Roundtable: Caring Museums Today

edited by Dominique Poulot

Keywords:
Museums, Care, Diversity, Indigenization, Exhibition, Inclusion, Contemporary art, Violence.

ABSTRACT:

The round table convenes a British museum professional, a North American philosopher and critic, and a German curator, to deliberate contemporary museum issues. The discourse focuses on contemporary museology and its challenges, particularly regarding the democratisation of visits and practices. The presentation of several case studies of institutions mobilising to present their collections and address the violence that may be associated with them is also a feature.

La tavola rotonda riunisce un professionista britannico dei musei, un filosofo e critico nordamericano e una curatrice tedesca, attorno a temi legati all'attualità dei musei. Presenta scambi di opinioni sulla museologia contemporanea e le sue sfide, in particolare riguardo alla democratizzazione delle visite e delle pratiche. Riporta diversi esempi di mobilitazione delle istituzioni per mettere in scena le loro collezioni e rendere conto delle violenze eventualmente ad esse associate.

La table ronde réunit un professionnel britannique des musées, un philosophe et critique nord-américain et une curatrice allemande, autour de thèmes relatifs à l'actualité des musées. Elle expose des échanges de vues sur la muséologie contemporaine et ses enjeux, en particulier à propos de la démocratisation des visites et des pratiques. Elle rend compte de plusieurs exemples de la mobilisation des institutions pour mettre en scène leurs fonds et rendre compte des violences qui leur sont éventuellement associées.

Opening Picture:

A Day at the Seaside: workshop for children inspired by paintings stored in Glasgow Museums Resource Centre (2004), which holds the city's collection of 1.4 million objects and is visitable seven days a week. Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

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Jonah Siegel

Jonah Siegel, Distinguished Professor of English at Rutgers University, is the author of many publications on art and its institutions and on literature, including *Desire and Excess: The Nineteenth Century Culture of Art* (2000), *Material Inspirations: The Interests of the Art Object in the Nineteenth Century*, (2020) and *Overlooking Damage: Art, Display, and Loss in Times of Crisis* (2022). In 2008 he published *The Emergence of the Modern Museum: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Sources* (2008). He has held fellowships at the National Humanities Center, and at the American Academy in Rome, where he was a Rome Prize Fellow in 2004. In 2005 he will be at Oxford, Bogliasco, and Università Iuav, completing work on a book on the destruction of art objects in popular culture.

Nora Sternfeld

Nora Sternfeld is an art educator and curator. She is professor of art education at the HFBK Hamburg. From 2018 to 2020 she was documenta professor at the Kunsthochschule Kassel. From 2012 to 2018 she was Professor of Curating and Mediating Art at the Aalto University in Helsinki. In addition, she is co-director of the /ecm - Master Programme for Exhibition Theory and Practice at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, in the core team of *schnittpunkt. austellungstheorie & praxis*, co-founder and part of *trafo.K*, Office for Education, Art and Critical Knowledge Production (Vienna) and since 2011 of freethought, Platform for Research, Education and Production (London). She publishes on museums, contemporary art, educational theory, exhibitions, historical politics and anti-racism.

Mark O'Neill

Mark O'Neill worked for over 30 years in museums, mostly in Glasgow, serving as Head of Museums from 1998-2009. He led a number of large scale, award-winning projects, including: in 1993 the only museum of world religions in the UK ("In terms of interpreting and inspiring society afresh… probably the most important museum to have been opened in Britain since the V & A", *The Spectator*); in 2006, the £35 million refurbishment of Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum (one of the "few memorable paradigm-shifting museums that come along in any lifetime" Elaine Gurian); and the £74 million Riverside Museum (European Museum of the Year 2013). He has lectured worldwide and published on museum philosophy and practice, on social justice and inclusion in museums and on the health benefits of cultural participation.

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How should we view the notion of “care” for collections in museums today?

Jonah Siegel: The responsibilities of curators have evidently multiplied to an extraordinary point. As in the past, those in charge of collections still need to protect objects in practical ways so they survive, and to display them effectively for various audiences. But curators are also called upon to explain or justify the value of the ownership and display of objects that in the past might have been assumed – often in response to shifting concepts of ownership and display that have been more effective at raising challenges than at reaching any kind of consensus. Today “care” includes the justification of value – as well as a related transparency and openness about provenance.

Nora Sternfeld: If we understand the task of a museum as a critical faithfulness to the material, then how can institutions be faithful to their objects? Is this really mainly about protecting materiality? Or is it perhaps, after all, more about the sedimented histories they carry within them and what the works are about? And would “care” not also touch the responsibility of the institutions and their relations to violence? We could think about questionable processes of acquisition, but we could also think of all the artistic works that have understood themselves in terms of collective processes, critical interventions, or ephemeral actions; they actually contain a potential. I propose that curatorial “care” really ought to apply to these processes and suggest therefore a new para-museological understanding of “care”.

Mark O’Neill: Understanding of the task of caring for the vast number of objects in the 100000 or more museums across the world are changing along with the epistemologies through which they are interpreted and with the political economy which supports the burgeoning number of museums. They are now seen less as archives where inert objects wait to be given life in displays or through the attention of researchers. Their meanings as well as their materiality now needs to be cared for, so that indigenous epistemologies can influence how they are stored and how – and to whom – access is provided. Just as visitors are no longer seen as passive recipients of sense impressions of objects (based on a *tabula rasa* theory of mind) but instead as contributing actively to the process of sense making, objects, in the language of Bruno Latour, are seen as having agency; they actively shape our lives by the affordances they provide and the limitations they impose.

In political terms, there have been demands for increased accountability from a public who are not entirely convinced of the value of these vast repositories – especially when incidents like the recent thefts from the stores of the British Museum reveal that many objects in even the most august museums are not adequately documented. Surely these institutions were not simply accumulating and hoarding in the name of scholarship – without doing the basic work of recording? In Glasgow in 2004, to justify one of the poorest

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cities in Western Europe spending £ 7 million on a new store (phase 1 of a repository which eventually held as 1,4 million objects – all fully inventoried! – at a final cost of £ 22 million), we decided to make it fully accessible to the public, with guided tours seven days a week. The approach to caring for the collection was transformed by taking seriously the fact that it was owned by the people of the city. "Care" means the museum is less a gatekeeper to publicly owned treasures and more enablers of access – both physical and intellectual.

What is the difference between this notion of "care" and the ordinary concern for technical and scientific conservation?

Jonah Siegel: Practical and ethical burdens increase as curators recognize their work as fundamentally educational and possibly even polemical. The need to care for the public has also grown, given the extraordinary expansion in the concepts of harm that have become available in recent years. The experience of the viewer has become an occasion in relation to which the claim of injury can be advanced – and possibly even felt – leading to the need for a new level of care in imagining where harm may be experienced and how it might be mitigated or prevented through modes of display.

