

Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language

Essays on Translation and Communication
in the Museum

Edited by

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This publication grew out of the international conference *Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language. Intercultural Communication and Translation in Museums*, organized by the Sharjah Museums Department, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, and HTW University of Applied Sciences Berlin. The conference took place from March 29 to 31, 2015, in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

→ Cover photo

Young people participating in the award-winning “TCoNE” program at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, which communicates using values important to the visitor.

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→ Funding

The conference and publication received generous funding from the Volkswagen Foundation, the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, the Sharjah Museums Authority, and HTW Berlin.



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Manal Ataya

Foreword

Museums the world over have a duty to foster learning and share knowledge by providing the public with access to objects and artifacts collected by cultures and peoples from around the globe.

However, these museum collections and the stories they tell often contain messages and ideas that we as the audience, particularly those living in different regions, may misinterpret or find difficult to understand. The potential for exhibitions to be misunderstood, or the message behind them to be misrepresented because of differences in the ways that people of different cultures perceive the world and translate information is more common than we may realize. This highlights the need for museums to adopt a culturally “appropriate language” when it comes to exhibitions.

In order to overcome this hurdle, the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), in partnership with Germany’s Goethe-Institut, hosted the “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” conference. This pioneering symposium, held at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, aimed to improve cross-cultural communication in museology and museum practice by acknowledging and mediating the differences in a multicultural and multilingual museum environment, be it in the Emirates or elsewhere in the world.

The experts who came together in Sharjah included curators and museum educators as well as specialists in translation and cultural studies from as far afield as Singapore, Malaysia, Africa, and Europe. Over three days, they exchanged ideas on how best to tackle the challenges posed by language and culture in museum work, particularly when translating from one language to another.

From the way objects are collected, interpreted, and displayed to culturally appropriate interactions among museum staff and audiences, the conference aimed to address these issues and stress the importance of intercultural communication and translation in a museum context.

The conference and this publication embody SMA's continued commitment to delivering culture, language, and learning to the public in an exciting and informative way. Sharjah Museums, like every museum, strive to make knowledge accessible to all, free from intellectual boundaries and misunderstandings. To share knowledge is to give knowledge. And knowledge is the greatest gift of all.

Gabriele Landwehr

Preface

“Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” This line from Gertrud Stein’s poem “Sacred Emily” is most often quoted without the capital letter name at the beginning, which is the name of a woman. The rest – a rose is a rose is a rose – is then quoted to prove that simply using the name of a thing already invokes the imagery and emotions associated with it.

If it were this simple, we would not have to scrutinize the appropriateness of words or, in this context specifically, key terms, concepts, and terminologies in the field of museology. As modern-day nomads, we experience the world ever anew, with new sounds, new fonts, new words, and, yes, new meanings. Assuming that three people with three different native languages mean the same thing when they communicate in a fourth language about a specific field is tricky – even more so when the terms stand for abstract and descriptive concepts. How, then, can we possibly explain and convey the intended meaning appropriately across cultures if we cannot relate to the language or culture of the other person?

The conference “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” was an attempt to address this issue in the context of global museum practice. It focused in particular on key concepts and terminologies shared or indeed

contested by museum experts coming together from three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) and from countries with religiously diverse and globalized, multicultural communities. All share the challenge of running their museums and interpreting their collections meaningfully. Consequently, they all need to find an appropriate and inclusive intercultural, interreligious, age-appropriate, and community-appropriate language for the presentation of historical and rare objects and for the education of their visitors. Fittingly, the discussion started with the question, “A museum is a museum is a museum?”

The museum experts provided the conference participants with valuable insights into what their museums are like, how they came to be, how they have changed with the historical and political developments in their countries and communities, and how they manage to function as institutions of learning and education in their current societies. The challenges for their museums turned out to be quite similar: they all have to cater first to their stakeholders (the owners, sponsors, and patrons), to management, and to their respective communities. At the same time, however, they have to open their collections to the increasing numbers of international visitors who want to understand, learn, and grow to appreciate another culture or other cultures. The conference thus marked an important step with regard to intercultural communication in the field of museology, in that it created awareness of culture-specific differences, overarching similarities, and common efforts to advance the field and serve audiences effectively using an appropriate language.

Ulrike Al-Khamis

Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language: The Sharjah Perspective

The “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” conference in March 2015 was the latest in a succession of innovative, collaborative projects devised and delivered by the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA) in close collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region and the Berlin State Museums (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). Indeed, the relationship between these three institutions goes back to 2008, when Berlin’s Museum of Islamic Art helped to celebrate the inauguration of the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization with an exclusive selection of rare historical artwork never before seen in the Gulf region. Subsequently, links to the Berlin State Museums were not only sustained but also expanded, due in particular to the dynamic support and consistent commitment of the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, which embarked on facilitating and organizing a regular succession of professional development workshops for SMA staff, both in Sharjah and Berlin, with the financial assistance of the German Robert Bosch Foundation.

Building on the success of these early collaborations, it was decided in 2012 – at the suggestion of the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region – to work toward formalizing the relationship between the three institutions in view of driving the partnership forward strategically and in a mutually beneficial fashion. In April 2013, an official memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in Berlin, its stated overarching aim regular institutional exchange and cooperation to enhance cross-cultural communication, understanding, and dialogue through museum collections, art, and culture. Within this general framework, the institutions placed a particular focus on the development of innovative projects in specific areas of intercultural museological practice, including interculturally appropriate professional development – with the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region supporting the activities of the two museum institutions by implementing relevant bespoke programs such as conferences, workshops, and symposia.

Immediately following from the MoU, the Berlin State Museums and the Sharjah Museums Authority set out to work on a second collaborative and interculturally highly complex exhibition project, this time contributing to Sharjah’s year-long celebrations as a Capital of Islamic Culture in 2014. As part of preparations for *Early Islamic Capitals – The Legacy of Umayyad Damascus and Abbasid Baghdad (650–950)*, a number of intercultural training sessions were again developed for both Sharjah and Berlin, this time deliberately focusing on colleagues from the museums’ collections management and education departments, who were to be closely involved in preparing and setting up the exhibition at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization and developing the education program to kick off after its opening in autumn 2014. Throughout the exhibition project and adjunct training workshops, the German and Emirati colleagues involved were invited to keep a diary in order to critically evaluate their curatorial and educational encounters, identify any instances of cross-cultural difference, misconception, misunderstanding, or indeed friction, and recommend improvements to both our professional communication in general and future training concepts or methodologies.

In September 2014, the findings were brought together and evaluated in a seminar specifically convened for this purpose. “Implementing Intercultural and Diversity Strategies in Training Courses for Museum Professionals in the Gulf Region” was conceived by Dr. Susan Kamel, who had been recruited by the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region in early 2014 to conduct a research study focused on intercultural learning needs in museums in the region and strategies to meet these needs in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner.

During the seminar, one aspect that repeatedly arose as a crucial, if not the most crucial, element of intercultural museological collaboration was “appropriate” language – understood in this context not merely in its linguistic but also its cultural sense. Indeed, colleagues across the board emphasized the need to be aware and sensitive when communicating across cultures and to develop both exhibition projects and professional development modules on a basis of respectful intercultural inquiry and comprehension, ongoing consultation, dialogue, and shared learning. Interestingly, these recommendations perfectly reflected the Sharjah Museums Authority’s long-standing observations in both its interactions with international partners and its daily work within the context of Sharjah and the UAE, where some 200 nationalities interact and communicate by constantly having to translate linguistically and culturally from their respective native languages. At the same time, our local experience is in no way unique. Over the past decades, the forces and dynamics of globalization have contributed to the creation of ever more diverse and complex multicultural and multilingual societies worldwide, with the result that intercultural and intracultural processes of language and communication are coming increasingly into focus everywhere, including – most pertinently in our context – in the international museum sector.

Be it in the Gulf region or elsewhere, in the context of long-established museums or new cutting-edge museum projects, in a museum’s internal workings or its dealings with the public, everything revolves around language: as a conveyor of factual content and meaning and a conveyor of cultur-

al, social and religious concepts, shared or indeed contested. Consequently, in order to work effectively in any intercultural context and specifically within world museums today, an awareness of and commitment to “appropriate” language and communication – encompassing everything from our physical interactions and body language to written and spoken texts – is becoming increasingly crucial.

Given this reality, it is surprising that, to date, there is little (if any) museological discourse dedicated to holistic intercultural communication in museums – that is, incorporating aspects of body language and behavioral patterns as well as verbal and written ways of communicating, conceptual transfer, and translation issues. “Inappropriate” intercultural communication prevails, often preventing intercultural museum staff from working together effectively and communicating successfully with their increasingly stratified and diverse audiences. Meanwhile, analytical and evaluative discourses trying to access and assess intercultural museum projects often end up communicating a distorted reality, at worst with key aspects interpreted neither accurately nor appropriately.

The international conference “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language: Intercultural Communication and Translation in Museums” was a direct result of the seminar’s findings. Organized by the MoU partners with the support of the University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin and funding from the German Volkswagen Foundation, it brought together prominent museum professionals from Asia, Africa, the Arab World, and Europe to discuss and define the importance of appropriate intercultural communication, language, and translation in world museums.

In terms of structure, the conference incorporated formal talks, workshops, and informal discussion groups to address the most crucial aspects that any museum professional encountering a multicultural working environment should be aware of. The introductory session highlighted the com-

plexities of intercultural communication in general, from the very first encounter with a different body language and dress code, to different greeting conventions, conversational patterns, and culture-specific attitudes toward professional everyday communication (e.g., oral versus written). Speakers then introduced their respective museum environments with a particular emphasis on overarching aspects of interculturalism and intercultural communication in their work, highlighting key issues, challenges, and also achievements in the process.

The second session considered intercultural language, communication, and discourse regarding “the museum” as an institution and the ways in which specific cultures may “construct” it philosophically, conceptually, and physically. Discussions considered how the term “museum” (or its culture-specific equivalents, for example in Arabic possibly *mathaf*, *bait*, *dar*, or *markaz*) is conceived, interpreted, and conceptualized in different parts of the world, before directing the inquiry to linguistic, social, cultural, and ideological specificities regarding its inner mechanisms, its terminologies, methodologies, structures, and procedures. Participants highlighted the need for a locally developed, defined, and accepted professional terminology, with recommendations focusing on the establishment of locally appropriate museological glossaries in dialogue with international terminologies.

The final session considered how to best communicate “the museum” in an intercultural environment, particularly to audiences with multilayered, culture-specific, and culturally conditioned needs, as well as intercultural language and communication needs. The discussions touched on the challenges of incorporating appropriate interculturality into the conventional communication strategies of an institution, be they written, spoken, or entirely non-verbal.

The tangible outcome of “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” is this critical e-publication, bringing together the participants’ con-

tributions and recommendations. We hope that it may trigger further international dialogue and discourse aimed at finding an “appropriate language” to support ongoing efforts and campaigns regarding the implementation of “appropriate museology” in the Gulf region as much as in world museums elsewhere. Meanwhile, everyone who participated in this pioneering conference walked away with a much-heightened sense of awareness and appreciation regarding the importance of appropriate intercultural language and communication in museum work. The insights gained will help us to examine our current approaches, work on our cross-cultural competences, and think about truly “appropriate” ways of communicating, both with each other and with our audiences.

Gundula Avenarius and Susan Kamel

The Languages of Museums

The Starting Point: Museums, Societies, Conviviality¹

In the twenty-first century, museums have had to re-think themselves and re-examine their relationship with the public. Museums have had to reposition themselves in relation to modern thinking about culture and society ... as well as to play a part in the wider issues of addressing social inclusion. Some museums now function as places where people can explore issues around identity and culture, endeavour to make sense of the world around them and provide a context for an understanding of humanity. (Sunderland Bowe 2009, 14)

Museums represent and produce knowledge about the world, its arts, and its cultures. They do so by performing key tasks: collecting, conserving, and documenting, as well as communicating via exhibitions and educational activities. But who chooses what to collect, what to preserve, and how to

1 Conviviality: The term has been most influentially used by Ivan Illich in his book *Tools of Conviviality* (1973, 11): "I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to demands made upon them by others, and a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence, and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value." Since then it has become a term used in many academic disciplines and generally refers to human modes of togetherness.

document these processes? Scholars and practitioners have long questioned how inclusive museums actually are and how discursive their practice is to challenge prevailing ideas through dialogue with their publics.² The most important issues facing museums worldwide are their visitors, their collections, and their modes of representation. Each institution has to review its relation to the community of users, develop audiences, and communicate with them. It also must evaluate its practices and processes of collecting and curating, as well as define its function as a repository and communicator of culture and knowledge. These issues need to be understood by the entire staff working in the museum so that they can react to the changing role of their institution. Modern societies shaped by global migration need to see a representation of intercultural dialogue within museum collections.

According to the new Critical Museologies (Macdonald et al. 2015), museums have the potential to welcome and give access to different audiences, to represent diversity and differences, to foster political engagement, and to take a moral standpoint. Two leading scholars in museum studies, Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd (2010, 3), call this an “activist museum practice” and argue that its basis should be the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the human rights declaration is a Western agreement that has never been universally ratified. Other traditions, moral principles and rules exist, manifested for example in the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which serves as general guidance for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation with fifty-seven member states in the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa).

Against the backdrop of these competing ways of thinking, societies in Europe and the MENA Region are changing rapidly due to fast economic growth and external forces such as the huge influx of refugees into Europe from warzones in Syria and bordering countries.

2 See, for example, the Inclusive Museum Knowledge Community, <http://onmuseums.com/>.

Along the Arab Gulf (Qatar and the UAE) migrant workers make up 80 percent of the population. They include members of different ethnic groups coming from nation-states such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, the Philippines, Nepal, and others. Meanwhile, the governments of the Gulf States have discovered culture and museums as an attraction for tourists and as educational institutions for their own citizens. The museum landscape is growing, and new museum buildings adorn the most beautiful locations in the new metropolises along the Gulf, such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha or the Louvre on Abu Dhabi's Sadiyat Island.

In this situation, museums can play an important role in finding ways to go beyond cultural differences and distinction and inspire fruitful approaches to living together. The term *conviviality* applies well to this task. It "encourages an analysis of situations in which people bridge all kinds of socially significant differences" (Nowicka and Heil 2015, 15). In the context of museum studies *conviviality* serves as a leitmotif in creating a space where society shares its common humanity while at the same time learning about and accepting maximum diversity.³

Examples can be found in Berlin and Sharjah alike: The German Historical Museum and the Museum of Islamic Art, both in Berlin, offer a program for Arabic-speaking refugees called "Multaka," which provides guided tours through the museums in Arabic by refugee guides who have been in the country for a long time. The goal of the program is for participants to learn about German society with its long and difficult history, as well as to learn about the history of their "own cultures" and their multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual societies (Nassredine 2016). In Sharjah, exhibitions like "So That You Might Know Each Other – The World of Islam from North Africa to China and Beyond" try to bridge different cultures and their material and immaterial worlds. Looking at museums, however, we have to acknowledge that they are

3 See also McLean and Pollock (2010) for a visitor-oriented approach that focuses on the physical character of museums as dynamic public spaces.

the product of their specific historical backgrounds, their cultural values and beliefs, and their specific social settings (Kreps 2006, 470). Museums are social institutions and, as such, part of their society's culture. They not only embody and reflect its values but also evolve in response to its changes.

