

Unpacking the Implications of ICOM's New Museum Def. (Bologna, 18-19 Mar 24)

Università di Bologna, Mar 18-19, 2024

Deadline: Nov 19, 2023

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"From Linguistic Innovation to Cultural Transformation: Unpacking the Implications of ICOM's New Museum Definition in Italy and France".

Cultural heritage has been continuously impacted by innovations, particularly in recent years, as a result of the digital revolution, the NFT market, and the necessary adaptations made by most cultural institutions during the pandemic, art museums included. While the majority of these innovations are attributed to sources external to the art world, prompting the art world to adapt, there are also instances where innovation originates from within the art world itself.

A significant instance of such innovation is the modification of the museum's definition, which was introduced by ICOM in August 2022. The new definition incorporates a series of keywords, including "sustainability," "diversity," and "ethically," which have the potential to shape the way museums are managed and have implications for their economic, art historical, and sociological aspects.

Both Italy and France have a rich cultural heritage, consisting of artistic, archeological, ethnological, natural and scientific collections, archeological and historical sites, music, etc. One of the main institutions who takes care of part of this heritage in both countries is the museum. In fact, museums are widely spread throughout these two countries. Italy counts 3,338 museums, galleries and collections (ISTAT data 2021), with over 50% of these managed by public entities/authorities. In 2022, France had 1,216 museums that had the "Musée de France" appellation, meaning that they are recognized by the State and can benefit from its assistance. Among these, 82% are controlled by a local authority or a group of local authorities, 13% by associations or foundations, and 5% directly by the State. These few stylized facts highlight how these 2 countries present very important museum networks and are hence likely to be importantly conditioned by the change in the ICOM definition.

As part of the Cassini Senior Project supported by the Institut Français, this workshop seeks to delve into the realm of innovation within the cultural heritage sector. Specifically, our focus lies in the analysis of how Italian and French museums are embracing or planning to embrace the three new concepts recently incorporated into the ICOM's definition. Our emphasis is primarily directed towards art museums.

Art museums represent just one facet of the diverse museum landscape that stands to be influenced by these terminological and broader innovative shifts. This workshop marks the start of a wider investigation, set to encompass the entire spectrum of museum typologies, including Histo-

ry, Science, Natural History, Ethnography or Anthropology, Archaeology, and Specialized Museums. Our intention is to comprehensively explore how these institutions are responding to the changing landscape, thereby setting the stage for deeper insights into the intersection of economics and art history within this evolving context.

Points that could be considered and debated during the workshop are along the lines of what follows:

“Sustainability”:

- 1) Environmental conservation (reduction of energy consumption, promotion of renewable energy sources, minimization of waste, etc.)
- 2) Social responsibility (engagement with local communities and addressing of social issues through art)
- 3) Conservation and preservation (preservation and conservation of artworks and cultural heritage ensuring their longevity and safeguarding them for future generations)
- 4) Education and engagement (raising awareness and educating visitors about environmental and social issues through art exhibitions, programs, and initiatives).

“Inclusivity”:

- 1) Accessibility (prioritize accessibility by ensuring that the museum's spaces, exhibitions, and programs are accessible to people of all abilities, including individuals with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities)
- 2) Representation (striving for diverse representation across exhibitions, collections, and programming, including artists from different cultural backgrounds, perspectives, genders, and identities)
- 3) Multilingualism (providing multilingual materials, labels, and interpretation services to cater to visitors who speak different languages)
- 4) Sensory experiences (create inclusive sensory experiences by incorporating elements that engage multiple senses, such as tactile exhibitions, audio descriptions, or immersive installations)

“Ethically”:

- 1) Restitution (actively pursuing and supporting efforts to return artworks that were acquired through unethical means, such as colonial plunder, forced sales, in general, looted art or illegal actions, to their rightful owners or communities of origin)
- 2) Cultural sensitivity (respecting and representing diverse cultures with sensitivity and integrity, taking into account the cultural and historical contexts of artworks and avoiding misappropriation or misrepresentation)
- 3) Code of ethics (adopt and adhere to a code of ethics that outlines guidelines and principles for responsible collecting, exhibition, conservation, and engagement practices, ensuring ethical decision-making across all aspects of museum operations)
- 4) Authenticity (rigorous authentication processes to ensure the authenticity of artworks in their collections, preventing the circulation of forgeries or counterfeit pieces).

Contributions by economics, art history, and sociology scholars dedicated to each of the keywords are invited, while keynote speeches will be held by art museum directors, funders, and officers, to foster the interaction between academia and art museums.

The interdisciplinary approach of this workshop will lay the groundwork for an in-depth discussion on the implications of this terminological innovation and permit to examine the potential shared

strategies that Italian and French art museums may adopt.

Keynote speakers

- ✉ James M. Bradburne - Director of the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, IT
- ✉ Emmanuelle Polack - Direction du Soutien aux collections, Musée du Louvre, Paris, FR
- ✉ Emanuela Totaro - General secretary of the Kainòn Foundation, Rome, IT
- ✉ Julie Verlaine - Professor of contemporary history, Université de Tours, Tours, FR, and Musée des féminismes, Angers, FR

Paper submission and deadlines

We welcome submissions of rigorous quantitative, theoretical, and/or qualitative studies contributing to the topic illustrated above. We particularly appreciate submissions from different fields of the humanities and the social sciences as well as interdisciplinary submissions.

Please submit your abstract of 300 words (in English, French, or Italian) with a short biography to museumworkshopunibo@gmail.com before November 19 2023 for a 20-minute long presentation.

Please note that the presentations will be conducted exclusively in English, regardless of the language used in the submitted abstract (discussion afterward can be held in any of the three languages).

Notification of acceptance will be given by mid-December 2023.

The workshop is jointly organized by Francesco Angelini (Università di Bologna), Alice Ensabella (Université Grenoble Alpes), and Marilena Vecco (Burgundy Business School), thanks to the Cassini Senior Grant 2023 from the Institut Français and the contribution of Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes (LARHRA), University of Bologna, and Université Grenoble Alpes.

Reference:

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