Nora Sternfeld: Caring would be a faithfulness to the unarchivable aspects of the museum: to the emotional and conflictual dimensions of the material, to the history of its "way" to the museum, to the sedimented histories they carry. I would opt for a "care" for the conflictual and unarchivable dimension of the material – precisely that which cannot be stored in archival boxes, but should nonetheless not be forgotten – also because the historical tension and conflictuality that is part of what the museum is can erupt once more.

The custodians' and curators' contradictory and always also somewhat impossible task would be to "care" for the conflictuality and performativity of the works – a "care" focused on the fact that there needs to be room precisely for the "*unarchivable*" element of art and history in the museum – because this is what actually distinguishes a museum from a police archive. The museum as para-museum would therefore be precisely a place in which a renewal of the material's current relevance – and not just its immobilization or, alternatively, exploitation – can become possible.

Mark O'Neill: The key shift in this notion of "care" is from an epistemology based on the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the positivism of the Scientific revolution, the dualism of Descartes and the utilitarianism of Bentham, to one that emphasizes relationships, systems and ecologies. The museum is no longer an island of civilization, occasionally visited by worshippers, but an active agent in a complex web of cultural, social and economic networks and systems.

This reflects the increased political valency of museum objects, no longer seen as neutral specimens, but as embodying the values of

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the cultures which collected them which, at the time of the formation of public museums, were dominated by imperialistic and patriarchal norms.

Do you see a new ethical concept in this concern for "care"?

Jonah Siegel: Practical considerations come to the fore initially when the concept of the museum itself needs support, but the challenge also may be viewed as an occasion for serious self-reflection.Why save this thing? Why display it? What values are we supporting by what we preserve, display, and explain – and by the terms we use to explain or justify ourselves? If we think of self-consciousness as a fundamental ethical responsibility, this process of reflection is revealed to be deeply ethical. I am not sure it is a new concept that recent ideas of "care" will require, so much as the recognition of a very old one.

Nora Sternfeld : The ethics of this concept of "care" are related to the ethics of Derrida's *Archive Fever* and of Benjamin's *Theses on History: Ethics of the "archival unconscious"*. I would speak about ethics that are based on the admission of intrinsic violence and a history of struggles that are haunting the archive.

In this sense I would speak about ethics as a faithfulness to the "unarchivable" – a concept that I owe to and have been working on together with the theorist Irit Rogoff.

But when we confront the unarchivable that haunts the archive, we encounter contradictions, uncanny contradictions. With Jacques Derrida I would refer to these contradictions as the ghosts in the archives. And what I would call care and ethics would be to be faithful to these contradictions instead of silencing them: We don't want to admit them, because we are looking for an order that legitimizes our lives, our positions, our points of view, we are looking for an order in which it is clear who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. But if we work with archives we encounter contradictions and struggles. And these will never legitimize what is. They may motivate what is, they move us, but they cannot legitimize it, even if the archives always try to do so in a certain way with their orders and structures.

Mark O'Neill: Newer notions of "care" in museum culture derive from movements to revise and enrich our understanding of human life, reflected in a series "turns" – cultural, linguistic, embodied, material, ecological, spiritual, spatial - a search in the humanities equivalent to efforts by Mahbub ul-Haq, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to replace metrics based on GDP with the Human Development index, and a legalistic version of human rights with one rooted in human capabilities. The philosophy of "care", largely derived from feminist thinking aspires to be more than a "turn" however, and to function as a paradigm shift, in the full Kuhnian sense, of a transformed way of thinking which re-frames everything and provides a new basis for "normal science". Virginia Held, for example, has argued that the feminist ethic of "care" is not

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an approach which can be added to more established philosophies such as Kantianism, utilitarianism or virtue ethics. It has something in common with the latter, but "in its focus on relationships rather than on the dispositions of individuals, the ethics of "care" is distinct".[1]

Insofar as museums are adopting a relational ethic of "care", museum theory is moving beyond the hermeneutic of suspicion and the deconstruction of the ideological role of museums to a focus on relationality, using terms like community, engagement, empathy, co-production, visitor centered, social justice, and cultural democracy.

The pandemic exposed a widespread hypocrisy about "care", where the (majority female) workers in homes for the (majority female) elderly, were exposed with their charges to higher risks than any other profession, for wages that were at or near the legal minimum. While many museums have engaged with the ethic of "care" through projects, the great majority delegate these to the largely female staff who previously had delivered school programs, and later art/engagement programs derived from Community Arts. During COVID most museums tried to adapt and provide caring services online, but some, most notably MOMA in NY, made their real priorities clear. Despite being one of the wealthiest museums in the world, within days of the first lockdown, and delivering "care" projects, including one focused on individuals living with dementia, MOMA sacked their entire education and engagement team – again mostly female, and from global majority backgrounds. In the UK, any time there are budget cuts, the engagement staff are always the first to go, in order to preserve the museums' *core* functions. Dementia care is of course very fundable, so it costs the "core" nothing. Despite values espoused in mission statements, museums like MOMA deny relational ethics and are driven by a desire to retain unilateral control over the institution and its environment, not to engage and to learn in order to contribute, in the words of the old ICOM definition, *to society and its development*.

"Care" in museums is focused on interpersonal care, working with small groups, selected from communities under-represented amongst museum visitors, through volunteering programs or time-limited projects. These are often linked to mission statement objectives involving contributing to social mobility, social cohesion or democratization. Where these engagements are designed to reshape the museum as a whole, there may be some truth in these claims. If they are just projects, these claims are not tenable – the numbers involved are simply too small to have any impact. As Nick Merriman, now CEO of English Heritage put it.

> *"If we are honest with ourselves, ...we like talking about socially engaged projects because social change is part of the accepted discourse and reward system of museology, and we feel better about ourselves when we're doing this kind of work. However, we have not found a way to translate this small*

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scale but important work into mass participation that makes a change in the wider society”.[2]

Embedding “care” in museum institutional culture would mean recognizing the unchanging gap in visitation between upper and lower socioeconomic groups, and that a strategic response to structural inequalities is required, in particular to the fact that the single most important predictor of museum visiting is prior level of educational qualification. Despite the huge focus on improving access to museums over the past 50 years, I don’t know of any museum which puts this core insight of cultural sociology at the centre of its engagement strategy. For every increased level of educational attainment, people are proportionately more likely to visit museums, and there is a big jump for people with degrees – especially those with humanities’degrees. Very few museums have mediation programs (involving all aspects of display, marketing, PR, outreach, inreach and visitor welcome) designed to create access for people with few or no educational qualifications. This means that, while museums can enhance the education of those who are already educated, the people who get the most out of them are the most educated. And the people who could most benefit from an enhanced education are the least likely to be addressed by the museum. And of course, education intersects with other vectors of inequality, compounding their exclusionary effects.