SAWA Museum Academy⁴: Toward Appropriate Museum Theory and Practice

Based on the outset described above and as a response to this challenge, the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), the Berlin State Museums (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), and the University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin created a multinational Museum Academy for the further education of museum professionals, an intercultural learning lab that positions museum professionals as social stakeholders.

The SAWA Museum Academy enables young museum professionals from the UAE, the MENA Region, and Berlin to collaborate in concrete practical settings. To initiate the program, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Berlin State Museums and the Sharjah Museums Authority, paving the way for an exchange program, a lab phase, and a conference (see also Al-Khamis in this publication).

In the lab phase (2014–15) the participants identified language as the central means for and barrier to intercultural communication. Language is not only a vehicle for communicating content but also an expression of the respective culture – be it in intercultural contact, international relations, or conflict situations. In museums, language is an important (if not the only) medium to communicate meaning and reinforce power relations. “Language is

4 SAWA Summer School until 2017.

often used without thought, in a natural and common-sense fashion (Belsey 1980). This apparent obviousness of the use of language hides the power of language to shape thought, to direct perception, to control responses and to present a particular view of the world” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 115–22).

Language maintains and reproduces social hierarchies. The decision to favor one language over another when describing objects naturally includes one group and excludes another. As a tool for use among the partners, SAWA therefore promotes the development of an Arabic – English – German intra-cultural glossary of museological terms, which also denotes the mediating language of the Museum Academy: English.

To research the language challenge in the museum context, the partners organized an international conference in Sharjah called “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” in spring 2015, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. It concentrated on experiences with intercultural and intracultural speech patterns and language use among museum professionals and academics from Europe and the wider MENA Region. Combining different disciplines such as cultural theory and philology, this focus revolved around translational studies, addressing the relationship between representation and power relations. As an “agent for difference,” translation denies any concept of a pure culture or a pure identity (Bachmann-Medick 2012, 28; see also her essay in this volume).

The title of the conference takes up an idea developed by museum scholar Christina Kreps:

Appropriate museology is an approach to museum development and training that adapts museum practices and strategies for cultural heritage preservation to local cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions. It is a bottom-up, community-based approach that combines local knowledge and resources with those of professional museum work to better meet the needs and interests of a particular museum and its community. Appropriate museology advocates the exploration and use of indigenous museological traditions where suitable. (Kreps 2008, 23)

Kreps argues that broadening our scope of inquiry offers alternative perspectives to so-called “Western” museum studies because it shows that there is not one “universal museology, but a world of museologies” (Kreps 2006, 470). In this sense an “inappropriate museology” would be a universal approach to museums, studying and teaching museum studies in Berlin exactly the same way as in Sharjah, without recognizing the different regional and local conditions. The curriculum of the SAWA Museum Academy responds to this need for an inclusive local practice with modules on participatory collecting and shared curatorial authorship taught by binational lecturer teams in transnational working groups (see the last essay in this volume). The aim of collaborative curating is to place the voice of a museum professional alongside those of the included parties rather than in front of or behind them (Bayer and Terkessidis 2017, 68). The idea is to demonopolize museum practice in order to attain a more inquiring, evolving form that relates to and connects with society.

“Appropriate language” should be understood in this context. The term – which we coined in reaction to Kreps – aims to encompass all aspects of communication and intercultural communication in museum work, from oral interactions to written texts. An appropriate language and communication needs localization and historicization through localized concepts and local practices. This compendium reflects on these aspects in the form of case studies from Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Great Britain, and Sharjah.

Public discussion in Germany centers on questions of how to deal with cultural difference and diversity. What is being negotiated under the buzzwords “intercultural communication,” “intercultural dialogue,” or “intercultural competence” is one of the most important topics guiding cooperation among globally connected citizens worldwide. As the majority of societies in Europe are undergoing radical and rapid changes, the challenges of interacting with people from culturally diverse backgrounds have increased. According to the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts 2008, 136), intercultural dialogue can be defined as follows:

Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of view between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or mindsets. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes.

But questions remain: How can we live together in a world where concepts that differ from the respective native set of beliefs and attitudes are being attacked? How can we even learn together if our ways of living, our morals, and our values are different? How can we respect our differences and not feel threatened but instead communicate toward cooperation? The foundation could be a mediated understanding of culture as a set of learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or social group and become evident in its members' daily behavioral patterns.

While it is generally accepted that museums play an active role in representing and producing knowledge about culture(s) by using their collections to “put together visual cultural narratives which produce views of the past and thus of the present” (Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 2), unfortunately this “knowledge production” has often established stereotypical images of “Muslims” and “Islam,” as well as museum displays that have not engaged in dialogue. As authors like Mirjam Shatanawi and Wendy Shaw have shown, this is especially relevant for historical displays of Islam in Western collections (Shatanawi 2014, 233; Shaw 2012). But some museums have started to research and rearrange their collection displays to challenge popular perceptions and seek a more transcultural perspective, focusing, for example, on cultural exchange and interaction along the trade routes (Weber 2014, 368).

Nonetheless, the massive influx of refugees into Europe and specifically Germany has brought these stereotypes back into the public debate with the question of whether Islam “belongs” to Europe. It has shown that there is “an

urgent need for a concerted effort to develop the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge that contribute to intercultural competence in the everyday practice of teaching and learning, so that future generations may be equipped to participate in an increasingly global and complex environment” (Huber and Reynolds 2014, 9). Our approach to the wider social challenges faced by the MENA Region, as well as by German or European society, is grounded in research demonstrating that “the ability to understand one another across and beyond all types of cultural barriers is a fundamental prerequisite” to making diverse societies work (Huber and Reynolds 2014, 9).

The first SAWA Museum Academy phase took place in Sharjah in September 2015, with subsequent iterations in Berlin in May 2016 and Sharjah in September 2016 and September 2017. SAWA’s integrated approach to museum studies combines museum conservation, collections management, curating, education, and public relations. Since all of these different disciplines shape the way knowledge is communicated in museums, they are dependent on teamwork. Interpreting objects in a museum’s collection constitutes the museological foundation and provides a concrete setting for intercultural communication: “Objects are open to manipulation in terms of meaning. This is their strength, but also their weakness. We see things according to what is said about them” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 116). The SAWA Museum Academy trains future museum professionals in working and collaborating as a team with one common goal: to design museum experiences for diverse audiences. Trained museum professionals should work with objects in collections acknowledging “multiple versions” rather than “objective truths,” a relativity that applies to the definition of cultural identities much in the same way (Delgado 2009, 9). It is a responsible method that accepts the limits of interpretation and translation in the museum context.

Museum staff should support and facilitate the ability of their institutions to initiate alternative ways of looking at the cultural heritage they preserve. Intercultural education should be practiced with careful reflection to under-

stand its complexity (Mecheril 2002, 27; Kalpaka and Mecheril 2010, 83). Personal exchange in collaboration, respectful communication, and an appreciative attitude of recognizing each other's differences are effective tools in achieving these goals. To foster this principle, the SAWA modules on various fields of museum work are planned and taught by Arab-German teaching teams and make reference to regional singularities and systemic commonalities. The SAWA program creates a learning environment that facilitates reflection upon new strategies of meaning making. SAWA initiates appropriate museological solutions in the context of contemporary social and global tensions produced by globalization. A major result of our first phase in Sharjah in 2015 was that the participants realized they had more similarities than differences, and they have continued their professional and personal exchange long after the two-week training session.

Another outcome of the conference was a recommendation to exercise caution in employing the term "intercultural," since it can be used to cover up actual power relations based on categories of difference (see Rassool in this volume). These denote not only cultural differences but also differences in race, class, gender, religion, or origin. To talk about "intercultural communication," "intercultural dialogue," or "intercultural competence" also risks serving a neoliberal management system that aims to strengthen the status quo and neutralize the politics of social justice. A more nuanced approach is to acknowledge these differences and the constructive nature of identities (Spivak 1988) and to recognize that multiple social statuses can be experienced simultaneously, constituting individual forms of identity, difference, or disadvantage (Erel et al. 2008). For the SAWA context, these observations increased our awareness concerning better practice among all of the different partners.

To take up an idea from John-Paul Sumner in this volume, museums, museum studies, and the teaching of it are affected by a Western language that pretends to be culturally neutral. Museums were and still are white, male, heterosexual institutions that aim to civilize the citizens and prepare them for

a specific idea of nation and one worldview (Bennett 1995; Muttenthaler and Wonisch 2006; ARGE schnittpunkt 2014). While the term “intercultural” can be misleading and in danger of being essentialist, it is also clear that neutralizing all differences (be they culture, gender, class) can lead to a depoliticization in favor of a neoliberal equity regime. When the Kelvingrove Galleries in Glasgow, Scotland, as John-Paul Sumner shows in his example, claim to offer programs for “all” – what he calls “culturally neutral programs” – a disproportionate number of middle-class, white Scottish visitors are attracted. So in order to take affirmative action and undertake justice-oriented museum work, an acknowledgement of differences is necessary. Gayatri Spivak calls this a “strategic essentialism” that understands the constructive nature of identities and utilizes them to reach a strategic goal (Spivak 1988, 205). Indeed, museums have the power to be a forum for contradicting worldviews and multiple stories, a public playground for differing parties (Kamel and Gerbich 2014).

Museum is a word we all use, but one that has different meanings in our respective contexts, particularly when used in translation. Thus, *museum* in English (or to take our own language, German) is not the equivalent of *mathaf* in Arabic, as far as cultural content and context are concerned. The word *museum* originates from the Greek term *mouseion* and entered other European languages via the Latin *museum*. Conceptually one could expect the museum to be a European invention, too. However, the *mouseion* is actually first attested in Alexandria, Egypt; therefore one might argue that it is an “Oriental” term and concept that later moved north and west. In any case, Egyptian textbooks on museum studies claim that the museum originates in Egypt.

The history of the term *museum* in Germany can be summed up as follows: When the Altes Museum for sculpture and painting was built in Berlin in 1830, its “foremost and highest goal” was “awakening and educating a sense for art” (according to its architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel). Consciously positioned near key symbols of the Prussian nation – church, stock exchange, and palace – the museum was understood as a key component in civilizing

citizens according to humanistic ideals and constructing Germanness with its roots in Greek and Roman Culture. Today, Germany is building museums that emphasize its reality as a country of migration and diversity; the word *Museum* has remained the same, but its meaning has changed (see also the chapters by Teo, Sumner, and Barakat in this volume).

We organized this conference because we believe that museums can contribute to a more just society and a more peaceful and fair world – if they begin to reflect on their civilizing and exclusive history and offer new spaces for dialogue. This view of museums as agents for social change cannot be taken for granted and certainly endangers the privileged status of many powerful individuals and institutions. But disrupting the language and museology of established power structures is the appropriate way to usher museums into the future.

Communication in a Global Context

In our endeavors toward an appropriate museology leading up to and following the 2015 conference, we constantly reflected on theories of intercultural communication and intercultural competence that are useful in our context. Although positions on the subject are numerous (see also Heringer 2010), Fred E. Jandt's *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community* (8th edition, 2016) provides a good overview of existing theories, of which the following are most instructive.

It starts with a definition of culture as shared practices and beliefs. Hofstede (1994, in Jandt 2016, 5) identifies categories such as symbols, rituals, values, and heroes and myths as signifiers for a culture that determines one's cultural identity. This view of culture as a fixed set of categories stands in stark contrast to a more fluid and flexible definition as a way of life and a

product of human relations (Longhurst et al. 2008, 2–4). One's identity is also shaped by religion, national identity, class, gender, race, and color, as Jandt suggests. According to the Diversity Charter (Charta der Vielfalt 2017) of German companies and institutions, we would have to add disability, age, sexual orientation, and sexual identity as well.

The Standpoint Theory developed by Collins (1990) and Harding (1991), in which identities can be multiple according to one's specific standpoint (in Jandt 2016, 340), is just as important for our topic as queer theories (Yep, Lovaas, and Elia 2003, in Jandt 2016, 347), which question the concepts of binary categories such as male and female. In a post-ethnic perspective, D. A. Hollinger (1995, in Jandt 2016, 59) argues that individuals live in diverse communities and are not only confined to one group. Ethno-racial groups are constructed based on blood and history paradigms or on affiliations.

Adequate translation can be difficult, according to Jandt. Sechrest, Fay, and Zaidi (1972) elaborate on five possible problems in translating between cultures: vocabulary equivalence, idiomatic equivalence, grammatical-syntactical equivalence, experiential equivalence, and conceptual equivalence (in Jandt 2016, 135–36).

Other theories that Jandt cites could have also been useful at our conference in Sharjah. The Cultural Shock model (Kalvero Oberg) develops five stages of acculturation, starting with the honeymoon phase, followed by irritation and hostility, moving to reintegration, gradual adjustment, and finally biculturalism (Jandt 2016, 278–79). Theories such as those by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) and others try to identify dimensions in which cultures differ, for example individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, or indulgence versus self-restraint (Jandt 2016, chapter 6). In our context these approaches did not seem appropriate, as they reduce the complexity

of cultures and subcultures, as well as their inherent power relations, to one essentialist definition of *national* cultures. Further, the tool and methodology of “critical incidents” (Flanagan 1954), which is popular in intercultural training programs, will not be addressed in this publication although it might be helpful in some contexts and personal encounters.

It is our strong belief that cultural identity often intersects and overlaps with other identities such as age, gender, health, social class, and so on. An intersectional approach in the study of culture is a necessary way to acknowledge that structural inequalities do exist in a world where our lives were “shaped by a confrontation with a complex web of multiple contradictions” (Erel et al. 2008, 211; Bilge 2013, 418; Czollek et al. 2011). Intersectionality is defined by Gust A. Yep, professor of communication studies at San Francisco State University, as follows:

Intersectionality has become an important interdisciplinary concept for understanding social and cultural identity in an increasingly complex global world. More specifically, it refers to how race, class, gender, sexuality, the body, and nation, among other markers of social and cultural difference, come together simultaneously to produce identities and experiences, ranging from privilege to oppression, in a particular society. (Yep 2015, 1).

Our notion of intercultural communication is thus shaped by the discourse of intersectionality. We suggest opening museums to (cultural) diversity with respect to:

- Inclusive collection policy that reflects and represents different cultures and identities
- Inclusive research policy that collaborates with diverse groups to identify research questions and undertake research
- Inclusive conservation policy that respects cultural differences when it comes to deciding what and how to conserve the cultural heritage of indigenous groups

- Inclusive education policy that offers programs for diverse audiences, writes labels in many different languages, respects multilingualism, collaborates with users, and allows them to participate
- Inclusive exhibition policy that gives the public opportunities to curate
- Inclusive staff policy that makes sure the staff resembles the broader society and its diversity
- Inclusive communication strategy within the institution and toward its users that fosters intercultural dialogue, openness, and accessibility

The Compendium: Celebrate Differences

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
—Audre Lorde

This compendium of examples and reflections on cultural diversity and communication offers insight into the discourse from many different corners of the world.

