

Narrating Culture(s) in Museums and Exhibitions (Lüneburg, 18–19 Jan 18)

Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Institut für Philosophie und Kunstwissenschaft,
Universitätsallee 1, Raum C 10.606 (Zentralgebäude), 21335 Lüneburg, Jan 18–19,
2018

Karla Reese

“Narrating culture(s)” has multiple meanings: On the one hand museums participate in a distinct form of cultural formation by de- and recontextualizing objects from different eras, fields and geographies. On the other hand they produce narratives about culture(s) within their specific ambit. We consider the historically defined frameworks under which these museums purport to operate as anything but neutral. The museological production of the (aesthetic) object has already been widely investigated, the museum’s function as a civic or educational institution questioned and its legitimacy of collecting the practices of the “others” or inventing heritage and tradition contested.

Recent advances in cultural theory have taught us that there is no object as such, and no collection as such, but that they are entangled in a history of political and economic exchange at mostly unequal material and social conditions. Furthermore the objects which have come into museums already are products of a normative idea about culture and values.

Though museums have conceive(d) of themselves as being universal institutions representing universal time, a legacy of the 19th century, their function and meaning cannot be generalized any more. We would like to interrogate the narratives through which museums via collections and exhibition perform a role as supposed agents of social transformations and liberal cultural values. Which narratives remain and which ones have to be replaced if we have to give up a certain western way of world-making knowing that museums have achieved a hegemonic status in their attempts of knowledge formation?

This conference would like to rethink the status of the object in the museum, where instead of just be a vessel of culture, we would like to debate them as negotiators of culture. It wants to question normative ideas what culture is, the way it is narrated and how it offers identification.

By inviting speakers from very different backgrounds we encourage them to think from a specific but also methodological perspective how museums can be rethought as spaces of possibilities – responding to what seems most urgent to them in terms of narrating cultur(s).

The conference takes place in the framework of a new PhD program, run by Susanne Leeb, Nina Samuel and Beate Söntgen, that started at the department of Art History at Leuphana University Lüneburg in January 2017. Cooperating with six museums from the region, PhD students work about a specific part of the museum’s collections and develop an exhibition proposal at the same time. The program is conceived of as a new model of academic education in order to encourage research in museums and to allow PhD students to gain practical experience. For more information: www.leuphana.de/ipk/primus

Programme

Thursday, January 18, 2018

14:00–14:30

Welcome & Introduction

Panel I: Object Dilemmas

Chair: Beate Söntgen

14:30–15:30

Hans-Peter Hahn (Goethe-University Frankfurt): The Museum as Place of Fragmentation. A material culturalist's view on the Transformative Power of Museums

15:45–16:45

Suzana Milevska (Politecnico di Milano): Shameful Objects, Apologizing Subjects: On participatory institutional critique and productive shame

Coffee Break

Panel II: Trouble with Representation

Chair: Barbara Plankensteiner

17:15–18:15

Mirjam Shatanawi (National Museum of World Cultures, The Netherlands): Europe and Islam: On the In-Betweenness of Collections

18:30–19:30

Raymond A. Silverman (University of Michigan): Collaborative Futures: Museum, Community, Knowledge

20:00 Welcome Reception

Freitag, 19. Januar 2018

Panel III: Politics of Perception

Chair: Nina Samuel

10:00–11:00

Anselm Franke (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin): Beyond Institutional Critique. What is an Essay Exhibition?

11:15–12:15

Patricia Austin (University of the Arts, London): Walking Through Stories

Coffee Break

12:45–13:45

Miguel Tamen (University of Lisbon): More Trouble With 'Tangible'

Lunch Break

Panel IV: Negotiating National Narratives

Chair: Susanne Leeb

15:00–16:00

Kavita Singh (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi): Remembering and Forgetting the National Museum

16:15–17:15

Derek R. Peterson (University of Michigan): The Uganda Museum and the History of Heritage

Coffee Break

17:45–18:45

Andrea Witcomb (Deakin University, Melbourne): Engaging with Cultural Diversity as Lived Experience: The Importance of Place as Frame for Exhibition Seeking to Engage with Cross-Cultural Encounters in Australian Museums

19:00 Concluding Remarks

Please register at: primus@leuphana.de

Reference:

CONF: Narrating Culture(s) in Museums and Exhibitions (Lüneburg, 18-19 Jan 18). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 9, 2017 (accessed Sep 3, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16943>>.