migrant narratives. Kedadouche and Noiriel's discussions led to the creation of the *Association pour un Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration* (Association for a Museum of the History of Immigration), the first group to campaign actively for a museum of immigration (Noiriel 1989; Noiriel 2004: 17). Whilst Kedadouche's affiliations were with the Right, Noiriel was closely associated with left-wing political activism (Laacher & Simon 2006); thus from its very inception support for the project crossed party lines. In the early 1990s the project floundered, overshadowed by a very public debate about revisions to the nationality legislation (see Feldblum 1999) and it was not until 1998 that the victory of France's multi-racial football team in the World Cup created a propitious context for the revival of the idea. In July 1998, just after the football World Cup final, the historian Patrick Weil (a member of the original group) and the journalist Philippe Bernard wrote a letter to the socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin urging him to reconsider the idea. Opposition in the cabinet reportedly caused further delay (Lebovics 2004: 172), but in June 2001 Jospin commissioned a report from Driss el Yazami, the Moroccan-born director of the not-for-profit community archive *Génériques*[4] and Rémy Schwartz, a high-level civil servant. The report was presented to the Government in November 2001 (El Yazami & Schwartz 2001). Once again the project stalled, this time on account of the forthcoming elections, which pushed the project off the agenda.

The 2002 elections did indeed produce a change in the fortunes of the project, but not perhaps in a way anyone would have predicted (see Herzberg & Van Eeckhout 2007). The elimination of Jospin by the National Front leader Le Pen in the first round of the presidential elections left the newly elected centre-right government looking for ideas that would enable it both to tackle (and to be seen to be tackling) racism and to hold on to the left-wing votes cast reluctantly for Chirac in the second round. A new report was commissioned in March 2003 by Prime Minister Raffarin from the former Minister of Culture, Jacques Toubon.[5] As a close associate of the President's with credentials at the Ministry of Culture, Toubon was in a unique position to push the project through. Following an extensive consultation process the report was submitted to the Prime Minister in April 2004; in July of the same year he formally announced the creation of what would henceforth be called the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*.

This political genealogy is useful since it indicates the importance to the project both of sustained political backing and of a willingness on the part of activists and academics on the Left to enter into a productive working relationship with the RPR/UMP, not traditionally seen as the party of immigrants.[6] The first dimension is illustrated by Jacques Toubon's concluding remarks to a forum of community partners on 13 January 2007:

Someone said earlier that the *Cité* is a political act. That's obvious. You don't just set up a *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* like you write a textbook or create a work of art. It's a political act that expresses a certain political will.[7]

More recently somewhat disingenuous attempts have been made to disavow the political aspects of the project, as in the following statement from Toubon on breakfast radio on 9 October 2007: 'the *Cité* is not a political instrument or a propaganda tool, the *Cité* is a scientific, educational and cultural establishment' (*Les Matins* 2007). The cross-party co-operation involved in the *Cité*'s development certainly helps to gloss over the extent to which it must also have suited the ruling party's interests or the project would never have gone ahead. However, the narrow political narrative does little to explain the broader socio-cultural context in which a museum came to be seen as the appropriate means for the regulation of difference, a question to which I will now turn.

2. The Museum and the policy agenda

Commissioning the study in March 2003 Prime Minister Raffarin made the case for the creation of a resource centre in the following terms:

The Republican model of integration "*à la française*" is today in need of a new wind. Indeed, various events of the last few years have revealed a 'communitarian' tendency, based on a retreat into identity categories, at odds with our conception of civil and political society. Other forms of behaviour also demonstrate intolerance and discriminatory attitudes that are equally incompatible with our democratic goals. Only a project on a national scale with long-term political backing can usefully contribute to restoring national cohesion.[8]

'Integration' was thus seen as the antithesis of a 'multiculturalist' approach, described as a '"communitarian" tendency'. There is not space here to go into this debate in much detail but essentially, the French conception of citizenship is based on a rigid distinction between the public and private spheres. The public sphere is perceived as 'neutral' and as the locus of interaction between equal individuals free of social, cultural or historical specificities. Other identities, in particular religious affiliation, should find expression only in the private sphere. Since the 1980s this model has however been challenged by a range of minority groups who have argued that under the guise of guaranteeing equality, the 'neutral' public sphere not only favours those who fit the mainstream profile, but also operates to prevent action being taken to address discrimination and inequality (Hargreaves 1995; Silverman 1992). Moreover, the injunction to 'integrate' the 'neutral' public sphere has tended to require immigrants to renounce their cultural heritage. Two distinct camps, not necessarily split along the traditional Left-Right fault line, emerged: the *républicains* (who rejected any form of recognition for cultural difference) and the *démocrates* (who saw recognition of difference as ensuring dignity and promoting a real equality) (Kiwan 2006: 100). More recently it had started to look as if a compromise position was emerging; the discourse of 'integration', increasingly recognized as a category of exclusion, begun to be reserved for the most recent arrivals and it was accompanied by