How can we link the notions of provenance and “care” for objects?

Jonah Siegel: Clarity about provenance and even about uncertainty as to provenance is vital. The history of an object includes the vicissitudes it has experienced. Caring for the museum itself requires frankness in these areas – and I anticipate that the burgeoning importance of the question of provenance will ultimately lead us to move beyond simply endorsing fairly primitive notions of cultural property, of group blame or responsibility, or of the ethics of individual ownership.

Nora Sternfeld: If we admit that conflictuality is somehow part of every process of musealization then we will see that provenance and “care” are intrinsically linked: The objects come to the museum with their histories. And musealization consists in a revalorization of values: It is doing something with the objects, and this “something” becomes part of them, for the better or for the worse. Caring for objects means caring for their histories – as violent (or as mundane) they might be.

Mark O’Neill: A relational perspective also emphasizes context, including provenance. The focus on the context of objects has been influential in museums from a number of perspectives – ecological in natural history, historical and cultural in human history collections. The role of context in art collections is still unresolved. The great English art historian, Michael Baxandall, ar-

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gued against providing context in museums, despite writing inspiring work on how culture shaped the *period eye* which enabled works of art to be understood and appreciated.[3] For different reasons, the evocation of context for non-European objects was disavowed by the Musée de l'Homme, in an assertion of the primacy of the European category of "art" over cultural meanings. This echoes arguments put forward by museum directors like James Cuno and Neil McGregor that, in effect, non-European peoples should be flattered by having their objects elevated to this status. This denial of the importance of context led many American museums, including the Getty and the Met to collect unprovenanced antiquities from Italy and Greece, many of which they have been forced by the courts to return, most famously the Euphronios krater.

One of the puzzling aspects of provenance studies is how wide acceptance that objects spoliated by the Nazis should be returned to the descendants of the original owners, is often combined with a vigorous insistence that the same principle does not apply in the contexts of other, relatively recent atrocities. *Reductio ad absurdum* arguments invoke claims for the return of objects taken by the Roman legions or marauding Vikings, with no recognition of the links of the objects with identifiable living descendants of their original owners. In 1999, Glasgow City Council agreed to return a Lakota Ghost Dance Shirt which had been removed from a corpse after the Massacre of Wounded Knee (1890) to descendants, mainly as the result of provenance research which showed that there was no way the object could have been legally acquired by the donor, as well as because of its religious, cultural and historical significance.

What contradictions or connections do you see in contemporary museum situations?

Jonah Siegel: The museum can be seen as a culminating point of a general education – a structure containing objects one understands or appreciates if one has been educated to the point at which doing so is possible. It can also be seen, on the other hand, as precisely the location at which that instruction should be carried out, one that should not require prior knowledge as a price of entry. To these extremes, between which museums and thinking about museums have moved since their inception, we might add the pres-

Fig. 01: Lakota Ghost Dance Shirt repatriated to the Wounded Knee Survivors Association in 1999. The shirt was probably removed from the body of someone killed in the massacre in December 1890. This was the first ever repatriation from a UK museum to a Native American organisation. Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

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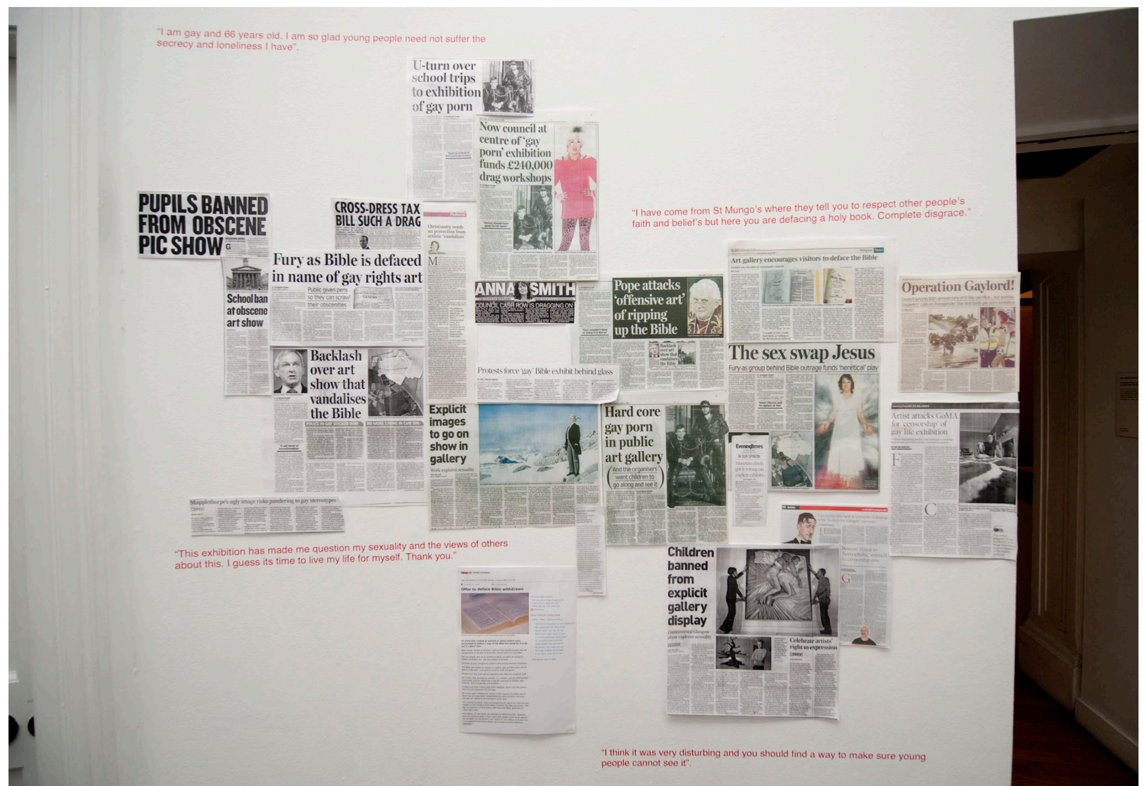

02

Fig. 02: In response to the backlash triggered by the exhibition SH(out), on LGBTI issues and art, we commissioned artist Anthony Shrag (http://www.anthonyschrag.com) to make a rapid-response display documenting the controversy and inviting public comment. Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

sures for instrumental value on the one hand, which is one characteristic manifestation of the educational mission (we must train our designers or citizens) and the claims for broader general values (such as the aesthetic, the ideal, universal culture, etc.) which are manifestations of that culminating quality of the institution, but which have been put under a great deal of pressure by recent reflections on the social interests inherent in the institution. The embrace of multicultural and inclusive values in European and American cultural institutions along with new sensitivities about the politics of ownership and display have tended to reveal the fault lines dividing the never truly harmonious elements that made up the cultural logic of the museum. Who is it for? What is it for? These basic questions are easy to answer in broad terms, but are less straightforward in practice than it is sometimes thought. I'd add that the same might be said about other important social structures that matter (the family, the nation, and so on). To put the matter in the terms offered in the original question: in some ways the museum might be better understood as a good example of the inevitability of contradictions that will be manifested at the junction point of all important connections rather than as an especially troubled instance of contradiction.