Following a foreword by Manal Ataya, director-general of the Sharjah Museums Authority, a short preface by Gabriele Landwehr, executive director of the Goethe-Institut at the time of the conference, opens the publication. After that Ulrike Al-Khamis, former co-director of the Museum of Islamic Civilization in Sharjah, traces the development of the conference within the context of German-Emirati collaborations in the museum sector and outlines the panels and discussions of the 2015 meeting. She emphasizes its topicality given that there is “little (if any) museological discourse dedicated to holistic intercultural communication in museums – that is, incorporating aspects of body language and behavioral patterns as well as verbal and written ways of communicating, conceptual transfer, and translation issues.”

Subsequently, two rather theoretical articles examine the subject: the first by Doris Bachmann-Medick on the Translational Turn, the second an introduction to the term “intercultural communication” by Said Faiq. Both scholars see culture and translation as crucial concepts that developed out of cultural studies and intercultural studies. Said Faiq coins the term “*culguage* – a combination of culture and language – to capture the intrinsic relationship between the two: two sides of the same coin, whereby a coin is rejected as legal tender if one side is blank.” With the support of Bachmann-Medick’s theoretical frame, we can see a museum as a translator that “dislocates the West epistemologically in its hegemonic claim of knowing, representing, and universalizing.”

We then move to Ciraj Rassool’s contribution as a mediator between these theories and the case studies, as it is both a radical critique of the terms “intercultural” and “multicultural” and a case study of museums in South Africa. Museums, Rassool argues, are “one of the sites where race was made”: they have categorized, classified and systematized the material world. He wants to show how we can go beyond, for example, the category of cultural history, which has traditionally included objects from people deemed to have culture and history opposed to those who have only tribes, whose objects have been placed in ethnographic collections.

Museum practitioners from Malaysia, Singapore, the UAE and Great Britain talk about the challenges and opportunities in these different contexts. Heba Nayel Barakat discusses the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia, which serves a “mosaic of ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions.” She gives a colorful example of a problem the curators faced when translating an English title into Arabic, noting that the curators were from three different Arabic-speaking countries (Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen) and thus brought with them three different interpretations.

Angelita Teo from the National Museum in Singapore explains the language policy of her museum, which has changed along with political systems and now culminates in four national languages in which the museum presents its exhibitions.

Aisha Deemas from the Sharjah Museums Authority gives a vivid example of how a timeline of the “Islamic world” used at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization was developed, and how the Hajj exhibit at the museum was designed to serve the diversity of Muslim believers.

John-Paul Sumner from Glasgow Museums in Scotland suggests that museums of the future should be co-curated with the public – in their style and with their voices – so that the curator will no longer be the dominant voice in the museum.

Sabrina De Turk and Kara McKeown, both from Zayed University, provide an overview of hand-held audio/digital technology in museums in the UAE that enable the institutions to customize various tours for a diverse audience. They show that the new technologies can support museums in becoming “intercultural” institutions by honoring and celebrating diversity with respect to class, age, gender, religion, language, and more.

A joint essay by German students from the SAWA Museum Academy (formerly SAWA Summer School) in Sharjah 2016 concludes this publication with a very personal account of their individual challenges and learning experiences during this unique educational program, which aims to continue in the study of appropriate museology.

However diverse our societies – and hopefully our museum staff and visitors – become, “people are bound to partake in the processes of conviviality while also living up to their distinctiveness” (Heil 2015, 323). In this light we end our introduction with a quote from one participant of the first SAWA Mu-

seum Academy 2015, which reflects an acknowledgement of our differences as well as the social nature of working together: “It’s not culture that divides us, it’s the personal stories that unite us.”

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who made this conference and publication possible. Our foremost thanks goes to Manal Ataya and her team from SMA for hosting the conference; the Volkswagen Foundation, especially Adelheid Wessler, for generously funding this event; Maya Roeder and Rabi Georges from the Goethe-Institut for organizing the conference; and all of the speakers and participants who travelled to Sharjah and shared their experiences and thoughts with us. And, of course, the exchange among scholars with such different personal stories would not have been possible without the work of our two translators: Aziz Qouzihi and Raghida Sarrouf. Thank you!

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Doris Bachmann-Medick

Translation – A Concept for the Study of Culture

Introduction¹

It is no longer possible to ignore how crucial processes of cultural translation and their analysis have become, whether for cultural contact or inter-religious relations and conflicts, for integration strategies in multicultural societies, or for the exploration of productive intersections among the disciplines. The globalization of world society, in particular, demands increased attention to processes of transfer and mediation, in terms of both the circulation of global representations and “traveling concepts” and the interactions that make up cultural encounters. Here, translation becomes a condition for global relations of exchange on the one hand and a medium liable to reveal cultural differences, power imbalances, and the potential scope of action on the other. An explicit focus on translation processes may thus enable us to scrutinize more closely current and historical situations of cultural encounter as complex processes of cultural translation. Translation has opened up to

1 This text is a shorter and slightly modified version of an essay that appeared in Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning’s volume, *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture* (Bachmann-Medick 2012).

a transcultural category that in no way remains restricted to binary relationships between national languages, national literatures, or national cultures.

Broadening the horizon of translation currently poses challenges to most of the humanities disciplines, not least to museum studies (see Silverman 2015), by referring to translation as a category of practice in the social field and by developing translation as an analytical category. Admittedly, this complex process risks diluting the concept of translation, and it seems important at this stage to delineate it more precisely. We might begin this specification by dissecting what has become a rather vague term into its most important facets (transfer, mediation, transmission, metaphor, the linguistic dimension, circulation, transformation) and the most significant areas of empirical study to which it can contribute.

The Turn to Translation – A “Translational Turn”?

If the horizon of translation is expanding, does this alone indicate a “translational turn” in the humanities and social sciences? Certainly it is not enough to disengage the category of translation from a linguistic and textual paradigm and locate it, as a cultural practice, in the sphere of social action, where it plays an ever more vital role for a world of mutual dependences and networks. In this respect, important approaches within translation studies have long been moving the category far beyond its traditional contexts (see, among many others, Bassnett 1998, 2002 [1980]; Cronin 2003; Venuti 1998; Hermans 2006; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002; on the “turns” within translation studies, see Snell-Hornby 2006). But the turn to translation goes further, since it is born specifically out of the category’s migration from translation studies into other disciplinary discursive fields in the humanities: not only

has translation become a precondition for traveling concepts in the humanities and social sciences, but it is a traveling concept itself. In a wide range of disciplines we find an attempt to develop the translation category into a more general translational approach for investigation and to apply it concretely in more comprehensive cultural and social analyses (see Renn, Straub, and Shimada 2002). The category of translation is undergoing methodological specification as it moves through the disciplines.

In recent years, scholars have undertaken ambitious investigations to foreground the translation perspective and give it practical and analytical application. Jürgen Habermas, for example, calls on religious communities in post-secular societies to “translate” their religious language into a publicly accessible secular language (see Habermas 2006), while Joachim Renn (2006) grounds a whole sociology on “relations of translation” (*Übersetzungsverhältnisse*). Raymond Silverman (2015) in his collection *Museum as Process* brings to the fore the role of translation in representing multiple knowledges and their objects and in shaping the relationship between museums and communities (for example, via repatriation, return of objects, e-patriation as a translation of physical objects into digital objects, and so on). Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) reinterprets migration in terms of translational action, and Veena Das (2002) discusses “violence and translation.” In more textual terms, Susan Bassnett (2005) talks about “translating terror,” and Mona Baker (2006) about “translation and conflict.” Countless other examples demonstrate the huge range of areas of inquiry within the humanities currently making use of translation as a new analytical category and as a category of action itself. Perhaps, then, the translational turn (see Bachmann-Medick 2009, 2016, 175–209; Bassnett 2011) has already arrived?

Certainly we can see heightened theoretical attention to translation processes in the most diverse fields, but we need responses to a fork in the road: As it moves as a traveling concept beyond the textual and linguistic level, will the translation category stubbornly stick to the path of purely metaphorical

use? Or will new research approaches begin to elaborate a more sophisticated and detailed translation perspective in methodological and analytical terms?

At this decisive moment we must first try to answer another, more general question: How do “turns” in the humanities come about? In disciplines concerned with culture, theory does not advance via massive ruptures of paradigms. Theoretical attention shifts less comprehensively, in a delicate feedback loop with the problems and processes of the surrounding society, via turns. Different turns can coexist in a kind of eclectic theoretical constellation. Given this academic landscape, an expanded translation concept (whether metaphorical or analytical) will not necessarily result in a translational turn – unless it moves through three stages that characterize turns in general: (1) expansion of the object or thematic field, (2) metaphorization, (3) methodological refinement, provoking a conceptual leap and transdisciplinary application (for more details on the question of when a turn becomes a turn, see Bachmann-Medick 2016, 16–17).

Thus, only when the conceptual leap has been made and translation is no longer restricted to a particular object of investigation but moves right across the disciplines as a new form of knowledge, a kind of traveling concept and a methodologically reflected analytical category, can we really speak of a translational turn. At that point translation also turns into a model for the study of culture, as it transforms cultural concepts by making them translatable and by translating them consciously into different fields. Beyond this, scholarly thinking and perceptions themselves become translational as a movement in research gathers pace, moving toward border thinking, taking greater interest in interstices, and focusing increasingly on mediation. In this framework translation is an analytical concept to be made fruitful for heterogeneous fields in the humanities and social sciences, such as social theory, action theory, cultural theory, microsociology, museum studies, migration studies, history, interculturality, and others.

The aim should be to encourage the pursuit of a translational turn on three levels, each of which should be critically examined in light of the expertise of translation studies: (1) on the level of an expanded horizon from textual to cultural translation or from the translation of language to the translation of action, including pragmatic, existential transfer situations; (2) on the level of epistemological impulses, without cordoning off the power relations and asymmetries of global relations; (3) on the level of practical implementations and transformative developments of translation-oriented attitudes.

Expanding the Horizons of the Translation Category

Translation as Contextualization

A translational turn in disciplines concerned with the study of culture presupposes the cultural turn in translation studies since the 1980s, a move that extended translation's purview beyond the transfer of languages or texts, opening it to questions of cultural translation and facing the frictions and complexities of cultural lifeworlds themselves (see Snell-Hornby 2006, 164–69). In the process, the familiar categories of text-related translation, such as “original,” “equivalence,” or “faithfulness,” were increasingly supplemented by new key categories of cultural translation, such as “cultural representation and transformation,” “alterity,” “displacement,” “discontinuity,” “cultural difference,” and “power.”

For a long time, reflection on cultural translation in translation studies drew its impulses chiefly from ethnographic research and its critique of representation (see Simon and St. Pierre 2000; Wolf 2002; Yamanaka and Nishio 2006; Sturge 2014 [2007]). These offered methods of cultural contextualiza-

tion that fostered linking smaller units within texts and other forms of representation (symbols, forms of address, narrative patterns, communicative situations) to larger, culturally specific and historical patterns of thinking and signification. But, conversely, these efforts of cultural contextualization still need the procedures of textual translation in order to gain important correctives to a critique of representation that risks sweeping generalizations: It is never whole “cultures” that are translated. By contrast, a more concrete than metaphorical translation perspective makes the wider spheres of culture and practice accessible in smaller units of communication and interaction. It allows larger complexes of communication, such as cultural transfer, the transmission of concepts, the circulation of objects of knowledge (as in museums), cultural dialogue, or cultural comparison, to be almost microscopically dissected – not least in terms of concrete translational activities by agents acting as cultural brokers.

Today the movement of peoples around the globe can be seen to mirror the very process of translation itself, for translation is not just the transfer of texts from one language into another, it is now rightly seen as a process of negotiation between texts and between cultures, a process during which all kinds of transactions take place mediated by the figure of the translator. (Bassnett 2002 [1980], 5–6)

The expansion of the translation category is groundbreaking in that the translator (which could also be a museum, see Sturge 2007) and, especially, the translation scholar always set the micro and macro levels in a necessary interrelation: the smaller formats and textual and interactional analyses are related to wider translational frameworks and vice versa. Translations are thus inserted into broad views on the relations of power and dependency and into a discursive environment such as orientalism or colonialism (see Asad and Dixon 1985, 177; Venuti 1998, 158). Translation history is made part of the history of colonialism, part of a “global regime of translation” (see Sakai 2009, 75) or a “biopolitics of translation” (see Sakai and Solomon 2006; Solomon 2009, 53).

Translation as Self-Translation and Transformation

Even individual translation practices are thus conditioned by more comprehensive hegemonic relationships and the asymmetries of the global “regime of translation.” Connections like this are especially significant at the level of language policy. The struggle of regional, indigenous languages against the overbearing power of the world languages makes the translation issue a particularly explosive one. This becomes clear in an impressive autobiographical essay by Kenyan writer and scholar Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (2009). He describes from his own experience how the asymmetries of languages are also relations of violence. These asymmetrical relations subject speakers, including authors, to demands for a specific kind of translation – and political enforcements of translation – that affect their very existence. The power relations between European and African languages in these situations are experienced bodily, as linguistic repression or terror. At stake here are translation challenges, which, as Jon Solomon (2009, 66) argues, always already imply the “myth of global English.”

At this stage a translational perspective opens the door to further study the politics of translation. This will involve discussing global linguistic asymmetries in the framework of what Solomon (2009, 53) calls a “biopolitics of translation,” as well as the levels of experiences, actions, and constraints that impose translation and self-translation on subjects and agents in the framework of “translation as a social action.” Martin Fuchs (2009) examines the latter aspect in particular depth through his sociological perspective on translation as a social practice. Fuchs shows how the marginalized Indian “Untouchables” or Dalits try to translate their existential and political concerns into a universalist Buddhist frame of reference, so as to find a point of contact with other social contexts and thus gain recognition. This case study shows that in multipolar translation circumstances like these, translational actions often need to capture universalist “third terms” (such as Buddhism) as reference points. Translation here is more than just a bridge between two

unrelated poles, more than a one-way transfer process; instead, the concept is a complex sociological, relational process of reciprocity and mutual transformation. Not least for museum studies, this necessity to translate by seeking “third” common reference points could pose a challenge.

