Cultural Coordinates in present-day museology (Madrid, 14–15 Oct 21)

Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, Oct 14–15, 2021
Deadline: Jun 25, 2021

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
CULTURAL COORDINATES IN PRESENT-DAY MUSEOLOGY:
Five neologisms

Aims and objectives of the Conference
At its meeting 139a (Paris, 2019), the Executive Committee of the ICOM proposed that museums should be defined as “democratised, inclusive and polyphonic spaces”. The Committee also considered that in the light of today’s conflicts and challenges, museums should “care for artefacts and specimens for society, safeguard multiple memories for future generations and guarantee equality of rights and access to cultural heritage for all peoples.” In the light of these future challenges defined by an international organisation, rethinking the museum today means providing tools that make it possible to respond with the highest degree of democratic commitment to the societal challenges of contemporary culture, manifested both in the immediate community and on a much larger scale, through transnational projection and digital innovation. It is precisely here in the present day that the limits of museums - represented by the physical limits of their display spaces - lose significance in order to necessarily open themselves out towards their urban, social and, in a latent sense, human surroundings with the intention of assuming a more actively participative role in the life of their communities and of society in general. Present-day museology is thus working to redefine its disciplinary limits, respond to demands such as those of “transparency” and “sustainability”, for example, and strengthen the participation and inclusion of all members of society. This transformative process will also be accompanied by new museographical narratives.

The International Conference Cultural Coordinates in present-day museology: Five neologisms is aimed at research that focuses on analysing the contemporary museological discourse and its effects on cultural communication. Numerous questions arise, for example, regarding curatorial practices, the new formulas of knowledge transmission, museology’s potential contributions to social cohesion, the mediation made possible by the new technologies and the critical contribution to be expected concerning issues such as gender demands, environmental sustainability and others. The sections are headed by the corresponding neologisms into which the themes that are the subject of debate and analysis are divided.

Lines of work
The thematic guidelines are organised into five sections which, as the conference’s title indicates,

correspond to five neologisms:

1. Demomuseum: inclusion and democracy.
2. Exomuseum: sociability and sustainability.
3. E-museum: the digital scope.
4. Museosophy: theories of the museum, museum spaces and curatorial practices.
5. Hypermuseum: museographical innovations and mutability of accounts.

In the definitive programme the themes may be ordered differently but will maintain the division of the five indicated panels. Proposals for papers must conform to one of the thematic areas set out here.

I. Demomuseum: inclusion and democracy
In recent decades the relationship between the museum and its public has undergone significant transformations. On the one hand there has been a notable expansion in the spectrum of visitors as a result of the application of inclusion strategies for new publics, some of them disadvantaged with regard to access to museums, such as minority groups and the special needs public. In parallel to the development of active integration programmes for such sectors, there has been a growing effort on the part of museums regarding their public-focused strategies to establish modes of communication that pay attention to the diversity of readings, interpretations and reactions regarding the objects on display. Together with these particularly noteworthy factors, others should be mentioned that can be seen as symptoms of a new state of affairs. The functions of the museum have changed. The tightly controlled procedures to which the care of cultural items is subject, the requirement for professional rigour and other conditioning factors means that museums project themselves publicly as centres of an authorised knowledge, as authorities in other words, but that socially required function is now joined by a demand for intellectual negotiation with the different publics which is permeable to difference, listens to other criteria and ultimately relativises the authority characteristic of the canonical discourses. Two opposing dynamics now characterise the museum and also compel it to try out new formulas of cultural democratisation and even to invent exhibition strategies and programmes that give expression to a democratic understanding of culture. As a shared cultural space museums are now expected to contribute to equality, well-being, the dismantling of social prejudices and correct practice in relation to gender; overall, a civilising activity that is located within the construction of our future and beyond the essential conservation of inherited cultural items.

Themes
- Social cohesion and attention to cultural diversity as museological challenges. The institutional discourse directed towards new, non-hegemonic publics.
- Modes of democratic presentation of the museum. The museum as community project. Opportunities for collaborative knowledge.
- Visualisation of the gender perspective.

Key words:
Inclusion, community, hospitality, public patrimony, feminism, democratic education, redarchy, otherness, sub-cultures, new publics, new status of the visitor.

II. Exomuseum: sociability and sustainability

The pandemic and associated health crisis have left their mark on world civilisation at the start of the 2020s. They have made it necessary to locate issues such as environmental pollution, the loss of biodiversity, climate change and other less generic themes such as health and safety in cultural spaces at the forefront of public debate . These and other issues are now making more active demands on museums as community-based institutions that are also equipped to contribute to environmental education and promote conservation-led practices. The criteria for sustainable development also commit museums with regard to their financial administration, their preventive conservation initiatives, the architectural projects they undertake and all aspects of their activities which may have an environmental impact. The relationship between the museum and its urban, natural and social context, in other words the interior-exterior relationship to which the term “exomuseum” refers, similarly affects the entire museological discourse with regard to the challenge of sustainability.

Themes:
- Museums and cultural institutions in relation to environmental and sustainability issues. Museums and sustainable practices.
- Museologies and museographies centred on ecological themes.

Key words:
Ecological sustainability, cultural heritage sustainability, society and context, territory, ecomuseum, association, environment, preventive conservation, critical and environmental museography.