an anti-discrimination agenda that placed the onus on tackling racism rather than accusing immigrants of failing to assimilate (Hargreaves 2005; Kiwan 2007).[9]

Yet, as Raffarin's discourse indicates, the distinction between *républicains* and *démocrates* never really went away. The vigorous debates around the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in schools, culminating in the introduction of a new law in March 2004, acted as a flashpoint and the post-9/11 context has increased hostility towards public expressions of (Islamic) difference and entrenched the integrationist line (see Bowen 2006). This is the specific political context to which Raffarin is referring; in the battle against the 'divisive' forces of multiculturalism the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* was seen, at least by him, as the opening up of a new front.

But why was a museum seen as the suitable instrument for this policy agenda, especially given the difficulties associated with exercising detailed political control over its production? There are a number of possible explanations. First, there is a striking parallel with the situation described by Ivan Karp in the US in 1992:

Communities are asking museums to accommodate themselves to cultural diversity at the same time as the courts are reducing the scope of affirmative action programs. Changes in political society are channelling the battle for equal opportunity into the cultural sphere of civil society (Karp 1992: 12).

The difference between France and the USA in this instance is that Karp's model assumes independent museums, whereas at the CNHI, as at most public French museums, income from private sources contributes only a tiny part of its budget. Nevertheless, the idea that in the USA museums constitute a form of compensation for reduced anti-discrimination activity in the political sphere (however contested affirmative action may be) is compelling. In France, the exhaustion of other policy avenues for tackling the exclusion of communities of foreign origin, particularly in cities, was certainly a factor in the decision to create the museum.[10] Nancy Green, until May 2007 one of the consultant historians at the CNHI, opened a recent article for *History Workshop Journal* with a provocative question, verging deliberately on the absurd: 'Can a museum save the suburbs?' (Green 2007). Yet the failure of nearly thirty years of policy initiatives to prevent the massive riots of November 2005 would seem to confirm that the time had come to try something new.[11] The decision to prioritize symbolic action is also symptomatic of the 'cultural turn' in sociology, that is, the displacement by 'culture' of a class-based approach to social analysis in the post-industrial context (see Wieviorka 1997). This is convenient for the Government, since a museum works out much cheaper than root-and-branch urban renewal.[12] But many of the project's supporters also firmly believe that without a cultural shift such initiatives are doomed to failure; Gérard Noiriel, has for example argued that it is the stigmatization of immigrants that is the root cause of discrimination and racism, over and above socio-economic factors and hence that the CNHI is an essential tool

for addressing this (Noiriel 2007a: 669-95).[13] The idea that culture can be a means of large scale civic action is 'a wager' (Noiriel 2007b: 13), but it is one of the few gambles remaining.

The appeal of a museum is enhanced by the fact that, in France, debates about cultural identity are increasingly played out on the terrain of the past on account, I suggest, of the absence of other available markers of collective identity for minority groups. Whilst, for example, a black identity may be deemed an affront to Republicanism, an identity based on a shared inheritance, such as slavery, is seen as less voluntarist, and thus more acceptable, or at any rate harder to dismiss (Barro 2006).[14] The CNHI has made much of the extent to which it is a response to social demand. Sceptics have however argued that the new institution is the embodiment of a pre-emptive control strategy, in which potentially subversive discourses (e.g. for recognition of minority memories) are taken up the Government in order to neutralize them and distance them from grassroots actors (Hajjat 2007: 208-9).[15] Moreover, where there was indeed a strong social expectation of public recognition this may paradoxically have played into a strategy of neutralization. Campaigners looked to the museum to perform as what Feuchtwang has termed an 'authority of recognition' (Feuchtwang 2003: 78). The desire for recognition casts the state in an unusual role: those whom it has previously marginalized through its hegemony over representation are suddenly transformed into petitioners, seeking the formal legitimization that only the state can offer.[16] The attractiveness of the museum solution to the state becomes clear: it enables the state to reassert its authority in a sphere where it was losing its grip and *at the request* of those whose discourse, in questioning the national narrative, potentially posed the greatest threat to state authority, to whom it now appears to be granting a concession.