Nora Sternfeld: Since the beginning of the 21st century, critical theories have spread like wildfire in the practice of institutional texts and contexts: feminism, anti-racism, environmental policies, institutional criticism, inclusion debates, decolonial and queer theories are omnipresent – while structurally, however, little has changed for the better and a hard-earned critical vocabulary often becomes a label. The question remains: How can the

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critique of the museum have actual consequences within the museum?

Mark O'Neill: Critical theories have indeed had a strong influence on the exhibitions and activities of some museums, with many claiming radical reinvention. There is little evidence that these changes are anything other than performative, validating the identities of the staff and those sections of the public which share their values. I know of no museum which takes a visitor-centered, experimental approach to progressive displays. This would involve ascertaining the attitudes towards, and the knowledge and understandings of, the issues involved amongst a wide public (not just minoritized groups) and then using formative evaluation to implement effective public education in the sense described by both Nora and Jonah. This is all the more important in our polarised society. The aim would be to reduce public bewilderment about many culture war issues, offering accessible information, reducing rejection and nurturing the reflection which is essential to active citizenship.

In Glasgow we learned the need for this approach the hard way. After three successful exhibitions in our Gallery of Modern Art on the theme of Contemporary Art and Human Rights, in 2004, 2006 and 2008, we added another to the sequence, celebrating LGBTQI art. We mismanaged the risks very badly, resulting in really negative experiences for staff and in damage to our capacity to address difficult issues in the future.[4]

What examples of (good) treatment could you cite in this context?

Jonah Siegel : An example of a recent display that I found rich and thought-provoking even as it addressed difficult questions in American history is *Wiyohpiyata: Lakota*

Fig. 03:
Visitors in 2009 to Sh(out): Contemporary Art and Human Rights at Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art admire 'Memorial To A Marriage' by Patricia Cronin. Despite the controversy triggered by the exhibition, this work was acquired by the city and is now on long-term display in Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery.
Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

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04

Fig. 04: Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

Images of the Contested West, at the Peabody museum at Harvard as I write, an exhibition that shows a museum leading with new ideas about its holdings and the relationships those holdings can illustrate. Among the effective strategies the curators used are some that I would describe as more phenomenological than conceptual. The exhibition has been given pride of place, occurring as it does near the beginning of the museum, which ensures the primacy of its account of difficult unresolved contact. The display is beautifully designed, indicating a material commitment to the concepts it strives to illuminate, thereby making a politically-charged and morally complex topic immediately interesting to the viewer.

At the heart of the exhibition is a complicated document, a Lakota Sioux ledger book (on loan from the Houghton library, also at Harvard), said to have been found on the battlefield where Custer was defeated at the Battle of Little Big Horn. The book contains illustrations by and of Plains Indian warriors that the exhibit presents along with historic Lakota objects from the museum's collections, and work by Butch Thunder Hawk, a contemporary Lakota artist, who was also a co-curator of the exhibition.

It would be difficult to describe in detail the many intelligent and effective design elements of this exhibition, but what is unmistakably clear is that the display begins with conflict, with unresolved and unresolvable issues that it does not attempt to close off or resolve, but instead leaves open in a productive way. The object at its heart was recovered from a scene of battle and displays warriors, so it does not only acknowledge conflict, but leads with it. The provenance of the object – and even its likely uses – are clearly indicated to be not fully established. The display includes works of art of the Lakota people, so it does not make conflict or conquest the only topic that matters about indigenous

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Fig. 05-06: *Wiyohpiyata: Lakota Images of the Contested West.* © Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University.

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communities. The inclusion of contemporary art that is directly related to the material on display illustrates in the most concrete way the continuity of Indian life – that the topics raised by the works on display are in no way merely retrospective. The exhibition thereby makes a contrast – to cite just one local example – with the images of indigenous people at the Fogg Museum that were painted – as so many fantasies and documentations of indigenous life were in the nineteenth century – to capture a culture presented as inevitably vanishing by the very people who were working to make it disappear.

Ultimately, what stands out to me about this example at the Peabody is that the most interesting responses to the ethical challenges of ownership and exhibition at a museum – and to historic violence and displacement – may well be the care taken in the organization and display of material. It bears saying that the success of this exhibition to my mind is not unrelated to the clear discussions of NAGPRA (the Native American Graves Repatriation Act) elsewhere in the museum, or the display of archeological work undertaken at Harvard as a site, and – of course – to the capacious collection of objects from different regions and cultures present in the rest of the museum.

Museums of anthropology carry a high burden when it comes to the recognition of practices of political power and of collecting and display that can no longer be passed over, given their complicity in practices of conquest and control, and in the development of racialized analyses used to justify those practices. The Peabody, a nineteenth-century foundation with troubling holdings and controversy in its recent past, is to be commended when it creates a display that tries to do more than merely reflect on its own failings. Needless to say, one display does not atone for decades of injuries or for centuries of conquest, but this one is to be applauded for the effective use of the resources of the museum (material, conceptual, phenomenological) to suggest new kinds of relationships between the past, present, and future.

Nora Sternfeld: With the collective *schnittpunkt. Exhibition theory and practice* and within our publication series "curating" in the publishing series of the University of Applied Arts Vienna we thought a lot about these questions. In our book on "Curating as Anti-Racist Practice", Natalie Bayer, Belinda Kazeem-Kamińsky and I ask how curatorial practices refuse to play the game of "getting over it". We discuss anti-racist curating as a practice that is faithful not only to objects, but to existing social struggles that encounter the ghosts of historical violence. And I think that the Kreuzberg Museum in Berlin, that Natalie Bayer is actually directing, is dedicated to these questions in its entire practice. Another example could be the Volkskundemuseum in Vienna that has reworked its collection presentation from an anti-racist perspective and is now in a process of restructuring thinking together with the collective *MUSMIG*. *MUSMIG*, the acronym for Museum of Migration is a museum

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in Vienna that does not (yet) exist. *MUSMIG* is a collective, an attempt at post-migrant self-historicization and a performance of the demand for a museum for migration. *MUSMIG* describes itself as "the blind spot of traditional museums, the thorn in the flesh of nation-state institutions. *MUSMIG* is the gap that comes into the world performatively, the utopia that is only realized in the act of speaking, in debate and in celebration". Since February 2024, *MUSMIG* has had a room in the Vienna Volkskundemuseum (Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art), its "director's room" is a meeting room for *MUSMIG*, which is currently headed by the first elected – six-member – director collective. The manifesto of the *MUSMIG* collective states:

A museum about migration is a museum about wars.