III. E-museum: the digital scope
Digitalisation has very notably altered communication between museums and their publics and in a wide range of ways. Accessibility of services, information, knowledge, documentation and other material, functional transparency, a strikingly precise communication of contents that can be offered from a distance, online collaborations with other cultural agents and with the public itself, and the provision of virtual spaces for the participation of different audiences in the museum’s cultural life are among the contributions that the technological revolution has brought to the museum in order to transform it. Furthermore, the extent of the increase in new requirements for communication and the exponential growth of the virtual dimensions of the museum have created functional problems, contradictions and some reservations regarding the way in which the digital society experiences its museums and the manner in which the museum manages its information technology. This section focuses on those realities and issues, which are extremely interesting for research.

Themes:
- Museology in relation to the digital society. Challenges and progress.
- Intermediality today. Management of artistic and cultural heritage in the urban context. The “remote” museum: the museum’s connection with non-presential publics. The physical death of the museum?
- New technologies in museum mediation. From the visitor to the active participant.

Key words:
Digital innovations in the museum, new models, intermediation, virtualisation, digital communities, virtual communication.

IV. Museosophy: theories of the museum, museum spaces and curatorial practices
As a cultural institution, the museum is permanently subject to changes and to exactly the same degree is susceptible to being considered an agent of social changes. Clearly, museological theory focuses on the museum and its specific functions but also on its relationship to functional social contexts that it affects. A space subject to such very special protection as a museum is, in turn, a public space and a participant in public debate. As a result, the museological debate itself is constantly expanding and transforming, establishing new demands from museum spaces and curatorial practices. At the present time the museum possesses multiple definitions and addresses a wide range of tasks and challenges. The theory of the museum, its intellectual negotiation and its functional and practical repercussions are all the subjects of this section, which will analyse and characterise some of the principal museological challenges.

Themes:
- Museological trends and museographic practice.
- Curatorial challenges and museum architecture. From historical experiences to the present day.
- Cultural heritage and the museum: mediations and metamorphosis.
- Museums and research.

Key words:
Museological theory, mediation, curatorial response, public debate in the museum, architectural extensions and enlargements, the museum as campus.

V. Hypermuseum: museographical innovations and mutability of accounts
The history of museums is characterised by numerous museographical experiments and in the 21st century an even more intense and accelerated demand for new initiatives and renewal is evident. At the present time many museums regularly produce new expographic plans for short periods of time. In recent decades museography has been a field of experimentation intent on perfectibility and one that offers very innovative contributions, such as the display of music, non-material culture, sound archives, film and video, etc. Also revealing a major capacity for transformation are archives devoted to the documentation of artistic practices, the components of which have encouraged alternative expographic formulas such as those characteristic of what has come to be known as “active archives”, as well as others arising from visual studies. Through exploration and the perfecting of expographies the museum aims to increase its interpretative base, rethink pre-established ideas of ordering, try out accounts that needed to be expressed or fragment them, while calling for a sustained reassessment of its own canons as part of the study of its collections.

Themes:
- Experimentation and innovation in expography.
- Curatorial projection and the didactics of display.
- Narratives and counter-narratives. Expography and artistic knowledge.

Key words:
Museography, new objects of display, interpretation of collections, new readings of cultural heritage.

Participants

Museum professionals and members of the academic community engaged in museological studies are invited to contribute papers to this event. The conference is open to proposals from PhD students, those already holding a PhD who are at the start of their academic careers and professionals and academics with longer career paths. The conference is intended to be an inter-generational academic encounter.

Presentation of papers
All those who would like to present a paper should send in their proposal, comprising a title and summary of contents (maximum 700 words), as well as a short curriculum vitae (maximum 300 words), in pdf format before 25 June 2021, to the following e-mail:
congreso.coordenadas@museodelprado.es
When sending the proposal please include the name of the sender in the subject header of the e-mail.

Acceptance or refusal of the proposals will be communicated by e-mail in a maximum of 20 days. The Academic Committee will decide on acceptances on 15 July. After that date and once the papers have been selected the programme will be compiled. The publication of the congress program is scheduled on 15 September, at which point the enrolment period will open.

The selected papers will be presented as a talk that can last for no more than 20 minutes. A computer, projector and screen will be available to those requiring them.

It is intended to publish the papers presented.

Spanish is the preferred language for the talks and debates but any other lengua franca of the European Union can be used (English, French, Italian, German). Similarly, the papers can be sent in Spanish or any other of the languages specified here. Papers must conform to the guidelines of length and editing that will be specified at the appropriate moment.

Enrolment and enrolment fee
The period for enrolment is 16 September to 8 October. Participants giving a paper do not need to enrol and are not required to pay the enrolment fee. For all others attending, places will be allotted in order of arrival of application until all places are filled. Information on enrolment and on the fee will be available when the programme is published.

Dates
Presentation of proposals: 7 to 25 June
Confirmation of acceptance: 15 July
Publication of the event’s programme: 15 September
Enrolment period: 16 September to 8 October
Event dates: 14-15 October

Contact: congreso.coordinadas@museodelprado.es
Organiser: Museo Nacional del Prado
Collaborator: Project Atlas Museo. Coordenadas culturales en la museología del presente, financed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the State Agency for Research, and the European Regional Developement Fund (MCI/AEI/FEDER; Ref. RTI2018-096578-B-I00)

Reference:

CFP: Cultural Coordinates in present-day museology (Madrid, 14-15 Oct 21). In: ArtHist.net, May 15, 2021 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/34113>.