The museum thus emerges as an ideal solution for the regulation of cultural difference in France, particularly given the extent to which this difference is increasingly articulated in terms of competing memory discourses. However, the State's position as an 'authority of recognition' by no means entails complete political control of the museum message. And indeed, in practice, the Government's agenda was seriously modified in the course of its materialization in exhibition form.

3. Negotiating ideology

The challenge to the Government's official agenda for the museum came, I suggest, from three different directions. These were:

- Internal challenges: the need to accommodate the views of staff members suspicious of the 'integration' agenda

- External challenges: pressure from civil society groups to acknowledge the role of the colonial legacy in structuring inequality

- Artistic challenges: the desire to include work that challenged the model of identity presumed by 'integration'

Internal challenges

An outline of the structure of the permanent exhibition from March 2006 summarizes the second section of the exhibition as follows:

The second section will show how immigration is constitutive of the French nation. There is a French model of the nation. And it is this model that has enabled the integration of foreigners (CNHI 2006: 37).

The conception of the 'French model of the nation' here is very similar to Raffarin's. At this stage the museum team consisted primarily of curators, trained in art history. Over the subsequent months more social scientists, better versed in the history of immigration policy and perhaps more sensitive to the social implications of discursive constructions, were brought in. Their cumulative influence is reflected in changes to the language used by the museum team and in the plans for the exhibition. For example, speaking on French radio in March 2007 Marianne Amar, a historian working in the museum team, described the permanent exhibition's narrative as follows:

> … we follow a migrant, we see little by little how bonds form with France, first with the bureaucracy, with the State, but little by little with the inhabitants […]. All of this is part of a long-term process – *I don't want to use the word "integration" because ever since there's been a "policy of integration" we know that it's a contested term* – but let's nevertheless say the process by which migrants settle in, are incorporated into the host society, holding on to more or less from their society or country of origin, and well, all this, in Gérard Noiriel's terms, all this makes for the "French melting pot" and creates a truly shared history (*Terres d'exil* 2007).

In the event, references to 'integration' in the permanent exhibition are few. The section to which Amar refers above, shown as late as July 2007 as 'the French melting pot' in the plans, had by the time of opening become the less assimilationist 'putting down roots' ('*enracinements*'). Moreover, whilst it focuses on national institutions such as school, political parties, trade unions and the Army, this section also contains references to community-based affiliations (no longer presented as necessarily at odds with participation in French public life) as well as to the legitimate need of migrants past and present to form 'micro-societies' (a less loaded term than 'communities').

External challenges

The project's success also depended on its acceptance by civil society groups. Many were initially hostile, fearing the implications for their own funding.

Support from the wider public was also important. The area where the *Cité* came under most pressure from civil society and where most changes were made was in relation to the treatment of the colonial past. The unwillingness of the French State to accept its responsibility for colonial oppression or to talk about this period has been widely discussed (Stora 1991; *Fracture coloniale* 2005; Mbembe 2005). However, during the course of the planning process, the regularity with which objections were raised about the potential occlusion of colonialism, particularly in such an ideologically charged location, did lead to concessions, such as the decision to hold a major conference on the links between colonialism and immigration (at the French national library in September 2006) and the staging of a version of Aimé Césaire's still controversial *Discours sur le colonialisme* to mark the 14 July 2006. A perceived lack of references to colonialism in the permanent exhibition, picked up even by a leader piece in the newspaper *Le Monde* suggests that the change in tone may have been fleeting (*Le Monde* 2007a). Nevertheless, such modifications as did occur did so clearly in response to public pressure.

Artistic challenges

In order to achieve credibility as a cultural actor and to change perceptions of immigration as an illegitimate or unworthy subject for a museum the *Cité* was determined to choose prestigious artistic collaborators. Unsurprisingly, these artists were rarely prepared to toe the official line and again, compromises and ideological shifts ensued. Two examples must suffice to demonstrate this.