The postcolonial debate has laid a foundation for this far-reaching notion of translation as transformation. Certainly, postcolonial studies have largely focused on transforming Europe’s understanding of itself as the “original,” critically remapping and reorienting previously dominant notions of center and periphery, breaking open fixed identities, and attacking the principle of binarism in favor of hybrid mixing. Yet, postcolonialism’s attention to the patterns of power in all kinds of translation relations (see Niranjana 1992; Spivak 2000; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002) has importantly set out the terms for considering mutual translation and transformation as a conflictual process. It is a viewpoint that oversteps traditional understandings of translation relations as relations of equivalence, breaking apart the assumption of firmly drawn positions or spheres, let alone of faithfulness to the “originals” of tradition, “roots,” or identity. Instead, it is the transgressive and transformative aspects of translation that, as the late Zygmunt Bauman argues, are the preconditions for “reciprocal change”:

Cross-cultural translation is a continuous process which *serves* as much as *constitutes* the cohabitation of people who can afford neither occupying the same space nor mapping that common space in their own, separate ways. No act of translation leaves either of the partners intact. Both emerge from their encounter changed, different at the end of the act from what they were at its beginning. (1999, xlviii)

Culture as Translation – Cross-Cultural Translation

The far-reaching approaches to translation as transformation incorporate a dynamic that will ultimately trigger a translational reconceptualiza-

tion of the notion of culture itself: “culture is translational” (Bhabha 1994, 172). Cultures are not unified givens that, like objects, can be transferred and translated; they are constituted only through multifarious overlaps and transferences, by displacements and histories of entanglement under the unequal power conditions of world society. Countering tendencies to standardize, affirm identities, and essentialize, a translation perspective can bring to light specific structures of difference: from heterogeneous discursive spaces within a society to internal counterdiscourses, right up to the discursive forms of acts of resistance.

However, perhaps we should not be too hasty in adopting the formula of “translational transnationalism” (Apter 2001, 5) as a way of making global language and translation policy and practices the gateway to enlightened cosmopolitanism. A translational turn might rather start by confronting concrete issues and work toward considering the historical, social, and political conditions that could allow cross-cultural translation to take place. Several authors have already pointed in this direction. Firstly, Homi Bhabha’s links between the transnational and the translational indicate – beyond mere wordplay – a decentering task for transnational cultural studies: “Any transnational cultural study must ‘translate,’ each time locally and specifically, what decentres and subverts this transnational globality” (1994, 241).

Secondly, the translation category can encourage us to spell out “globalization as translation” (Cronin 2003, 34) – again a decentering of global processes as well as an agent-oriented view of globalization (see Papastergiadis 2011). Translation allows the citizens of a global civil society to achieve a “bottom-up localization” (Cronin 2006, 28) and thus advance the active formation of relationships and networks. But – thirdly – the study of global translation processes also requires careful reflection on the historical dimension. Such work calls for a reinterpretation of the transition of non-European nations (such as India) to capitalism and distinctive forms of multiple modernities: no longer as the result of linear processes of universalization but as the result of translational ruptures.

Epistemological Dimensions of a Translational Turn and Their Global Implications

Displacement

“Translation is the agency of difference” (Haverkamp 1997, 7) – but a statement like this requires specification. And that specification cannot remain only epistemological, countering holistic approaches and the supposed purity of the concepts of culture, identity, tradition, religion, and so on. It is imperative to provide historical detail when analyzing processes of cultural translation; Walter Mignolo and Freya Schiwy (2003, 4) call this the necessity of “theorizing translation across the colonial difference.”

Rethinking global relations in the sense of displacements and multiple cultural affiliations demands a new view of the translation concept that is political and sensitive to power. Replacing the popular notion of translating as bridge building, it might be more realistic to focus on fractures and disparities in the translation dynamic. After all, the in-between situations within translation relations are closely linked to the interstitial existences arising from global migration, exile, and diaspora (see Papastergiadis 2000; Vorderobermeier and Wolf 2008; Bachmann-Medick 2018).

A translational view of migration is still at a very early stage, but it promises to benefit from the analytical capacities attributed to translation. They shed new light on the translational character of cultural phenomena in general: their non-holistic structure, their hybrid heterogeneity and multiplicity. In this regard, our understanding of translation has now developed to include important processes of displacement and alienation, of distinction and mediation. The path has been cleared for new methodological approaches to the “interstitial spaces” so celebrated by the humanities, by examining them as translational spaces: as spaces where relationships, situations, identities,

and interactions are shaped through concrete processes of cultural translation, for which Sherry Simon's (2006) investigation of the contact zones, language communities, and multilingual migrants in the divided city of Montreal provides one example.

But beyond this, in-between spaces unfold their greatest potential in an epistemological and analytical respect: translation-oriented lines of approach encourage the search for concepts that cut across binary pairs and break open formulaic clusters. For example, a translational view of "interculturality" makes plausible the concept's constitution out of individual translation steps, giving new visibility and relevance not only to understanding and mediating but also to easily forgotten elements such as misunderstanding and resistance. This kind of translational approach makes complexity more transparent and easier to handle, which is useful not least in dissecting master narratives and synthesizing terms such as modernization, identity, society, or culture.

From Universalization to Cross-Categorical Translation

Will the concept of translation, then, succeed in transforming universalizing European theories, concepts, and categories? One-sided claims to universalization premised on Eurocentric categories are being called into question more and more vehemently. Under fire in particular is the European tradition of translating other cultures and languages exclusively into the European context. In the future, current trends to reverse that line of vision will likely become increasingly important. Moreover, the presumed one-sided global distribution of Western concepts and practices is no longer uncontested. It is beginning to be filtered through a close scrutiny of reciprocal translation processes. This move is supported above all by studies that try to identify points of articulation for the mutuality of translation, like the shared effort to

find “third idioms” (with reference points like religion, as discussed by Fuchs 2009, or human rights, as in Tsing 1997). Such approaches cannot survive without the impetus for a reconceptualization of translation coming from outside of Europe – especially from Asia, at present (see Hung and Wakabayashi 2005; Ning 2008; Ning and Yifeng 2008).

In this respect, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s work aims at “displacing” the question of translation. His influential book *Provincializing Europe* proposes considering translation not only “cross-culturally” but also “cross-categorically,” thereby explicitly challenging Eurocentric, universal points of comparative reference and instead opening the door to non-European categories of investigation. For example, it is difficult but must be possible to translate the Hindi term *pani* into the English term “water” without having to pass through the pre-given scientific category in the Western knowledge system, H₂O (see Chakrabarty 2000, 83).

Chakrabarty shows how “cross-categorical translation” demands a historicized and contextualized approach to universalizing investigative categories such as democracy, human dignity, or equality. He argues that a political historiography in non-European countries, like India, and under postcolonial conditions is possible only through a process of translating European key categories of modernity – translating here in the sense of “translation-as-displacement.” Chakrabarty (2014, 66) presents the example that the collective subject “the proletariat” in India “can be named only through a series of displacements of the original European term ‘the proletariat,’” toward “subalterns,” “masses,” “peasants,” or even “multitude.” J. Devika’s (2008, 183) study of “translating feminist concepts largely produced in first-world contexts into the local language” in 1980s Kerala State, India, is another innovative investigation of this kind.

Finally, we can use the focus on translation processes to examine approaches such as a transnational historiography that takes into account

“entangled histories” (see Randeria 2002). Translation’s relevance is most striking, however, in terms of its reevaluation of “universal” concepts in transcultural traffic. Because there are no homogeneous spaces of reference in the global sphere, it is essential to attend carefully to the culturally specific settings, conditions, deep structures, and translational perspectives at work in the study of culture, including those of our own research. Which concepts are we working from? To what extent can we still consider research categories like modernization, development, capitalism, knowledge, art, labor, and so on to be universally valid? What kinds of translation processes are necessary to open up such analytical terms transculturally and to find functional equivalents for them in the spheres of action and conceptual systems of non-European societies?

The Humanities and the Study of Culture as “Translation Studies”

Translation within Disciplines

One of the greatest challenges to the translational reorientation currently permeating the various disciplines could be a new self-definition of the humanities as forms of globally open “translation studies” (see Bachmann-Medick 2016a). One example is the energetic debate within comparative literature on restructuring the entire subject. There, the model of translation expands the object of comparative literature’s attention to include political contexts, examining them from the vantage point of “translation zones” (Apter 2006, 5) and showing how “philology is linked to globalization, to Guantánamo Bay, to war and peace, to the Internet” (Apter 2006, 11). Another example comes from the discipline of history, which has recently begun to rediscover translation – understood here as a specific historical process

associated with colonialism and decolonization, missionary history, and concept transfer (see Howland 2003; Rafael 2005; Richter 2005, 13). Historians are increasingly looking for creative reinterpretations of basic political concepts such as liberty, democracy, and human rights in order to develop new historical and political terms in place of those proposed by the West, and to foster practices of explicit non-equivalence (see Liu 1995, 1999; Sakai 1997; Bachmann-Medick 2013).

Worth mentioning are attempts – for example in religious studies – to use the concept of cultural translation as an “analytical tool for image transmissions and religious conversions in general” (Bräunlein 2009, 29), necessitating increased attention to translations of images. Interpreting religious transfers from this translation perspective reveals that transformation, re-interpretation, and active appropriation are mediated across long distances through a visual and performative practice of “image acts.” This is a standpoint particularly suited to driving the model of translation in a direction that has so far been largely ignored, one importantly addressed by Birgit Mersmann in terms of “cultural visual studies as translation research” (2004, 107; see also Mersmann 2016). Visual translation has a particular explosive force arising from the all-encompassing transcultural worlds of media and images, in which we meet face-to-face with cultural differences and opposing visual cultures, even visual taboos (one example being the scandalous photographs from Abu Ghraib).

Translation between Disciplines

I have touched on just a few examples to indicate the large scale on which the concept of translation is currently pervading many different disciplines. In the emerging knowledge society, translation can also become a model to link the various disciplines, whereby the individual studies make themselves

as susceptible as possible to connecting with other areas of knowledge and exploring their “contact zones.” In contrast to the “smoother” category of interdisciplinarity, the translation category has the advantage of explicitly addressing the differences, tensions, and antagonisms between disciplines or schools of thought.

Another advantage of the translation category might be to harness its characteristic self-reflexivity to help consider our own research as itself a task of translation. This draws attention to the internal structure of knowledge acquisition in research on culture: pluralized relations and phenomena arise precisely through the disruption of concepts of wholeness and unity, by indicating the multiple strata – and contradictions – that each translation process inevitably accretes. It is important here that the work of cultural research not be centralist but rather begin with the investigation of margins and interstices (between disciplines or between cultural phenomena) as spaces of translation.

Translation as a Model for the Transnational Study of Culture

From this vantage point, a further dimension of translation for the humanities becomes visible: the possibility or necessity of translating not only between culturally different concepts but also between different, locally specific knowledge and research cultures in the study of culture itself – not least in museum studies. Even within Europe, tunnel vision all too often restricts the view to Anglo-American approaches alone. Which other research approaches are being lost in translation?

If the study of culture is to be not only globalized but transformed, starting from its “margins” (according to the European vantage point), it will, in

Stuart Hall's view, have to make use of translation processes: "Cultural studies today is not only about globalization: it is being 'globalized' – a very uneven and contradictory process. ... What interests me about this is that, everywhere, cultural studies is going through this process of re-translation" (Hall and Chen 1996, 393). Two full decades ago, Stuart Hall was already insisting that European cultural studies not only translate itself into the processes of internationalization and modernization but also make itself translatable for Asian and African cultural studies. Importantly, Hall decouples translation once and for all from a European "original":

Translation [is] a continuous process of re-articulation and re-contextualization, without any notion of a primary origin. So I am not using it in the sense that cultural studies was "really" a fully-formed western project and is now taken up elsewhere. I mean that whenever it enters a new cultural space, the terms change. (Hall and Chen 1996, 393)

For this as yet unfulfilled humanities project in translation and as translation studies, we must intensify the search for methods and research concepts that are not restricted to Western knowledge traditions but rather arise in the course of a "global conversation" (Jacob 1999, 112). In this context, translation could become a stimulating model for a transnational study of culture, reaching beyond the idea of traveling concepts. The model of translation postulates not only a global frame of "traveling" that considers the applicability or transformation of concepts, but rather a frame of displacement, of ruptures, frictions, power asymmetries, and even untranslatabilities (see Bachmann-Medick 2014, 119–36).

In this system, translation as a critical conceptual perspective has an absolutely strategic function. It dislocates the West epistemologically in its hegemonic claim of knowing, representing, and universalizing. In our empirical work, however, we must ask very carefully what insights are really gained through the category of translation and whether we might not merely be witnessing the start of a new metaphor's triumphal march. But one thing is al-

ready clear: the (transnational) study of culture can benefit a lot from a critical sensitivity to cultural translation processes in their political dimensions and underlying structures – that is, their implicit strategies, their claims to power and hegemony, their manipulations, appropriations, and acts of violence, as well as the opportunities for intervention that they offer. Translation is emerging more and more as “a matter of war and peace” (Apter 2006, 3). Ultimately, the move from what is still an ivory tower of theory and research onto the hard ground of social and political relationships in “global communication across cultures” would be “a truly revolutionary ‘translation turn’” (Snell-Hornby 2009, 50).

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Said Faiq

Intercultural Communication: An Introduction

Introduction

Across their different approaches/models and associated strategies, the primary objective of the different media of museology is to communicate a certain body of information to receivers, both intra- and interculturally. To this end, the “Appropriate Museology – Appropriate Language” conference, held at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization in March 2015 in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, sought to address the thorny intersection of culture, identity, language, and intercultural communication. The following excerpt from the call for papers illustrates how this theme framed the conference:

The conference brings together museum, culture and art practitioners as well as experts in translation and intercultural communication from the UAE and the Arab world, Asia, Africa and Europe to discuss the dynamics, challenges and opportunities of appropriate intercultural language in the museum and cultural sector, in view of establishing positive guidelines and glossaries as well as conducive attitudes and behaviours towards a local and culturally appropriate museology.

This indicates the plethora of issues related to the problematics inherent in the role and media of museums in transcultural encounters and the corollary power and/or disempowerment dynamics that animate the spaces of these encounters. Central to the conference, and to this contribution, is the relationship between language and culture. On this, Kiely and Rea-Dickens (2006, 1) write:

The notion of language and culture represents the communities and institutions which house and frame both language learning and language use. ... [This notion] provides opportunities for engagement with issues of language use, language form, language learning, language pedagogy and language assessment which inform on the construction of identity and on the social and cultural contexts where identity is profiled.

In this context, museology demonstrates the complexity inherent in the process of intercultural communication. This complexity stems from a desire to “carry over” specific cultural goods to receivers with particular systems that regulate the production and reception of such goods.

This complexity has occupied center stage in debates because of the shift that the field of cultural studies, including museum studies, has witnessed since the 1980s. In particular, the idea of cultural modeling through the arts and translation has ushered in questions that cannot be adequately answered by conventionalized fidelity approaches, represented by objects and subjects. The focus has shifted away from the products as complete outcomes to their cultural, political and economic ramifications; away from concerns about the matter and/or manner, to treating the products as social, cultural, and political signs (tokens) attached to global and local relations of power and dominance. It should be noted here that this shift has, not surprisingly, been precipitated by work on orientalism, postcolonial and cultural studies, and by a questioning of the transparent and fluent strategies and practices of representing others, particularly non-Western cultures.

Like translation, museology involves the handling of goods (information as products and even texts) produced under certain cultural conditions and using one particular language (language is used here to refer to linguistic and any other symbolic systems that facilitate communication), with the aim of transporting them to other contexts (intercultural communication) as well as to the contexts of the producers (intracultural communication). The politics of communication posits that producers (art professionals and translators) work on the basis of making the goods travel well in their own or other cultures, with the ultimate aim of augmenting a particular view or message. As such, while safeguarding the spirit of the source contexts of the products (cultural goods), producers often work to satisfy briefs, commissioners, patrons, and curators. To do this, they must exert considerable efforts to manipulate and even subvert the target reception to benefit the “client.”