A museum about wars is a museum about exploitation.

A museum about exploitation is a museum about resources.

A museum about resources is a museum about capitalism.

A museum about capitalism is a museum about power.

A museum about power is a museum about fascism.

A museum about fascism is a museum about annihilation.

A museum about annihilation is a museum about pain.

A museum about pain is a museum about racism.

A museum about racism is a museum about borders.

A museum about borders is a museum about movement.

A museum about movement is a museum about people.

A museum about people is a museum about migration.

A museum about migration is a museum about wars. [5]

At this very moment we are preparing a book on the difficulty of working with the history of nazism in an era of *post-nazism*.[6] Luisa Ziaja, chief curator of the Belvedere in Vienna, writes in her text about some of her collection exhibitions. Her text "on historical and institutional critique in curatorial work with a collection" has the title: *Not following, not not showing, breaking, challenging*. And she describes her very careful curatorial practice against the grain and the weight of the canon.

How do the notions of "care" for objects and "care" for visitors fit together? Are there any contradictions between the two approaches?

Jonah Siegel: While safeguarding the objects in their "care" is a prime duty of curators, their responsibility to visitors is no less important. Given the state of general education today, it is challenging to know what positive information or knowledge a culture-worker can rely upon. People may or may not know clearly why they are in the museum, or even why something is of interest. In every public institution, the curator needs to teach and inform in order to safeguard the ongoing value of the institution itself and of the objects it contains.

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Meeting people where they are, informing, and inspiring them are all key elements for the future health of the museum. Finding the balance between confidence (in the good the institution can do), humility (when it comes to historic museal practices inextricably associated with acts of violence) and respect (for the public as moral and intellectual subjects, for objects and their histories) will always be challenging and lead to policies and practices characterized by compromise and contradiction. The question is whether our intellectual communities are willing to see contradiction and compromise as powerful conceptual tools, or whether they will be unable to do more than judge them for being in the end what they were to start with—the main elements shaping culture.

Nora Sternfeld: This is a very good question. I think that a museum is a place of contradictory tasks and negotiations. If we think about "care" in the museum as a "care" for the conflictuality that comes with the relation to history this contradiction is exactly what has to be lived and negotiated in the process of museums. This is why I think that we should imagine new museum practices that I would call "progressive conservation" in which conservators, curators and educators work closely together.

Mark O'Neill: Any formulation of museum practice that posits a contradiction between care for objects and "care" for visitors is an admission of failure; the core task is to reconcile these obligations. When we were planning to move Glasgow's

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Fig. 07: Patricia Cronin 'Memorial to a Marriage' on display in Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum. Image Credit: Glasgow Life Museums.

Museum of Transport to a new Zaha Hadid-designed museum on the river Clyde, the most consistent request for improving the old museum was to allow access onto the trams and buses, which had been prohibited to preserve the vehicles. The conservation team did an ethical assessment of the issue and recommended partitioning the interiors, screening off half with Perspex, and allowing the other half to be very gradually eroded by visitors.

Many people do not visit museums because they find them uninteresting, but the inequalities in museum visiting by class, race, ethnicity, level of education etc. are not the result merely of individual choice, but of structural, systemic inequality in society. This implies that museums are up against strong forces and it is important not to make excessive claims about the capacity of museums to change these structural barriers. But some museums – of art, science, history or other subjects - have much more representative audiences than others, so there is scope for change. The restriction of "care" for visitors to one group of staff is a way of avoiding working out how the museum as a whole would need to change to reduce the attendance gap and attract more representative

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audiences. Just as museums are required by law to make changes to enable access by disabled people on equal terms with the non-disabled, an ethic of "care" would require equivalent adjustments be made to enable educationally disadvantaged people to benefit from museums in all their dimensions.

How can "care" in the museum relate to the notion of expenditure - you can give your own definition of this concept - as the Surrealists, Georges Bataille, etc. might have thought of it between the wars, or to classical economics, etc.? So how do we think about the obsolete, or even the waste, in this utopia of "care"?

Jonah Siegel: The question of expenditure and waste is always going to be of most interest when understood to be a matter not of value (what is this worth?), but values (why does this matter?).

Contemporary culture is obsessed with efficiency, and shows an ever-renewed (and extraordinarily naïve) faith in novelty and in the genius of inexpert solutions. The museum stands athwart these tendencies and demands attention to what has been left behind *schnittpunkt* and – respect for expertise. These elements that make the institution feel atavistic are key to its moral function today – to stand against the pressures of aggressive ignorance and the valorization of financial profit and loss as the measure of all things.

What are we caring for and about when we care for and about museums? What is a museum when it cannot take either desire nor complacency for granted? The answers to these questions will make the next decades among the most exciting in the history of the institution, or contribute to the ongoing emptying out of its purpose.

The dictionary tells us that in English at least, "expenditure," not infrequently brings along with it the idea of waste (in *Oxford English Dictionary:* "The expending or laying out (of energy, labour, time): often with notion of waste"). It strikes me that this question makes most sense in a world in which any expenditure that is not aimed at satisfying some basic need or pleasure will be a waste. In that world, the museum will always be a waste: it makes demands on our memories, it offers pleasure depending on effort, and sometimes unpleasure as well, following reflection. It does not make us richer or (*pace* Pierre Bourdieu and his followers) place us in a superior position in our society from which we can benefit practically.

A fundamental question is whose desire is being recognized, generated, and satisfied in the museum, and how to make the experience of the viewer one in which passions are activated but not cloyed. If we think of the matter this way, literature may be as good or better a guide than the theorists of museum design or economists. William Shakespeare lays out in one long complex sentence in his Sonnet 129, one account of the nature of desire (he calls it "lust") in relation to expense. The sentence

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is stylistically complicated because the poet is trying to capture a deeply dynamic relationship in which cause and effect, emotion and experience, are deeply and complexly intertwined, but the point is relatively straightforward as a description of experience. "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame," he tells us in a grim vision of the psychological effects of desires satisfied, "Is lust in action.".[7] He also reminds the reader however, that before the expense and waste that is the moment of desire satisfied comes the truly powerful experience of lust: "and till action, lust / Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame, / Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust." Satisfaction is not the end of the cycle, however: once satisfied, desire tends to turn on its object: "Enjoyed no sooner but despisèd straight, / Past reason hunted; and, no sooner had / Past reason hated as a swallowed bait" Is it possible to escape the cycle of violence to the object of desire –or to route desire differently so that it escapes the moralized structures that make its workings a waste of shame? The museum will provoke such questions when we allow it to – and perhaps some of the ongoing antipathy to the institution may be traced to a complex including both the regrets of satiation and – the prude's fears disguised as economic prudence.