The first concerns the creation of the logo, or visual identity, commissioned from designers Pete Jeffs and Yann Legendre. The original design brief set certain conditions that would have aligned the project with the national-Republican discourse so apparent in Raffarin's letter (cited above). In particular a *tricolor* colour scheme was prescribed for the logo. Jeffs and Legendre rejected this and when confronted about the absence of the words 'nation' or 'Republic' from their proposal during their competition presentation they were convinced they had lost the contract. Instead, they developed an identity that explored the relationship between the individual and the collective, refusing to see the two as diametrically opposed. Speaking at a public meeting about the commission in March 2007 the member of the *Cité* team who had liaised most closely with the designers confirmed that their intervention had generated a re-evaluation of the project's own positioning:

*When we first launched the competition for the visual identity we were really at the start of the project […]. And in fact, the fact of meeting the designers, it was they above all […] who enabled us to identify and prioritize the guiding principles (*éléments moteurs) *of the Cité, which was just emerging.*

A similar process occurred with the *Cité*'s first major artistic commission, *La Zon-Mai*, a joint installation by the renowned choreographer Sidi Larbi

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Cherkaoui and visual artist Gilles Delmas (Cherkaoui & Delmas 2007). The work was composed of a 'house' of screens with video footage of dancers from a wide range of different backgrounds projected on to the 'walls'. The dancers' pieces were linked by the project of inhabiting and at the same time making strange their intimate domestic space. The installation's aim was to rework notions of belonging and of home, from a perspective clearly informed by postcolonial theory.

Zon-Mai *at* La Condition publique*, Roubaix. Photo taken by author on 24 April 2007]*

For Cherkaoui, the CNHI's interest resided in its potential to overturn the eurocentrism of the colonial period, and encourage visitors to re-evaluate their own self-definitions by calling into question self and other, French and non-French (Cherkaoui 2007: 10). A project intended to reinforce a sense of national identity thus found itself promoting a work deliberately targeted at the erosion of national boundaries.

4. Conclusion

Speaking on 9 October 2007 Jacques Toubon outlined the museum's approach to cultural diversity:

In our country Republican principles have to a large extent contributed to the view that talking about and showcasing origins and differences is dangerous for the Republic. What's happening today, and the *Cité* is probably one of the first illustrations of this, is that we are able to reconcile the egalitarian individual French model of integration with the recognition of diversity. I think that if the *Cité* is a success we will have taken a big step towards a modernized French model (*Les Matins* 2007).

As we have seen albeit briefly, one of the first steps towards this new conception was the collaboration with the designers. Internal negotiations were also instrumental in producing this shift. Of course, the project remains in many ways true to its original ambition; 'integration' is still an important concept and national boundaries are if anything reinforced by the way they are taken for granted in the exhibition narrative, encouraging a perennialist reading of the nation-state. Nevertheless, the vision of the 'French model' the museum puts forward in 2007 is very different from that with which it began. The new version is much more in tune with current sociological thinking wherein, as Rogers Brubaker has highlighted, integration is no longer understood as the transition from one homogeneous unit (i.e. discrete culture) to another but rather as involving 'a shift from one mode of heterogeneity – one distribution of properties – to another mode of heterogeneity, that is, to a distribution of properties more similar to the distribution prevailing in some reference population' (Brubaker 2001: 543). In many respects the museum has operated in reverse of the original conception; instead of acting as a tool of the State for forging citizens it has acted as a conduit for the views of civil society actors (activists, academics) to permeate official discourse.

It remains to be seen how the museum may develop in the future. Since the election of Nicolas Sarkozy in May 2007 the official line on immigration and integration in France has hardened and as a consequence the museum's position in the policy landscape has shifted. Far from being seen as a tool of the state it is increasingly perceived as locus of opposition, an uncomfortable position for its managers. Shortly after his election Sarkozy announced his decision to create a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development, a manifesto pledge (Blecher 2007).[17] The museum now falls partially under its jurisdiction. Eight of the CNHI's scientific advisers resigned from their official positions in protest at the conjunction of immigration and national identity in the Ministry's title (*Libération* 2007). The CNHI provided a high-profile platform for its collaborators to launch a political campaign (for the abolition of the Ministry, or at least of its name), yet another reversal of its Government backers' original vision. In addition, whilst neither the President nor the Minister for Immigration were present to inaugurate the museum (*Le Monde* 2007b), its opening was greeted with a public show of

support by a small group of activists from local immigrant rights groups, all actively hostile to current Government policy . Whilst the administrative structures of the CNHI were designed to make it as resistant as possible to direct political interference (it enjoys the same degree of autonomy as the *Louvre* or the Pompidou Centre, rather than being run directly from the Ministry of Culture like most institutions of its size) there are no guarantees that the need for budgetary restraint will not provide an excuse for funding cuts. The destiny of the project would be strange indeed: set up in order to promote the Government's social agenda it may well fall victim to its perceived hostility to the State, without there even having been a change in the ruling party.