It follows, then, that intercultural communication, including the work of museology and translation practitioners, involves transporting (carrying over) cultural goods to specific target constituencies. These constituencies have at their disposal established systems of representation, with norms and conventions for the production and consumption of such goods (meanings vis-à-vis people, objects, and events). These systems ultimately yield a *master discourse* through which identity and difference are marked and within which intercultural communication is carried out (Faiq, 2007).

Intercultural Communication in / of Appropriate Museology, Appropriate Language

A paradox of human history is that scientific and technical discoveries – weapons, for example – are deployed for purposes that do not relate to science at all. Instead, the purposes are grounded in how cultures perceive each

other. Alfred Nobel, inventor of a weapon, dynamite, endowed his legacy and money to the search for peace (Nobel Peace Prize) to eliminate the need for weapons; peace in this case means establishing understanding between at least two parties. Genetics, to give another example, is being regulated by interpretations of ethical rules based outside of genetics itself. The deployment of weapons during wars relates to misunderstandings or often forced ways of understanding. Labeling a culture or a people “different” provides the ammunition for the labeler to deploy weapons against the labeled, including through the production of works that reinforce such labels (Faiq, 2007).

Misunderstandings derive from incompatibilities in the processing of the media that carry them (language). Yet, misunderstandings are the products not only of linguistic incompatibilities per se, but of cultural ones as well. This means that misunderstandings generally occur in particular social structures, particular histories, and prevailing norms of communication production and reception. All of these can be said to make up the ingredients of a culture and the ideology subsumed within it. The two fundamental tools (components, ingredients) of intercultural communication, including in museology and translation, are culture and a relevant medium of transmission. Because it brings the two together, intercultural communication is by necessity a multifaceted, multi-problematic process with different manifestations, realizations, and ramifications.

In general terms, culture can be defined as shared knowledge: what the members of a particular community ought to know in order to act and react in specific, almost preformatted ways and to interpret their experience, including contact with other cultures, in distinctive ways. Based on religion, social structures, beliefs, values, and history, culture involves the totality of attitudes toward the world, events, other cultures and peoples, as well as the manner in which the attitudes are mediated. In other words, culture refers to beliefs and value systems tacitly assumed to be shared by a particular social group and to the positions taken by producers and receivers of communica-

tion (Fairclough, 1995; Faiq, 2004). The mediation is facilitated by language, which provides its users with the tools to channel attitudes into particular representations.

In any communicative act (even between people of the same group), culture and language are so intertwined that it is difficult to conceive of one without the other, as it would be impossible to “take language out of culture or culture out of language” (Bassnett 1998, 81). Extending this relationship to include translation, Emig (2001, 203–4) maintains that:

Culture itself is shown to be the result of translations, and these translations are depicted not so much as inevitable forces of history, but as individual acts that rely on their interplay with social and political contexts. Inside these contexts they often fail, and the consequences of these failures can indeed be fatal. But equally fatal is the attempt to ignore or even abandon translation as a crucial prerequisite of the formation of identity, be it personal, national or indeed cultural.

A culture seeks to tell its members what to expect from life, and so it reduces confusion and helps them predict the future, often on the basis of a past or even *pasts*. Cultural theorists generally agree that the very basic elements of any culture include history, religion, values, social organization, and language itself. The first four elements are interrelated and are all animated and expressed by language. Through its language, a culture comprises shared and learned behavior that is transmitted across generations for the purpose of promoting individual and group survival, growth and development, as well as the demarcation of itself and its group vis-à-vis other cultures and their respective members (Faiq 2014).

A very basic definition of language is that it is no more than the combination of a good grammar book and a good monolingual dictionary. But this definition does not encompass what users actually do with the grammar rules and the words neatly listed in dictionaries. The grammar rules and the words in the dictionary mean whatever their users make and want them

to mean. Usage therefore very much depends on the user, and language as a whole assumes its importance as the mirror of the ways in which a culture perceives reality, identity, self, and others. Here, one may invent the term *culguage* – a combination of culture and language – to capture the intrinsic relationship between the two: two sides of the same coin, whereby a coin is rejected as legal tender if one side is blank. In intercultural encounters, communication means that those carrying out the act of transporting goods bring with them prior knowledge (culture) learned through their own (usually mother or first) language.

The norms of producing, classifying, interpreting, and circulating cultural products within the contexts of one *culguage* tend to remain in force when approaching goods transplanted through artworks or translation from other *culguage* contexts. As with native products, the reception process of transplanted products is determined more by the shared knowledge of the receiving community (*culguage*) than by what the products themselves contain. In other words, the master discourse serves as an established system of representation that helps define a culture for its members, but more importantly it helps these members define other communities (*culguages*) through a scale of otherness vis-à-vis the self (cf. Bakhtin 1981).

The work of museums, for example, involves representation: a concept and a framing strategy. Representation weighs heavily on the study of trans-cultural encounters. Tymoczko (2007, 113) provides the following definition:

representations involve a “particular view or impression of a matter,” and this is one reason representations participate in ideological or polemical contestations. Another factor in the ideology of representations is the role of discourse in the formation of representations. Not only do representations involve perspectives and (sometimes hidden) agendas, they also reflect and are structured by pre-existing discourses that inform the views of those making the representations.

Under the umbrella of representation, the issues of composition, reception and semiotic intertextuality (pertinent to museology and translation) interrelate in an intricate fashion within a context of ideological power struggle. When cultures cross and mingle, *pasts* clash and a struggle for power and influence becomes inevitable. Old formulations and modes of mediation appear on the surface, and their realization is made possible through language: the databank of discursive options. The use of language as discourse is invested with ideologies surrounding the production, circulation and/or challenging of stereotypes and/or power relationships between represented and representing communities (different *culguages*). Discussing translation as a case of intercultural encounters and representation, Apter (2005, 160) aptly argues that the issue of source and target ushers in fundamental theoretical and practical implications, whereby

the identity of what a translation *is* is tested; for if a translation is not a form of textual predicate, indexically pointing to a primary text, then what is it? Can a literary technology of reproduction that has sublated its origin still be considered a translation? Or should it be considered the premier illustration of translational ontology, insofar as it reveals the extent to which all translations are unreliable transmitters of the original, a regime, that is, of extreme untruth?

In this context, the status of the products (cultural goods), their relations to their native contexts, the responsibilities of the producers (artists or translators) and receivers (consumers), and the ethics of transcultural communication, including patronage, publishers, and exhibitors, all throw communication into an epistemological no-man's-land regarding points of reference for interpretations and acceptability. Because of the requirements and constraints of a master discourse, self and other become situated in modes of representation ingrained in the shared experience and institutional norms of the self (the *culguage* doing the representing). Otherness is measured according to a scale of possibilities within the master discourse: when the other is feared, the discursive strategies (language choices) one expects are those that realize hierarchy, subordination, and dominance. Otherness can and often does

lead to the establishment of stereotypes, which usually come accompanied by existing representations that reinforce the ideas behind them.

The representation of others through art or translation is a powerful strategy of exclusion used by a self that is considered normal and moral (Said 1995). Not surprisingly, this exclusion is also accompanied by a process of inclusion toward some accepted members of the other, as long as the *acceptees* adopt and adapt to the underlying master discourse and its associated representational system and ideology of the accepting self, that is, the *acceptors* (Faiq 2006). Such a situation may lead to the production of goods that reflect transcreated realities, thus inviting issues of appropriation, subversion, and manipulation.

Approached from this perspective, museology and translation yield sites to examine a plethora of issues: race, gender, (post)colonialism, publishing policies, censorship, and otherness, whereby all parties (agents) involved in these enterprises tend to be highly influenced by their own *culguage* and the way they see the *culguage* about which representations are created. The interaction between different *culguages* produces strategies of containment that reinforce “hegemonic versions of the colonized” (Niranjana 1992, 3).

The view that manipulation and deformation are common practices in transcultural communication is apparent in translations from Arabic and works of art that represent the Arabs and their locales. Translation from Arabic into mainstream Western languages (particularly English and French) has been regulated by the norms of a master discourse of intercultural communication that precedes the translation itself (that is, a framing system that exists before one actually embarks on translating a given text). Within this context, translation has played a central role in establishing and reinforcing images of Arab culture that comply with the requirements of the master discourses of the translating cultures. Both cultures (Arab and Western European) have at their disposal systems of representation laden with stereotypes

of the other, with the West having the upper hand in disseminating its representations (images) of the Arab other largely due to the political, economic, and cultural power it has enjoyed particularly since the nineteenth century and the days of direct colonial relations. In all this, translation from Arabic into Western languages has achieved very little in improving cultural relations and/or establishing mutual understanding (Faiq 2010). Orientalist artwork was produced within particular *culguages* to feed exotic images that receivers in the West had about the mysterious Arab East.

Museology, as translation and communication, can challenge intercultural spaces and also interrogate issues of power and disempowerment. As institutions with different traditions, cultures, localities, peoples, ideas, briefs, missions, visions, and so on, museums can create spaces for people to appreciate, understand and become aware of the need for better intercultural communication. Through their cultural goods, museums can educate global citizens about the urgent need for global sense and sensitivity in intercultural encounters.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding its complexities and problematics, the ethics of intercultural communication postulates that it should lead to a rapprochement between the *au-delà* (Bhabha 1994, 1), the other, and the self. But this is easier said than done. The master discourse that underlies intercultural encounters generally leads to the production of representations by the self about the other in accordance with values, beliefs, and discursive strategies that already exist.

Given the uniqueness of the current globalization trend and what it entails for the state and status of concepts such as nation, language, and cultur-

al identity, intercultural communication today plays a crucial role in forming and/or deforming cultural identities. In terms of power relationships, it has mostly done the latter. If not rectified for better intercultural encounters and a celebration of cultural differences, this global world, as Bermann (2005, 7) writes, will “be less hospitable; in fact, it could founder.”

Intercultural contacts that resulted in the great cultural shifts from one civilization to another have been made possible through communication, including the work of museums. But can museums, as providers of cultural goods, produce appropriate *culguages* (i.e., appropriate museology and appropriate language)? Can museology, in this global context, help different *culguages* appreciate each other through informed, unbiased, and critical interpretations of their respective cultural products? The answer depends on the master discourses that govern how museums operate.

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Ciraj Rassool

Questions of Culture and the New Museum

South African society has experienced very difficult histories of multiple colonialisms, as well as the social engineering of a rapacious, violent apartheid regime that divided its people into races and ethnic groups. In many ways, South African history can be understood as a deep, historical contest between the project of race and ethnicity of successive colonial states and apartheid on the one hand, and the project of imagining a society without race and ethnicity on the other. Sections of the South African liberation movement that emerged during the twentieth century developed a substantial body of thinking about non-racialism and anti-racism, especially during the period from the 1930s to the 1980s. These ideas have enabled us to understand race, ethnicity, and the administration of people in a historical context. We have also come to understand how each category of race was created as part of the South African administration and governmentality, and how ethnicity itself was invented through native administration as part of the processes of rule.

At the beginning of our workshop, the organizers explained that they were not thinking about culture in any fixed sense. However, the notions of

“interculture” and “multiculture” tend to position groups as fixed in their respective cultures, much like the arrangement of taxonomies of plants and animals. In this framework, societies are characterized by fixed cultures, whose coexistence needs to be managed through some kind of intercultural or multicultural policy mediated through translation and a thorough understanding of what constitutes the various “cultures.” I believe it is possible to think about these things differently, and I will provide examples of how these issues have been expressed in the museum landscape of South Africa.

The museum is one of the sites where race was made. A group of colleagues and I recently completed a project on the South African “empire” with the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Henrichsen et al. 2015). This project demonstrated how to understand Southern African history through the idea of a regional empire of power and authority instead of through the conventional framework of nation building. Research conducted in this project also emphasized that the museum needs to be understood as an epistemology, a system of representation, and not merely as a collection or exhibition. Indeed, the museum was the very institution of empire, marked by categories of ethnicity and systems of classification and knowledge hierarchy (Rassool 2015; see also Bennett 1995, 2004). The fundamental classification was that between cultural history and ethnography: between the material culture of those deemed “civilized” and the material culture of those deemed “primitive.”

The South African museum system was shot through with this classificatory system, characterized by a division between the people seen as having culture and history, and those seen as having only tribe and the physical features of race. Accordingly, the museum system was divided between museums of cultural history and museums of ethnography, with the latter sometimes incorporated into natural history museums (Davison 1990). This museum inheritance posed challenges to healing the ravages of colonialism and apartheid and building a democratic, non-racial society. How could these

old, divided national museum collections, marked by a colonial classificatory division, become museums of the new non-racial nation? What did non-racialism mean for the classification system, what did it mean for the museum infrastructure, and what did it mean for the administration of collections and artifacts that had been segregated?

A new “flagship” national museum was created in Cape Town out of an amalgamation of the old previously segregated national museum collections; it was named Iziko Museums of South Africa, with *iziko* a Nguni word for the hearth of a home. As part of the amalgamation and integration of the collections, a new collections division was created and simply called “social history,” along with a new storage facility for these collections (Davison 2005; Rasool 2009). This new collections building was not merely a new storage space; it became the site of an internationally significant epistemological project of taking previously segregated cultural history and ethnography collections, for example of ceramics, and performing the collections management work of placing them within a single collections division. This epistemic work also included close attention to labeling and object biographies in order to remove administrative racism while showing the history of race and ethnicity.

While the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam made the bold step in 2015 to remove and change its labels that bore the stamp of colonial racism (Jones 2015), many museums across the world hold significant collections from Southern African societies that continue to carry the offensive labels added during their acquisition and early entry in to the collection. These labels, such as “Kaffir,” the colonial label for Nguni-speaking people in the Eastern Cape at the time of their nineteenth-century conquest by the British, present a challenge to museums as they find ways of according respect to societies from which their collections emanate. There is an opportunity for these museums in South Africa and in other countries not only to alter their offensive labels but also to embark on a project of thinking about the history of ethnic and ethnographic labeling as part of the cultural work of colonialism. Labels

are not merely vehicles of authenticity; they are couched in the discourses of society and the object (Price 2013). The decolonization of museums may involve an inquiry into the ethics of acquisition and into the relationship between collections and living, historical cultures. It also involves a deep, critical, historical inquiry into the knowledge systems surrounding objects and collections, in an approach that questions colonial categories.

In South Africa, the work of building a society out of the ravages and deep effects of racism is also potentially a project of trying to imagine a new nation without race and even potentially without ethnicity. Yet, the new post-apartheid society continues to be marked by race in almost every way. It is impossible to enforce policies of affirmative action without some reliance on older notions of race. Non-racialism is not simply a denial of the effects of race, nor an opportunistic claim on racelessness; the politics of racelessness serves to assist those whom apartheid empowered, the beneficiaries of apartheid's own affirmative action. In contrast, non-racialism needs to be understood as a politics of knowledge and identity in which one thinks about the racial and ethnic administration of persons historically.