Influential economic models aside, the question of excess has also been shaped by the ongoing influence of some residual avant-garde sensibilities. Modernists tended to take the museum for granted, to push against the pressure of the past, as the Futurists did most flamboyantly, imagining an institution characterized by the charisma of antiquity on the one hand, and by the excess of material it gathered together on the other, a place in which the prestige of history justified the assembling of a profusion of objects that crowded out the emergence of important and deeply necessary responses to the dynamic new world technology was bringing into being. There is something perverse in the fact that the museum sometimes is still met with an attitude that made far more sense in 1909, when the technology being celebrated was the car and airplane. It should be difficult to argue not only that the cachet of history or of art is where it was in that earlier era, but even that the museum will provide the most copious kind of experience of culture available to us today. After all, almost everyone carries in their pocket access to more objects and experiences than all the museums that have ever been could relay to them in many lifetimes—though the result of all that access amounts to one experience over and over again. The crowding to be feared, it turns out, is not that of the museum—and technological innovation today has evidently not led to the new engagement with life celebrated by F. T. Marinetti and those who followed his lead.

Nora Sternfeld: What is waste and obsolete now, might mean something completely different later. This is why I think that all that seems obsolete is part of a certain uncontrollable and ungovernable relation to history – that is exactly the reason why it might be able to carry the "unarchivable".

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Mark O'Neill: In terms of Bataille's grand guignol philosophy of energy, the images that come to mind are from the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, which featured three of the city's great museums: the mocking headless Marie Antoinette figures dancing at the Conciergerie; the paintings and images of the Louvre coming to life to the sound of Saint-Saëns' Danse macabre, implicitly acknowledging their death and denial of jouissance in the museum; and the Musée D'Orsay, a converted railway station, built on the site of Palais d'Orsay which was burned by the Communards during the Paris Commune of 1870. Expenditure on what Veblen might have called this conspicuous heritage was not matched by adequate investment in the most basic need of civilization- effective sewage systems, so that the swimming events in the Seine had to be postponed numerous times because of excessive amounts of human waste. This cultural contradiction is also evident in the UK, where in 2023, 265 conservative MPs voted against an amendment to stop private water companies from dumping raw sewage into the England's rivers and coastlines, reflecting how much neoliberal values had changed the meaning of "conservative" to such a degree that it no longer includes conserving the countryside, in a nation where the natural heritage of "this green and pleasant land" is a key part of its traditional identity.

In terms of classical economics, I think of museums as social institutions like the family, friendship or religion, which are outside the market and essential for its functioning – but constantly transformed by market forces. In the current era of market fundamentalism, where economics functions in a closed-off world of transactions which generate profit and loss, any impact on society or nature outside this cycle is called an "externality". Increased pollution and mass redundancies, for example, are "negative externalities". The core of society is the economy; all other aspects of life are "external", and by implication, secondary.

In this interpretation, the ethic of "care" can be seen as a resistance to this vision of society as a mere external effect of the market, rather than the market being a servant of society. This neoliberal ideology claims the authority of Adam Smith, but it is a travesty of his thought, and not only because it discounts his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and its celebration of empathy as the basis of civilization. Even in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), he argues that the endless repetition of simple tasks resulting from the division of labor leads to a "torpor" of mind which renders the worker "not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life".[8] The need to remedy this, Smith argues, even justifies state expenditure on public education. Museums in this view are instruments of human development, but as mere "positive externalities", the "invisible hand" of the market constantly demands that they justify themselves in terms of

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economic utility. It is a key paradox of museum culture that they carry out this humanizing function, and also, as instruments of modernity, take part in the destruction of traditional ways of life which modernity entails, transforming modes of landownership and human relationships with objects and nature as more and more aspects of life are commodified and absorbed into the market economy. Museums function as an extractive industry, collecting the flotsam and jetsam from the wreckage of cultures in the wake of modernization, in processes often conceived of as rescuing these remnants for the benefit of humanity, and romanticizing cultures which they have helped destroy. Jonah's quotation of a Shakespeare sonnet, reminds me of another, no 64, which may help to account, in part, for the muting of desire which is often apparent in museums. The obsessive gathering of artefacts may less an acquisitive response to the proliferation of artefacts, and more a manic flight from the fear that this hoarding will not, after all, keep an awareness of mortality at bay:

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,

That time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose

But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

How can we think about distance from objects, or even their detestation/condemnation, within this framework of "care"?

Jonah Siegel: Evidently the ethical museum has to be ready to separate itself from the works of art it values if those works have been acquired unethically. And yet, there may be more to the responsibility of the museum than abdicating "care" to an owner. Might "care" for an object mean letting it go? Certainly. Might "care" argue for retention? In some cases. There is no necessary relationship between "care" and property, as Solomon demonstrated when it came to identifying the parent of the baby.

It seems to me that the question of the condemnation of objects, which has been a controversial topic in museums for decades now, has taken on new urgency in very recent years, that the premises on which opprobrium and suppression have been based may need to be revisited. To condemn specific objects for the memories they carry of past ethical failures to the point of no longer displaying them is to make a decision that ignorance is better than knowledge. This extreme proposition may evidently be reasonable in specific cases (in the display, for example, of works designed to sustain a dangerous lie about history and to suppress a people, as is the case with confederate monuments in the American South) and has perhaps been worth entertaining more broadly for the fundamental challenge it presents to any complacent sense that knowledge will match up in an easy way with virtue. But it is probably time to move on from the idea that removal of objects tainted with evil amounts to an authentic act of care. Such decisions imply ethical claims about curators (we

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are ethical because we protect you from the possibility of harm), about objects (they may cause harm), about museum visitors (they are liable to be harmed) and about one version of "care" (to care is to anticipate injury and to prevent it from happening). All of these claims tend to suggest that either the broader world has moved on from harm, so that the museum is the location for vestigial possibilities of ongoing harm (like unexploded ordnance after a conflict) or that it has at least recognized harm reduction as a good that should be carried out in the museum as well as elsewhere. Alternatively, they amount to a proposal that in an incurably cruel world the museum should work towards a compensatory safety not available outside the institution. In recent years, when we have seen the bold and open embrace of irrational forms of cruelty in situations and locations where we had thought such things had been superseded pretending that anyone is better off by being ignorant about any part of the past risks embracing blindness not only about what is behind us, but what looms in our near future, not to say what is here right now.

Nora Sternfeld: In our next book "not only exhibiting"[9] we try to face the fact that the museum is a place that has so many traces of violence in its storages… "Care" – as I tried to explain – is care exactly to these contradictions.