The future of the CNHI should be followed closely by all those concerned with the nebulous relations between politics and culture and the capacity of museums to contribute to a social policy agenda. For in short, whilst they may appeal to policy makers as a (relatively) cheap and highly visible fix, the diversity of actors they engage means their ideological destination is hard if not impossible fully to determine. As Andreas Huyssen has noted, 'no matter how much the museum, consciously or unconsciously, produces and affirms the symbolic order there is always a surplus of meaning that exceeds ideological boundaries […]' (Huyssen 1995: 15). As such, museums are 'tools' to be handled by politicians with care.

Notes

[1]   In May 2007 the CNHI was the main focus of a special issue of the UNESCO journal *Museum International* (59 (1-2)). Nevertheless, relative to the Quai Branly, international awareness remains low. Prior to this date only two peer-reviewed articles had appeared in English on the subject, by Nancy Green (2007) and Brigitte Jelen (2005).

[2]   Officially, the national museum is only one component of the *Cité.* However, the other activities envisaged by the *Cité* – a library and resource centre, a programme of cultural events, education and research programmes – do not go much beyond what one might today expect of any large contemporary museum. Moreover, as of Autumn 2007 only the permanent exhibition space is open. The term '*Cité*' is intended to give the museum a more youthful feel, recalling the names of other institutions such as the *Cité de la musique*, which houses both France's leading conservatoire and a museum. It also connotes the '*polis*' and hence its determination to foster a renewed citizenry (see Green 2007: 249-50).

[3]   <http://www.migrationmuseums.org/web/ index.php?page=Network>, accessed 8 October 2007.

[4]   <http://www.génériques.org>

5 '*Lettre de mission du Premier ministre adressée à Jacques Toubon, lui confiant la présidence de la mission de préfiguration chargée d'imaginer les conditions de réalisation d'un futur "Centre de ressources et de mémoire de l'immigration"'*,
http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/index.php?lg=fr&nav=83&flash =0
accessed 7 November 2006.

6 Although this may be changing. The unwillingness of the Left either to promote representatives of minority ethnic communities to positions of responsibility or to propose any serious measure for tackling discrimination has led to growing disillusion (Masclet 2006). The RPR/UMP has stepped into the gap, presenting itself as the party of merit and opportunity (Van Eeckhout 2007).

7 Where citations are not followed by references to publications they are transcripts from my recordings of the proceedings.

8 '*Lettre de mission du Premier ministre adressée à Jacques Toubon, lui confiant la présidence de la mission de préfiguration chargée d'imaginer les conditions de réalisation d'un futur "centre de ressources et de mémoire de l'immigration"'*,
http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/index.php?lg=fr&nav=83&flash=0,
accessed 7 November 2006.

9 For a discussion of the emergence of French anti-discrimination policy see Fassin (2002).

10 Laacher & Belbah attribute the current popularity of 'memory work' (of which the CNHI is perhaps just the most prominent manifestation) with funding bodies in France to this exhaustion (Belbah & Laacher 2005: 17).

11 For a useful discussion of the riots in English see the dossier by the US Social ScienceResearch Council, 'Civil unrest in the French suburbs, November 2005'
http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/, accessed 9 October 2007.

12 On a number of site visits in the year prior to opening members of the CNHI staff, in particular a senior manager, were keen to stress that the building costs are no higher per m2 than for social housing. This does not of course necessarily make them equally worthwhile.

13 See also Savarèse (2000: 222).

14 For an overview of recent polemics see Dufoix (2006)

15 Lebovics' fear that the museum would allow the state to spy on the activities of immigrant support and other political and cultural groups seems, happily, a little far-fetched (Lebovics 2004: 173).

16   Although, they do not want 'recognition' to amount to a total surrender of the right to control their representation. Hence the idea of the museum as 'recognizing authority' coexists with the idea of the museum as 'site of mutuality' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: xi) or 'public space', open to debate.

17   '*Ministère de l'immigration, de l'intégration, de l'identité nationale et du co-développement*'
      http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/iminidco.

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