Just as one problematizes race and ethnicity in the history of the administration of persons, so one has to think historically about the categories involved in the administration of museum objects and collections. As much as we can identify how artificial and constructed ethnicity is, we need to be able to understand how ethnicity and ethnic categories themselves have history (Vail 1991). For example, we need to appreciate the history behind how the ethnic and ethnographic category of "Zulu" was created and how Zulu social formation can be understood historically beyond the simplistic framework of the *Mfecane* and state formation (Hamilton 1998). This will enable museums to rethink the category "Zulu" in their collections management, not just for its historical accuracy but also for its cultural politics over time.

The museum has also been a site that helped create the category “Bushman,” and it is important to understand the role of the museum and its disciplines of physical and cultural anthropology in the history of “bushmanization.” What the concept of Bushman has meant has changed over time from its earliest colonial creation in reference to people without livestock, partly as a consequence of dispossession, to people who raided Boer homesteads for stolen livestock (Gordon 1992). This process culminated in the physical anthropological studies of the early twentieth century, along with the racial project of cast-making from the bodies of Northern Cape farmworkers and shepherds, conducted in the name of anthropological and museum preservation (Davison 2001; Skotnes 2002).

Colonialism has also often had the effect of removing people from any sense of indigenous continuity with precolonial societies. It is important to understand how new expressions of a politics of indigeneity have been emerging, in which people have sought to narrate their lives in new indigenous terms, this indigeneity being the basis of a new and aspiring modernity, sometimes even expressed as the “recovery” of indigenous knowledge systems. For this, an older language of ethnography has often been employed, one that draws on the research and publications of the old colonial anthropologists. For example, while Khoisan indigenous identities were studied in the museum through the prism of racial type and the trope of disappearance, Bantu-speaking people were turned into ethnic groups through the work of anthropology and native administration. And notwithstanding the desires of indigenous communities, it has not been possible for indigeneity to be claimed and expressed outside the frames of ethnography (Rassool 2009).

These are some of the contradictions unfolding in South African museums, expressed most powerfully in the exhibition *Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan History and Material Culture*, curated by artist and scholar Pippa Skotnes at the South African National Gallery in 1996. This exhibition sought to engage with the history of racialized cast-making and the power of the

Bushman Diorama that had been installed at the South African Museum in 1959–60, utilizing the body casts of racial science made fifty years earlier. In this significant exhibition, Skotnes sought to counterpose the violence of the gun and the museum with recovered expressions of indigenous voices, as assembled by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd from nineteenth-century !Xam informants held in the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town on charges of stock theft (Skotnes 1996; Skotnes 2002).

Skotnes's project failed to problematize these notions of "recovery" and "rescue" ascribed to the work of Bleek and Lloyd, and her concept of the museum remained couched in the discourse of atonement, preservation and stewardship, and its desires for trusteeship over people and objects (Rassool 2009). The *Miscast* project was also criticized for reproducing and repeating the very colonial representations of Khoisan people that it had sought to problematize. In addition, the exhibition met with new assertions of indigeneity as ethnicity, as neo-Khoisan groups sought to question the authority of the curator and the museum (Schrire, Kozain, and Abrahams 1996) These assertions were part of broader neo-Khoisan demands for belated inclusion in the system of traditional authorities (formerly native administration) that also represented a shift from race to ethnicity.

When building a new national museum of a non-racial democracy, what can museum professionals do with the legacies of racial collecting and research? An important aspect of South African museum anthropology and collecting history involved supposed "preservation" of the physical records of people deemed to be disappearing, such as people labeled "Bushmen," whom anthropologists saw as "living fossils." As a result of these impulses to preserve and collect, the buried bodies of the recently deceased were purchased by museums from grave robbers. This trade in stolen human remains of early twentieth-century people lay at the heart of making the modern museum in South Africa, coinciding with the birth of the Union of South Africa as a new white nation in 1910. It also saw South African museums compete with their

European counterparts for access to the remains of the stolen dead, as an expression of the South Africanization of science. In addition to this trade in human remains, there is also evidence that South African museums purchased people's bodies even before they died (Legassick and Rassool 2000).

As part of the transformation of the old museum collections at Iziko Museums of South Africa, the collections of the dead stolen in these ways or acquired for the purposes of racial research were removed from the collection under the terms of a new Human Remains Policy and set aside in special no-access stores until a national policy on return and repatriation comes into operation. After the Bushman Diorama was shut, the Iziko Museums decided to consider racialized body casts to be unethically acquired human remains as well. The experience of creating national cohesion and social healing through the return and reburial of the remains of Sara Baartman in 2002, and Klaas and Trooi Pienaar in 2012, was widely expected to initiate a broader process of returning the dead from museums in South Africa (Rassool 2015). These returns would not merely be a series of events signifying deracialization but would constitute processes of remaking the museums themselves.

As the legacies of race and physical anthropology as science are scrutinized through the decolonization of museums in South Africa, Iziko Museums have also shown that it is possible to rethink the value of the category "ethnography." It is not possible to build new, postcolonial nations on the basis of the ethnographic museum. Experiences in Ghana, Uganda, and other countries demonstrate the dilemmas of national museums that remain dormant, with their frozen, dusty exhibitions trapped in old languages and categories. The creation of social history collections at Iziko Museums has shown one way in which old museums with inherited collections can set themselves on a post-ethnographic path, so that people can recognize themselves in museums outside the colonial categories of race and ethnicity.

That museums are about people and creating civic forums for discussion and debate is powerfully clear in the cultural and memory work of community museums in South Africa that have emerged since the mid-1990s. The foremost example of this new museum of process is the District Six Museum in Cape Town, which came into existence as a memory museum to defend the land of District Six, from which people had been forcibly removed under apartheid. This museum, which has developed alongside a complex project of healing the community through land restitution, has also deliberately set itself the task to rethink the city of Cape Town beyond the categories of race, with the challenge “to build a city not of people, not of races” (Soudien 2001).

The District Six Museum has worked with a concept of “museum” not as a collection but as a site inscription, as memory work, and as transactions of knowledge. In recent years its main methods of interpretation have involved site visits and commemorative walks, utilizing the resources of memory, trying to ensure that a land restitution process under way pays attention to questions of memory. Here the museum is understood as the process of knowledge formation, one of the resources to reconstitute society: the museum beyond the object and the exhibition. Yet the District Six Museum has been through quite a substantial process of museumization and formalization, as it has acquired the responsibilities of stewardship and care of collections, objects, and images of ordinary lives, as well as recordings of social memory and cultural expression (Rassool 2006).

The post-ethnographic museum and the museum of process both point to the possibility that the modern museum as the world has known it, which emerged in the making of the modern person and coincided with the colonization of the world, may have outlived its value. Yet, the “post-museum” can only be the outcome of a sustained engagement with the basic museum work of collection, conservation, exhibition, and education in ways that enter into battle with the concepts of race and ethnic group, categories that seem almost naturalized and frozen into who we are. In general, it is critical to think

about the connections between the administration of people and the administration of artifacts in the museum, and to rethink society and rethink the museum at the same time. What we are talking about in questioning race, ethnicity, and ethnography is a new critical citizenship and what it means to be human in a postcolonial world.

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Heba Nayel Barakat

Multiculturalism in Museums: The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia as a Case Study

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) is the largest museum dedicated to the arts and culture of the Islamic world in Southeast Asia. It houses over 10,000 artifacts, 2,500 of which are on display in its permanent galleries. It aims to organize on a yearly basis three major artifact-based exhibitions in addition to four to six photo exhibitions. It receives more than 10,000 visitors per month, 50 percent of whom are foreigners. Although the museum is a relatively new addition to the tourist market in Malaysia, it has received several awards, for example a prize from the mayor of Kuala Lumpur for the best cultural destination in the city. As a museum, IAMM strives to attract and cater to a wide range of visitors, not just to visitors from elsewhere in Asia but also to the citizens of Malaysia, who represent diverse cultures and religions.

Malaysia, which consists of eleven states on the Malay Peninsula and two states on the island of Borneo, has a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary system. Islam is the official religion but not the only one; thus, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Malaysia has approximately fifteen

ethnic groups, but the main groups are Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The country is a mosaic of ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions. The IAMM is accordingly situated in a multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious society.

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia was envisaged in 1996, when Director Syed Mohamad Albukhary approached Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad with a collection of Islamic coins offered for purchase. Prime Minister Mahathir reflected on the offer and indicated that it was about time for Malaysia to establish a museum dedicated to Islamic arts and culture. He further posed the question of which organization could take on this endeavor. The Albukhary Foundation decided to meet the challenge and an agreement was signed between the government of Malaysia and the Foundation, whereby the Foundation would build and manage the museum for ninety-nine years. The Albukhary family embarked on developing a collection of Islamic art to be shared with the visitors. Today, the museum displays artifacts that cover the entire Islamic world, from the Iberian Peninsula to Southeast Asia and China, spanning more than 1,400 years.

There are advantages and challenges to constructing a museum in a multicultural society. IAMM had to confront many issues that revealed themselves during the museum's construction and furnishing stages. IAMM's director was entrusted with the task of developing the building's design with a renowned Italian architectural firm and lead architect, then adding to it and making adjustments on the premises with local architects and international craftsmen. From Albukhary's perspective, the components of a museum are, to a great extent, standard in the twenty-first century, yet when building a new institution in a multiethnic, multicultural society, the project's conceptualization must take on new dimensions.

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

The museum is built on four levels, to harmoniously blend into the surrounding environment on the plot of land allocated by the government to the foundation. The lower ground and ground levels are dedicated to the museum facilities (gift shop, restaurant, children's library, fountain garden and special galleries), while levels 1 and 2 are reserved for the permanent galleries.

Among the challenges facing the museum from the beginning was the need to welcome visitors who may not know or understand much about Islam or Islamic art. As the museum is in proximity to the national mosque, we feared that visitors might confuse the two, thus its identity as an art museum had to be visible. Indeed, the museum has had visitors who approached the premises and asked whether they need to veil or to take off their shoes. Such questions indicated a cultural sensitivity that needed to be addressed. Thus, a fundamental inclination at the design stage was to build this museum in a modern, open space, where – unlike in many other museums – light penetrates and a sense of comfort prevails. The monumental entrance to the museum is lined with predominantly blue tiles commissioned from the ceramist ateliers of Iran.

From the road approaching the museum's entrance, one can see the Open Space Gallery (OSG), which is a large hall dedicated to photography exhibitions and is accessible for free. The OSG's frequently changing photo exhibition has become a welcoming communication tool, attracting visitors with its blown-up images and accentuating the function of the museum. The concept of bringing the outsider inside counters any fear of approaching museums that many visitors may have.



Image 1 The iwan of the Museum, lined with blue tiles commissioned from the ceramist ateliers of Iran. The Open Space Gallery on the ground floor is visible to the visitors from this angle © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Once inside the permanent galleries, space division is not part of the architecture: no walls, no partitions, and no closed doors – that was the philosophy of the modern approach. No artificial boundaries; let the boundaries create themselves! This open approach caters first and foremost to a multicultural society, where set boundaries bring with them sets of rules and regulations, limitations, and fear of the unknown behind the doors. Technically the lack of boundaries poses many challenges to the museum, ranging from regulating humidity and temperature to creating invisible space divisions.

The first level of the permanent art galleries demonstrates the concept of a “hierarchy of space” in museums (Tzortzi 2015). The first gallery is dedicated to the history of Islamic art, whereby information panels in two languages present a chronological dynastic history of the major Islamic empires



Image 2 View of the permanent display with no artificial boundaries or partitions between galleries © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

through the use of architectural models of mosques. This gallery becomes a background history of Islamic art and architectural development, and highlights the important decorative features such as ceramic, wood, marble, and metal elements, which will be displayed on a different level of the museum. In the hierarchy of space, the next gallery is the Quran and manuscript gallery. This is actually the first gallery to display historical artifacts, as the rest of the permanent galleries do as well. Yet, following the historical introduction, this is the most important gallery, as it presents the history of Islam through a collection of Quran manuscripts and scholarly manuscripts from around the world. The gallery also houses the oldest artifact in the museum: a vellum leaf in the Hijazi script style, from the Hejaz in the first century of Islam.



Image 3 Quran leaf. Written in Hijazi script on vellum. Near East or Arabian Peninsula. 7th-8th century AD/1st-2nd century AH © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



Image 4 Entrance to the India, China and Malay world galleries © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Keeping the “hierarchy” as a priority in mind, the next three galleries are dedicated to the three ethnicities in Malaysia: the Malay, Chinese, and Indian Islamic legacies. Museum space “can be used to stage displays and narratives” (Zamani and Peponis 2010, 876). Thus, in creating an interrelationship among these three connected galleries, the conceptual hierarchical system became fundamental in portraying each gallery’s connection to the visitors. By assessing the important legacies of the multicultural society that the museum is part of, the institution sends a keen message that it is an integral part of this society. In this manner, the museum evolves from the traditionally rigid thematic, dynastic, or chronological gallery division toward a more dialogue-based horizon. The second level of permanent galleries follows a thematic approach more inclined toward material typology.

Communication with an Islamic Museum in a Multicultural, Multiethnic, Multireligious Society

Perhaps unlike all-encompassing historical museums, specialized museums like the IAMM need to approach communication with the visitors in multiple ways. The museum adopts verbal and nonverbal communication models when addressing the 50 percent of our monthly visitors (out of 10,000 walk-ins) from cultures that may not share the museum's language. While the other 50 percent are locals, they often have a different mother tongue or different cultural norms. The challenge is to find communication strategies that come as close as possible to cultivating an "attractive visiting culture" (Hiller et al. 1996, 14).

As the main challenge is language, IAMM has taken a nonverbal approach for better communication (Topan 2011; Goman 2008, 143; Hall and Hall 1990, 3). According to Macdonald (2007, 157), "how people negotiate their way through museums and galleries can have considerable implications for how they relate to and interpret exhibition content"¹; thus, IAMM uses light as a guide for movement, not in the form of light bulbs or lit arrows but by allowing natural light and showcase lights to guide visitors' movement throughout the museum. The movement from the first gallery to the second is envisaged through a lit corridor. The movement within galleries is guided by a lit wall on which the introductory panels are displayed. This arrangement of light helps guide visitors to the starting point in each gallery, while a dim area indicates the end of a gallery, as seen in the demarcation between the Indian and Malay gallery spaces.

1 Similarly, a study conducted by the Space Syntax Laboratory of University College London found that the special layout of galleries and museums became key guidelines to successful visits by exhibition-goers (Hiller et al. 1996).

Language Challenges at IAMM

Language constitutes one of the main challenges at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. This is not because there is a lack of language skill; on the contrary, all panels are in two languages, English and Malay, while introductory panels to exhibitions and galleries as well as exhibition brochures are in three languages, English, Malay, and Arabic. However, challenges arise in several domains: translation between languages and finding the appropriate terminology; terminology within a single language and how it is culturally understood; and the use of body gestures and nonverbal language in museum tours.