Mark O'Neill: One of the most pervasive fantasies of museum workers, especially those in art museums is that, despite their elaborate training in the skills involved, reading objects is something that people can do without training or mediation. This may reflect one of the major blind spots in how museums understand their audiences. With the rise of identity politics and a reduced prominence of class politics, a great deal of effort in museums goes into addressing ethnic, cultural and sexual identities, often framed by equalities legislation. It is not our job, say "traditional" art museums, to reduce the distance between objects and people by attracting less unequal, more representative audiences, to compensate for inadequate state education or to undertake social work to boost the self-esteem, identity and self-efficacy of social groups based on their socioeconomic position. This is dishonest: these museums work very hard to address the inadequate education and self-efficacy of potential donors, and to offer privileges to Friends and Members. This is precisely social work for the well off and the well-educated.

In our increasingly individualistic, globalized, geographically mobile society, fragmented by rapidly changing forms of identity- what Zygmunt Bauman has labelled "liquid modernity"[10] – museums can provide relief from the anomie of an atomized existence, anchoring people in time and place, reinforced by the potentially inclusive civic ritual of museum visiting. The cultural richness of museum collections has the potential to de-escalate polarizing and fragmenting forces by creating spaces where all are welcome and which offer multiple perspectives. But, as noted above, this will not happen as a side effect of progressive displays: museums need to learn how to make it happen.

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In terms of the issues Jonah raises about the tensions which arise from the museum's need "to separate itself from the works of art it values if those works have been acquired unethically", the most prominent event in my experience was when Glasgow City Council agreed, in 1998, to return a Lakota Ghost Dance Shirt to the Wounded Knee Survivors Association. There was no legal obligation to make the return, and there was considerable pressure not to create a precedent – this was the first repatriation from the UK to Native Americans. The Council, however, recognized that possession is not an absolute value, and, given that there was no legal way the Shirt could have been acquired, repatriation was the only ethical thing to do.[11].

Is an anti-museum of opprobrium conceivable?

Jonah Siegel: Certainly – but I do not believe it is worth the effort. On the whole, it is probably better to build institutions for admiration than otherwise.

The public is less interested in being scolded than it is sometimes thought. If culture will only tell them that our old institutions are sites for negative judgments and for storing the evidences of past evils, they are likely to seek out more positive cultural messages where they can, which will often lead them to too-simple or dangerous versions of nationalistic chauvinism. Life is short; most activities do not quite match up to their ideal aspirations. It is not clear that the current preoccupation with historic moral failings has eventuated in more than in encouraging the most pernicious forms of reactionary thought.

Nora Sternfeld: I think that not to reflect the violent histories of the museum is and would be a shame.

Mark O'Neill: Apart from memorial institutions such as Holocaust museums, the Gulag Museum in Moscow, the House of Terror in Budapest, or the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, museums of opprobrium are very rare. Jonah is right, the public don't like being scolded, and this was evident from the early days of public museums. In 1852, reasoning that to learn about good design, visitors needed to see bad design, a precursor exhibition to the Victoria & Albert Museum in Marlborough House showed 87 objects in what the Times called a "chamber of horrors". It illustrated "decorations on false principles of design, such as vulgar and inharmonious coloring, want of meaning and unity and pattern, graceless imitations of natural forms etc". Visitors did not appreciate seeing objects they owned judged as being in bad taste and the backlash was such that the display was soon removed. I am unaware of any museum that has attempted to enhance their educational impact by showing art and design that has been explicitly labelled as bad (excluding Nazi anti-modern exhibitions).

Memorial museums clearly signal to visitors before they enter what their focus is – and many millions are interested in these topics, will-

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ingly to expose themselves to the pain involved in exploring them. Other museums, however, especially art and "universal" museums find themselves unable to move beyond positive, utopian visions of the past, denying Walter Benjamin's insight that every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism. The questions memorial museums ask about who we humans are and why we are capable of such violence would be much more challenging if they were embedded in the British Museum, the Louvre or Munich. The denial of complexity to create utopian spaces clearly has a psychological cost – in the psychic energy required to repress awareness of the barbaric – which includes a muting of intensity of the museum experience, and the well-known phenomenon of museum fatigue.

In psychoanalytical terms this splitting is a form of dissociation. Laurajane Smith has shown that attempts to address this dissociation by, for example, interpreting the role slavery played in Southern plantations in America or the wealth that great country houses owned by the National Trust in the UK, struggled to engage the largest museum visiting demographic – middle-class, well-educated white people whose identity is tied up with what she calls the Authorized Heritage Discourse.[12] If museums are to contribute to reducing toxic polarization, we need to find ways of supporting visitor – and staff – confidence in reflecting on more complex narratives. Many museums, like the National Portrait Gallery in London, are attempting to do this, but, as I said, we need a lot of rigorous experimentation to understand how this might become more effective.

Is it possible to conceive of a museum of exiled objects?

Jonah Siegel: Of course. In fact, it is harder, I think, to do the opposite: to imagine a museum of objects that are at home. New ethical dimensions open up when we recognize the inescapable condition of exile, and the privileged position of the museum as locus of exile.

Nora Sternfeld: Isn't every museum a museum of exiled objects? And shouldn't we reimagine ownership under the conditions of exile? Very interesting projects think at the moment about practices of shared ownership.

Mark O'Neill: With the exception of artworks specifically commissioned to be part of a museum (such as the Rivera mural in Detroit Institute of Art), all museums are made up of objects which are exiled, in place, time, context or meaning. This is inherent in the nature of museums and has been an issue since their earliest days. Quatremère de Quincy complained about religious objects being ripped from their contexts in the days after the French Revolution. Theodor Adorno made a similar point more than 150 years later in his essay on the Valéry Proust Museum, when he noted the homology between the words museum and mausoleum.

The idea of exile implies a forced

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rather than a willing migration, with a sense of loss – no matter how reconciled one is to one's new home, the ache of longing for the place of origin endures. Thinking of objects in this anthropomorphic way is alien to the positivist tradition, but it may be a useful approach, in terms of creative interpretation, helping to focus both on what they meant to the people of their originating contexts and what they mean to contemporary visitors. If this exiled object could speak, what would it want to say to people today? Labels written in the voice of the object would be partially fictional, but if well researched they could support more accurate, less presentist labels, and go beyond mere identification.

What is the relationship to reparation - of objects, of societies, of history - in the politics of museum "care"?

Jonah Siegel: As noted above, "care" and property rights have no necessary relationship. Indeed, some of the most important moral guidelines we live with have to do with the limits of property. Society steps in when individuals treat their animals in abusive ways, or use their factories to pollute the environment more than the approved amount. I cannot do what I want to my own home because there are building rules constraining my actions. When we do not enforce such rules in relation to architecture, propertied vandals destroy our urban fabric. In short, ascertaining ownership is only a very limited basis on which to build an ethics. In the cultural realm it tends to lead to a very narrow, and sometimes pernicious brand of politics, involving as it does quite short-sighted views of nationalism and property.

True reparations would be a project of such extraordinary complexity given the practical, political, and moral issues it raises, that one suspects that the tendency to focus on the entirely limited version of the practice that might be achieved by museums shipping objects from one place to another is just a way to avoid doing the actual work.