Finding Appropriate Terminology

Among the challenges faced by the curatorial department was translating the title of a lecture presented by Professor Tariq Ramadan at IAMM in 2013 as part of the museum's lecture series in conjunction with exhibitions and publications. The title in English was "The Word and Its Signs," and its proposed Arabic translation sparked many debates, culminating in two options: the literal translation "*Al Kalema w Dalalatoha* – الكلمة ودلالاتها" and "*AlQuran w Ayatouh* – القرآن وآياته." The title of the lecture needed to be further translated to Malay, and this would be based on the Arabic title. Toward the end of the lecture, we as museum curators realized that our frequent use of certain Arabic terms in our display captions and publications did not necessarily mean or translate to the correct term. Arabic terms posed a challenge, even though three of our curators speak Arabic as their mother tongue (from Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen). A term such as "*ayaat* – آيات," which is translated literally as "verses," has also been translated, more appropriately, as "signs"; terms such as "*doaa* – دعاء," invocations, or prayers, "*salat* – صلاة," have also posed repeated

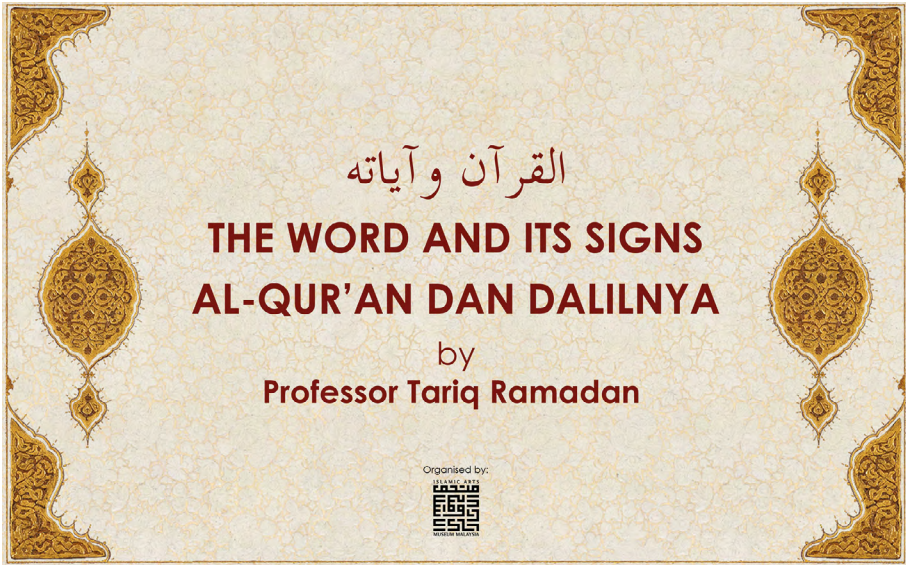


Image 5 Title of Tariq Ramadan’s talk © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



Image 6 Az-Zakah exhibition panel © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

challenges. Perhaps viewing this issue from a Western perspective is different than viewing it from an Arabic-speaking perspective, which was another element that opened further debate. At the same time, it became obvious that there was a lack of scholarship and guidelines in the museum world on the

most “appropriate” approach to museum terminology, not to mention spelling dilemmas such as Makkah/Mecca, Hijrah/Hajj, or the recent use of CE instead of AD. Arabic words and their transliteration are treated with sensitivity in Islamic museums across the globe due to their relation to the Holy Quran. In an exhibition and publication on Islamic alms (الزكاة), for example, the exhibition title posed the challenge of finding a correct transliteration: *az zakah, zakat, or al zakah?*

The approach to terminology within one language is not confined to the Arabic language. The museum has encountered terms used in English that did not deliver their required message to the Southeast Asian community – that is, they were not understood. During the furnishing stage of the museum, signs were used that followed the British Museum in most cases. The museum toilets were thus labeled “Gents” and “Ladies.” As they are a few meters apart within one corridor, many visitors would read the door sign “Gents” and not recognize which gender it connoted. There are terms that are more culturally recognized in Malaysia than “exported” British terms. Following preset terminology may pose issues in different environments. Yet, terms are organic, changing over time, and when new terminology emerges it poses a greater challenge to museum panels and captions.

Labels and artifact captions face the same need for an appropriate museum terminology, as they arrive at the museum with the artifact but are often drafted by auctioneers, whose purpose is to glorify and sell. These captions must result from proper research and identify the object appropriately for its later appearance in galleries. Accurate, brief, informative, interesting, are but a few requirements for a caption of less than ten words! The visitor-object engagement thus forms yet another challenge (see Tzortzi 2014).



Image 7 Artifact with caption on display at the gallery © Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to reiterate the need to address challenges in museum languages and to attempt, rather than postpone, developing appropriate museum terminologies that meet the challenges of the fast-growing world. This approach would ensure an appropriate place and space for museums in our societies and would meet the requirements of new generations.

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Angelita Teo

Singapore, a Multiracial Nation – The Role of the National Museum

Introduction

We are going to have a multiracial nation in Singapore. We will set the example. This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everyone will have his place, equal; language, culture, religion. ... And finally, let us, really Singaporeans ... unite, regardless of race, language, religion, culture. (Lee Kuan Yew, Television Singapura 1965)

The birth of Singapore as an independent nation on August 9, 1965, stems from our separation from the Federation of Malaysia. The above quotation was taken from a televised press conference to announce the separation, delivered with tremendous emotion and conviction by Singapore's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew. These words have, over the past fifty years, influenced many of our public policies, as well as determined the languages in which the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) has presented our exhibitions and content.

The NMS is the oldest museum in Singapore. It was first established by the British in 1887 as the Raffles Library and Museum and housed in a



image 1 National Museum of Singapore, 2017 © National Museum of Singapore

neo-Palladian building designed by the English engineer Henry McCallum. It has remained a museum ever since, although it has undergone many incarnations over the last 130 years.

In 1993, when the National Archives, National Museum, and Oral History Department were merged to form the National Heritage Board, the NMS was renamed the Singapore History Museum. The renaming of the museum determined its primary direction for the next eleven years, during which it concentrated solely on showcasing Singapore's social and political history. In 2004, however, the museum was given a new lease on life when it underwent a multi-million-dollar redevelopment that culminated in its unveiling in December 2006 as the National Museum of Singapore.

Fast-forward another nine years to 2015. That year, as part of Singapore's efforts to celebrate fifty years of independence, the museum was given another opportunity to upgrade all of its permanent galleries, and it reopened

with much fanfare in September 2015. It is today promoted and recognized as Singapore's oldest museum with the youngest and most innovative soul, and it aims to be the "people's museum." It does this by using art, technology, and popular culture in innovative and engaging ways to present the complexities of the country's past and the layered, multicultural identity of its people.

It is therefore important to understand the history of the museum and its transformation or evolution over more than a century, to develop a deeper appreciation of the role it plays in Singapore's society today, in which people of all races live in harmony.

The Evolution of the National Museum

Raffles Library and Museum (1887 to Early 1960s)

The museum was called the Raffles Library and Museum from 1887 to the early 1960s, reflecting the vision of Stamford Raffles and his associates in Singapore in the early nineteenth century. They envisaged the museum to be Singapore's premier institution for the collection of the Southeast Asian archipelago's natural and cultural heritage.

At this early stage, the museum's narrative placed Singapore within the context of the Southeast Asian archipelago. This can be seen as a forerunner of later (debatable) attempts to position the museum within the wider world in the twenty-first century. The museum's collection during this formative phase comprised primarily natural history material with some archaeological and ethnological collections, and was shaped from the perspectives of the natural sciences and Victorian-era culture.

Singapore's first museum collection of its kind was thus born, and the notion of a collection became the museum's main legacy for the future. This was complemented by the launch of the *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* in the late nineteenth century, which was based at the museum. The scholarly journal was essentially a compendium of accumulated knowledge of the Malay Peninsula and archipelago, in an approach that might be termed "antiquarian" today.

The 1919 centennial of Singapore's founding marked the first time that a "local history" collection, in the museum's words, came into existence (Moulton 1921, 13). This collection was a symbolic insertion into the museum's narrative to commemorate the momentous event. The collection consisted of commissioned historical portraits of colonial personalities in Singapore society. In hindsight, this event was a prelude to the museum's involvement in Singapore's significant commemorative anniversaries, which became more pronounced from the 1990s onward.

Syonan Museum (1942 to 1945)

During World War II, the Japanese invaded and occupied Singapore, renaming it Syonan-To ("Light of the South" in Japanese). Although the occupation years were a period of destruction, oppression, and widespread suffering, the museum survived the war with very little damage or loss. In fact, it was said to be the "safest place in Malaya," according to Eric Foenander of Perak Forestry Department (quoted in Tan 2010, 110). Not only were the museum's collections secure but they were also maintained and conserved, together with a treasure trove of library collections, records, and archives.

This was made possible through the concerted efforts of prominent Japanese officials and British scientists. Notable among them was E. J. H. Corner,

assistant director of the Botanic Gardens, who approached the Japanese authorities soon after the fall of Singapore with a formal request to “preserve the scientific collections, libraries and matters of historic interest, particularly at the Raffles Museum and the Botanic Gardens” (Liu 1987, 55). Five days after the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese, Corner was appointed secretary to the eminent Japanese professor Hidezo Tanakadate, who had travelled to Singapore with the mission of protecting the museum and its contents. Because of their powerful connections, Tanakadate and Marquis Tokugawa, honorary president of the museums and gardens, were able to prevent looting and a takeover of these institutions by the Military Administration.

Renamed the Syonan Museum, the museum remained open to the public throughout the occupation years and counts the statue of Stamford Raffles among the cultural materials and scientific collections it protected during the war. After the war, the museum reverted to being known as the Raffles Museum.

National Museum (Mid-1960s to Late 1980s)

After 1965, the museum found itself in a transitional state between the end of the colonial era and the beginning of Singapore’s independence. While there were nascent attempts to develop a museum narrative with the help of UNESCO consultants, the museum continued to hold on to collections from the colonial era in what seemed to be an ambivalent situation. Until the early 1970s, the museum remained largely a scientific educational and research institution.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, the museum’s narrative changed when it was renamed the National Museum and repositioned to focus on local history and heritage in relation to nation building. This was in tandem with the rest of

Singapore progressing on a similar trajectory of national development. In this phase, the colonial-era natural history collection began to be seen as a historical anomaly and was given to the National University of Singapore and the Muzium Negara in Kuala Lumpur.

Other components of the museum's colonial-era collection, such as archaeological and ethnological artifacts, were retained. With the incorporation of a national art gallery in 1976, the museum's vision as a public cultural institution began to take shape. Its mission was broadened to include coverage of Singapore and Southeast Asia, as well as Singaporean art. As the museum's focus shifted to local history and heritage, its local history collection grew steadily. With the inclusion of local archaeological artifacts from the first of many excavations undertaken in Singapore, the history of the island was stretched back 700 years to the pre-colonial period of the fourteenth century. The museum's inherited ethnological collection of Southeast Asian material was also enhanced with new acquisitions such as Southeast Asian textiles.

Singapore History Museum (1990s to Early 2000s)

In 1993, the National Museum was incorporated into a newly formed National Heritage Board, which included new museums such as the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) and the Singapore Art Museum. The museum was renamed the Singapore History Museum (SHM), and its narrative became increasingly focused on the presentation of Singapore's history. This resulted in substantial growth of the Singapore history collection, particularly in what was termed "folk-life history" or the history of everyday life. It was perhaps during this phase that the artifacts in the collection began to closely reflect the nature of Singapore's immigrant and community history. The SHM's inherited collections (such as the Southeast Asian collections) came under the purview of the ACM.

At the same time, the SHM's narrative began to provide a historical perspective on the contemporary development of Singapore's economic ties to neighboring Johor and Riau in the Growth Triangle, as well as to China, as it began to welcome foreign investment and development. Together with its foreign counterparts from these countries, the SHM organized special exhibitions on their underlying historical links.

During this period, the SHM also held special exhibitions to commemorate the anniversaries of defining historical events in Singapore. More importantly, the highly successful Singapore Story exhibition, shown at Suntec City shopping center in the 1990s, was adapted and screened at the SHM, prompting the museum's narrative alignment to the Singapore Story. In addition, the SHM also ventured into what could be described as "audience programming" or "unconventional" museum exhibitions by partnering with external parties to hold exhibitions on themes such as virtual reality, McDonald's toy collections, and Channel 8 drama series to attract new types of audiences. While these popular exhibitions contributed to increased visitor numbers, they nevertheless drew mixed responses from some members of the public, as well as some criticism from museum professionals.

National Museum of Singapore (2006 to 2012)

After an extensive renovation project, the museum underwent a dramatic transformation in terms of overall size and capacity, and was relaunched as the National Museum of Singapore in December 2006. Its vision shifted to the goal of becoming a contemporary lifestyle destination, with the inclusion of a fine dining restaurant, café, and visitor hospitality services. In addition to presenting Singapore's history and heritage in the newly created History and Living Galleries, the museum also began to offer a spread of international traveling exhibitions, as well as curated film screenings and programmed

shows. Its mission now focused on collecting artifacts to fill pressing gaps in the themes featured in the Living Galleries (fashion, food, photography, film, and wayang), as well as presenting films and educational programs. The museum's Singapore fashion and food collections were thus formed and began to grow, as its photography collection was expanded through acquisitions of art photography and historical photography.

During this phase, the museum's narrative shifted fundamentally to move beyond Singapore's history as its core to one in which world history became the broader narrative context. This shift was made to propel the museum to the ranks of prominent museums in the Western world by hosting traveling exhibitions that drew largely on their collections, such as Greek masterpieces from the Louvre in Paris.

While this generated interest and appeal at one end of the museum's visitor spectrum, it also elicited questions about the relevance of such exhibitions. This issue was not resolved, and after the shift in Singapore's political-social landscape following the 2011 general elections, it was subsumed in a developing "Singapore 50 narrative," a collaboration between state and citizenry to foster a national narrative of the half-century following Singapore's independence.



image 2 Singapore History Gallery, 2015 © National Museum of Singapore

National Museum of Singapore (2013 to 2015)

This period marks another phase of the museum's transformation, in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of Singapore's independence in 2015. As the nation approached this historical milestone, the emergence of an increasingly vocal citizenry prompted a process of self-examination and introspection to consider the Singaporean identity and what it means to be Singaporean.

The museum responded by expanding its scope to engage Singaporeans at all levels, opening its doors to new ideas and partnerships that added value to its purpose and mission. There was a greater focus on audience development to cultivate a local museum-going culture through the creation of content that is both accessible and relevant; yet, the museum retains strong core programming and focus to sustain the interest of the museum's traditional partners and supporters. A more pronounced emphasis on local content connects the museum with the national narrative, providing the opportunity for a louder Singaporean voice to emerge. A revamping of the museum's permanent galleries was timed to coincide with the nation's jubilee celebrations in 2015 and aimed to guide the national dialogue on identity and nationhood by reexamining the Singapore narrative and bringing it up to date to the early 2000s.