While it is clear that for the foreseeable future and with good reason the question of reparations will be an urgent topic for the museum, there are real limits that need to be recognized: 1. Caring for an object and establishing the rights of owners are different things because law and ethics are not the same thing. 2. True injuries are not liable to repair, which means there is a limit to what institutions of culture can do in this direction. 3. There are real risks to the museum and to the ethical moment if a ritual of sacrifice is seen as the main work of the institution, thus freeing the rest of society from its moral burden while placing an unsatisfiable demand on structures that will inevitably fail in response. To ask curators to serve as priests tasked with the symbolic work of expiation is to confuse ritual with ethical action and care with atonement.

Nora Sternfeld: Contrary to many understandings of "healing" and "care" in connection with museums and decolonization I would like to propose a different approach: What

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if we were to approach the decolonization of museums from a perspective of the inconsolable? What would the debates and concepts for the decolonization of museums look like? What would they tell? How would they deal with their epistemic violence and their stolen artefacts? And how can a museum of the inconsolable be conceived against this background, in which restitution is not thought of as reparation while instead serious work is constantly being done not only on restitution, but also on the consequences that the history of colonialism demands?

The German author Max Czollek speaks about a "reconciliation theatre".[13] By this he means the cultural and social staging of a certain element of German "memory culture": The imperative "that everything should be good again," without any actual and real consequences. What Max Czollek outlines in his book as a counter-image, is "inconsolability." He refers to Vladimir Jankélévitch, a French philosopher who thought a lot about the irrevocable, about what can't be taken back, away, or be deleted. The inconsolable is the bitter realization that nothing is and can actually be "good again" anyway. Sarah Ahmed, said: "Don't get over it, if you are not over it".[14] And in this sense the inconsolable is not an end. On the contrary, it is consolation that is actually the expectation of an end. The inconsolable is a beginning. The inconsolable is the bitter realization that nothing is and can actually be "good again" anyway.

But what can happen in the museum, and what Max Czollek outlines in his book as a counter-image, is "inconsolability". I would argue that this is exactly what the museum can actually do: If we insist and persist in an emancipatory museum perspective, that doesn't want to tell history as the story of victors, then we will encounter a history full of violence, of pain, of wars and defeats – full of lacks and cracks and breaks and histories that were silenced.

Mark O'Neill: The traditional account of museum history tells of a transition from cabinets of curiosities or wonders to rationally systematized, scholarly collections, which emerged as part of the scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries and in response to Europeans' "discovery" of new worlds full of alien cultures, and innumerable hitherto unknown plants and animals. These discoveries evoked a predatory response, embodied in the legal doctrine of *terra nullius*, which held that lands whose peoples did not mix their labor with the land were "empty" and could therefore be legitimately appropriated by those who practiced Western agriculture. The doctrine of racial inferiority authorized a similar predation of the inhabitants. Underneath the veneer of Enlightenment rationality museums gave to these processes we may see, not so much, or not only, a new process of knowledge production, but a manic response to the unanticipated cultural diversity of humanity and the fecundity of tropical flora and fauna - an effort to impose control in the face of excess, and the anxiety it generated. Museums have proliferated more or less in line with the scale of globalized anxiety.

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Many museums began with ideals of reparation - the Louvre healing the French nation after the violence of the Terror and the Revolutionary Wars, royal collections opened up voluntarily by royal families to enlist the newly wealthy bourgeoisie into the public sphere, civic museums designed to inspire and heal the new industrial cities with their anomie and social fragmentation. Perhaps the most obvious healing museums were open air museums of rural life, beginning with the prototype in Sweden – Skansen. Significantly sited, not in the countryside but in the heart of Stockholm, it was designed to recover some of the traditional ways of life that had been destroyed by modernization, not only mitigating the pain of these losses, but romanticizing the rural past as the authentic soul of the nation. A similar task was performed in Bucharest much more recently when the Museum of the Romanian Peasant was redisplayed to recover a sense of life before the depredations of the Ceausescu regime.

While the revolutionary impetus behind the opening of the Palais du Louvre as a public institution, were Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, as Andrew McClellan has shown, bourgeois hierarchy was rigidly enforced and the significant numbers of the “lowest classes” who visited in the early days soon came to understand that they were not welcome;[15] the social role of the museum, as identified later by Bourdieu, of reproducing elite cultural capital, became firmly embedded. Malraux’s pre-internet vision of the democratization of access to art, so that everyone could form their own “collection of works with the power to help us live” has not materialized, even in the age of the internet, which mirrors and often amplifies real world inequalities.

The museum of healing became less convincing after World War I. For anti-modern modernists like Ezra Pound, the mass slaughter “and of the best among them” was a “wastage as never before” for a “botched civilization…for two gross of broken statues”. Towards the end of *The Wasteland* (1922), TS Eliot, another conservative (and antisemitic) modernist lamented the costs of progress, writing of “These fragments I have shored against my ruins”. Against this background the self-perception of many museums, especially those which see themselves as “universal”, is simplistic and likely to fail to deliver any kind of repair. While museum collections do, in many ways, represent the greatest achievements of human creativity, the results of the human desire to understand nature and the aim of documenting human histories and cultures, they are also an inventory of what has been lost; even the most positive change involves loss. For museums to embrace an ethic of “care” they need to find ways to acknowledge and encourage reflection on this reality, and to enable much more representative audiences to benefit from the reparative power that this implies.

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Endnotes

1 Held 2006, p. 4.

2 Merriman 2020.

3 Baxandall 1991.

4 Hollows 2013.

5 English Translation of the manifesto in *schnittpunkt*, Baur 2020, p. 93.

6 The term *post-nazism* is used with the prefix "post-" in reference to postcolonial theories and denotes the examination of continuities after the break – the defeat of the nazis and the liberation by the allies. It seems particularly relevant in the context of the resurgence of right-wing parties in the successor states of nazi Germany. The book asks about curatorial ways to deal with continuities of nazism in the 21st century. It is dedicated to curatorial formats and strategies that address and deal with the mechanisms of repression and denial of nazi history. The contributions analyze the normalization of fascist aesthetics and discourses. They position themselves within new debates about the politics of memory, seek possibilities for confronting histories of violence, and reflect on contexts and projects in museums, universities and public spaces.

7 Shakespeare 1997, Sonnet 129.

8 Smith [1776] 2008, p. 560.

9 Griesser-Stermscheg, Sommer, Sternfeld, Ziaja 2004.

10 Bauman 2000.

11 O'Neill 2006.

12 Smith 2006.

13 Czollek 2003.

14 *Diversity Work as Emotional Work*: Lecture at the University of Vienna within the framework of Gender Talks on 22 November 2013.

15 McClellan 2008.

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