Language Policies

In essence, the museum did not have a language policy in place until November 2013. Prior to that, it was up to the museum directors to decide how and in which languages the exhibitions and programs would be delivered and presented to its audience. Since its inception, the National Museum's primary language of choice has always been English, except for during the World War

II-era occupation from 1942 to 1945, when Japanese was the only language option. Although the National Heritage Board initiated an official language policy for all institutions under its care in 2013, the National Museum's first major redevelopment (completed in 2006) can be said to have started this process itself.

In 2006, the museum's permanent galleries were divided into the main History Gallery and the Singapore Living Galleries, which comprised four thematic galleries concentrating on food, film and Chinese street opera, photography, and fashion. Although the Singapore Living Galleries employed innovative ways of using multimedia technology to enhance interactivity for visitors, it is the History Gallery that is of particular interest for this paper. The History Gallery was conceptualized, designed, and developed without any standard text panels or captions. Instead, each visitor was given a handheld audio-visual device specially designed for the gallery. This device was called the "Companion" because it accompanies visitors on their journey through seven hundred years of Singaporean history, covering a massive 2,800 square meters of exhibition space. The Companion has been aptly described as "an electronic docent with the appearance of an overgrown iPod and the capacity to provide information in a multi-sensory manner to appeal to all ages" (Remer 2007, 91). It boasts eight hours of multimedia content, ranging from archival video footage and audio clips to narrated stories, interviews with curators, historians, and regular Singaporeans, as well as, of course, text and captions. The content is also available in four languages: English, Chinese, Malay, and Japanese, making it more accessible to a wider museum audience.

However, the impetus to make the content available in these languages did not stem from the museum's desire to cater to local audiences or showcase Singapore's recognized national languages of English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. Instead, as discussed above, this period of development saw a shift toward propelling the museum to the ranks of prominent museums in the Western world. As such, attracting and engaging tourists was a major consid-



image 3 Voices of Singapore Gallery, 2015 © National Museum of Singapore

eration – in fact, the translation costs were provided by the Singapore Tourism Board. The language selection was hence based on the fact that Singapore welcomes a large number of Chinese, Indonesian, and Japanese tourists annually. Following feedback from the Indian community in Singapore, the museum also sought to be more inclusive by providing some Tamil content in its galleries.

In 2013, a circular was sent to all divisions and institutions under the National Heritage Board (NHB), clearly stating the policy guidelines on the usage of Singapore's four official languages (National Heritage Board 2014). This document takes into consideration current practices as well as issues and challenges that exist in our multicultural environment, specifically those surrounding translations and the use of language.

The guidelines state that:

1. English is the primary language for public communications across NHB. Mother Tongue Languages are used when reaching out to ethnic groups and/or non-English-speaking segments of society, in particular initiatives that are community-centric and/or with a long-term horizon or permanence, e.g. permanent galleries.

2. When using Mother Tongue Languages in addition to English, to use all the other three official languages.
3. Discretion may be exercised for initiatives which are not of National Significance or when situations are not practical, e.g. content captions for museum galleries have limited space. Divisions should strive to use all four languages where and when possible.
4. Museums are to use both English and the three Mother Tongue Languages for their permanent galleries and banner/marquee events. This will encompass the following media:
 - Signage (with the exception of directional signs)
 - Exhibition Guides
 - Audio Guides
 - Marketing collaterals (those with a shelf life beyond 3 months)
5. Wall text in the exhibition galleries will be in English only.
6. The above guidelines (point 5 and 6) will also apply for special and travelling exhibitions of national significance. These exhibitions will be identified during the exhibition planning meeting at programme cluster level.
7. Translations to Mother Tongue Languages will capture the essence and gist of the English version. It need not be a word-for-word translation.
8. The NHB website should include some resources in Mother Tongue languages. Divisions with resources in Mother Tongue Languages should send the information to [the marketing and communications department] whenever it is available.
9. A panel of translators/translation organisations will be formally appointed (period contract) across NHB and all divisions will tap into this resource. This panel should be able to handle translations of a general nature. It is unlikely to cover special exhibitions by the Museums which require specialised expertise and domain knowledge. (National Heritage Board 2014)

Conclusion

The National Museum's narratives, acquisitions, and collections have shaped each other in a continuing journey that began over a century ago with an ambitious vision of the museum and its museological "hinterland." In its earliest phase, this hinterland comprised the Malay Peninsula and the South-east Asian archipelago, then focused on Singapore before shifting again to the region, then to the world at large, and now back to Singapore.

In a broader context, the museum's narratives and collections throughout these shifts tried to address the fundamental issue of what constitutes a "Singapore narrative and collection," whether seen from within Singapore, the region, or from elsewhere. At this stage, the museum will have to chart a course within these parameters and exercise a public history that engages its visitors with its narrative and collections. While museums continue to occupy the time-honored role of collecting, preserving, and conducting research in order to provide "great content," they must also be outward looking, engage with the wider society, and attract a wider audience base. With this in mind, the effort to present the museum's exhibitions and programs in the four national languages is essential not only to reach out to more people but also to assert the importance of maintaining our diversity while developing a national identity and establishing what it means to be Singaporean.

Today's visitors are also more vocal and demanding than ever. Beyond visiting an exhibition for educational purposes, they are often seeking opportunities for social bonding and view the museum as a leisure destination where they can be entertained. However, to achieve this, it is necessary for museums to be more democratic and less autocratic when fulfilling their role in society. It has also been suggested, and I agree, that museums should see themselves as facilitators of learning rather than authoritarian educators.

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Aisha Deemas

In Between the Lines

This chapter intends to present a case study from Sharjah Museums to contribute to the discourse surrounding intercultural communication in the context of museums. I will begin by introducing the organization, Sharjah Museums Authority, through its local context and ongoing outreach and education programs. Next, I will explain the importance of intercultural communication and translation within this context. Finally, I will share some examples from the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization to reiterate the central point – namely, the need to develop a culturally appropriate language to foster a culturally appropriate museology.

The Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA) is an independent government entity established in 2006 by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Sharjah. It aims to “deliver the highest museum standards to preserve collections & enhance an appreciation of culture and learning through our exhibitions, educational and community programs” (SMA 2016). SMA currently manages sixteen museums across the emirate of Sharjah. These are dedicated to archaeology, aspects of social, maritime, and transport history, local heritage, the arts, and Islamic civilization. SMA maintains and further develops its museums with the vision “to be a cultural beacon that enhanc-

es Sharjah's identity locally and internationally and contribute in nurturing a community aware of museums' importance as a cultural, educational and enjoyable destination" (SMA 2016).

It is worth noting that the museum scene in Sharjah has grown organically from within the community and evolved gradually over the past twenty-five years. The first museum, Sharjah Archeology Museum, opened its doors to the public in 1993. Other museums followed steadily to create the family of sixteen museums now operating within the emirate. This organic development means that the local context of the emirate and the country has had a direct influence on shaping the museums and the work they do. To understand this better, we need to take a look at the demographics of the UAE population. The UAE population consists of a majority of expatriates representing more than two hundred different nationalities, with local citizens making up less than 20 percent of the total population. According to an article in *Gulf News*, the top five languages used in the Emirates are English, Arabic, Urdu, Malay, and Hindi (Constantine and Al Lawati 2007). These two facts are a good indication of the audiences that the museums mainly serve. In addition, the UAE receives an increasing number of tourists annually. An announcement from the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority indicates that Sharjah is shifting its focus to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), India, and China to compensate for a decline in the number of Russian tourists, who made up the largest tourist group to the emirate before Russia's economic and political unrest in 2015 (Algethami 2015). As a result, the museums are looking at a very diverse audience that, given the vision of Sharjah's ruler, SMA aims to engage equally through all of its exhibitions and programs.

Within this context, the issue of intercultural translation is a very important element to keep in mind when thinking about how to appropriately address the cultural array of local and regional visitors, as well as international tourists. After all, language is not merely a means of communication but a reflection of peoples' culture; in the context of a museum, an understanding of

these living cultures should be reflected in our linguistic and general sensitivity towards the respective cultural differences. As Fatima Badri, linguistics professor at the American University of Sharjah, puts it: “our languages are part of our heritage and civilization” (quoted in Constantine and Al Lawati 2007).

The issue of translation is particularly important in this context. Given the demographics of the UAE’s population and visitors, all of Sharjah’s museums – and the projects, programs, and exhibitions they present – aim to open channels for intercultural, interfaith, and intergenerational dialogue. In order to do this effectively through translation, we need to be conscious that “dialogue” extends well beyond the spoken or written word. In fact, “language reflects the interests, ideas, customs and all the cultural aspects of a community” (Bahameed 2008). Consequently, when we represent a certain culture or interact with it in any way through the medium of language, we need to take all of these aspects into consideration. Furthermore, in order to communicate them effectively, we need to appropriately decode the language of the receiver of the information in both its cultural and its linguistic sense.

Let us then consider the museum as a storyteller and communicator. For the process of storytelling to be successful, both the narrator and the listener have to be effectively engaged. That is, we need to take into consideration who is telling the story and to whom the story is being told. As Steinbeck (2003 [1952], 208) wrote in his novel *East of Eden*, “If a story is not about the hearer he will not listen and here I make a rule: a great and interesting story is about everyone or it will not last.” In order to properly convey the message that a museum wants to tell about the local culture, its staff needs to understand where its visitors are coming from. For us here at Sharjah Museums, when we talk about narrator and listener, the narrator can be anyone from the curator who creates the story to the museum guide who guides the visitor through the exhibition. It can also be an education specialist or the marketing person. In fact, in our case, the narrator typically is not simply an individual but rather a group of people. How they communicate with each other, as well

as how they communicate with their listener (in this case the visitor), will affect how the story is eventually told and received. Meanwhile, the listener, or visitor, typically is also part of a group of people and not just one person. This group may be local, consist of expat residents, or be made up of foreign tourists. All groups may also be intergenerational or age-specific: for example, school children, retirees, or a group of disabled teenagers. In order to demonstrate how we try to apply appropriate language when communicating with our visitors, the next section will highlight some examples from the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization.

The Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization opened its doors to visitors in 2008. It is located in the magnificent traditional building of the Souq Al Majarrah in the heart of Sharjah. The museum's collection is arranged across six galleries by theme: the Abu Bakr Gallery of Islamic Faith, the Ibn Al Haitham Gallery of Science and Technology, and four Islamic Art Galleries.

One of the important permanent educational resources that the museum has provided for these galleries is a large-scale graphic timeline in the Ibn Al Haitham Gallery for Science and Technology. The aim of the timeline is to show the evolution and achievements of Islamic sciences from the birth of Islam to the sixteenth century, emphasizing that through the so-called Dark Ages of Europe, the Islamic world experienced a long period of great enlightenment and prolific scientific and technological innovation. The brief for the timeline stressed that it should highlight both scientific and historical key events and personalities from the Islamic world, and that these facts should be contextualized by others drawn from the rest of the contemporary world. Based on these directives, the timeline project seemed rather straightforward. However, in reality there were many challenging translation questions that had to be addressed throughout the process of its creation. The first issue was the title of the timeline itself: Was it to be a timeline of the Islamic Empire or the Islamic world? Indeed, are they the same thing? Which expression should we use? The distinction in English may not be very significant,

but when the two terms are translated into Arabic, they do indeed become different terms with very different political and cultural implications. For example, while in English “the Islamic Empire” is used conventionally, in Arabic it cannot be translated as *al Imbaratoriya al Islamiyya* because Islam never had an emperor. If, however, we translate the term as *al Dawla al Islamiyya*, it would have to be rendered as “the Islamic State” in English, which, in turn, would be inaccurate and misleading linguistically. Choosing to use one term over the other brings with it the connotations linked to that term and influences how one chooses to tell a story or represent a particular history. In the end, the museum decided to use “Islamic world,” for that phrase translates more accurately and appropriately into Arabic: “*al Alam al Islami*.”

Another question that arose during the same project was how to identify the key events that would be represented on the timeline. Would they be selected based on their significance from a local or an international perspective? And how would a final decision be made in cases where the two perspectives differed? One event debated largely was the birth of the great Muslim scientist Al Razi. He was a famous and important scientist and doctor with numerous scientific achievements, among them the invention of soap. Some considered this interesting for the general visitor, while others found it limiting and demeaning to his many superior achievements. The question was which of the following two descriptions best represented him for the timeline:

1. In the year 865 Al Razi is born in Ray, Iran. He later writes a recipe for soap.
2. Al Razi, one of the greatest Islamic scientists and doctors, is born in Ray, Iran.

The second phrase was eventually agreed upon to reflect local Arab-Islamic attitudes toward Islamic history. Another similar discussion took place concerning the events of the year 1085, in which Toledo became a center for

the translation of Arabic scientific texts into Latin, and the Crusades began. Which detail is more important to put on the timeline, or should we include both? Since they are both highly significant historical events, eventually they both made their way onto the timeline.

One might question the relevance of these discussions for the topic of translation and the use of appropriate language. However, language reflects culture and beliefs, and thus the words one uses to tell a story mirror the narrator's standpoint. In the context of museums, we do not want to alienate anyone on the basis of his or her religious or cultural background; therefore these discussions are crucial. They become even more necessary when the topic at hand is religion and faith. The examples that follow here concern discussions surrounding the interpretation in the museum's Abu Bakr Gallery of Islamic Faith, in particular the Hajj (or pilgrimage) display.

When we address a topic as sensitive as faith or religion within a museum, we ought to be aware of two main issues. The first is that different people view religion and faith in different lights. In a museum gallery that presents the core principles of the Muslim faith, it is possible that visitors will expect to see different things. The second issue is that within the context of the museum, we do not wish to isolate any particular audience, and as it is impossible to present all possible views on the topic, we attempted to present our interpretation in a neutral way. The Hajj display outlines the rituals followed during this annual pilgrimage. It explains, in a simplified manner, the journey and all of the stages involved. In real life, Hajj is a ritual that Muslims are very emotional about, for all physically and financially able individuals are obliged to complete it once in their lifetime. Many have performed this trip one or more times, while others have not yet had the opportunity due to a range of obstacles. Non-Muslims are also generally interested and curious to learn about Hajj and have many questions about the rituals and the reasons behind them. Crucially, however, Muslims from across the world do not perform Hajj rituals in exactly the same manner due to culturally shaped religious tradi-

tions and conventions. There are also different sects within Islam that have different ways of performing the rituals. In essence, this reflects the diversity of the Muslim peoples. Nonetheless, we are not a museum that represents a specific religious sect, nor are we in a position to favor one over the other. Our aim is merely to provide our visitors, both Muslim and non-Muslim, with an introduction to material and intangible stories from the heart of Islamic civilization. We carry a universal message and aim to open channels of dialogue among all of our visitors.

So how do we tell the story of Hajj appropriately? It has been a challenge, and we cannot say that we have answered the question yet. However, our approach was to develop a storyline that only covers the basics constituting a common doctrine. Differences between sects or those based on culture have been left out, not as an act of censorship but rather for practical reasons. We had to maintain focus on our goal throughout. This, then, determined how much information to include. Questions we asked ourselves repeatedly included whether we wanted to represent a particular sect or whether we wanted to present the Hajj trip in general, regardless of the specifics. What kind of meanings were we setting out to explore? In short, how could we “translate” (culturally and religiously) the topic in a way that would be suitable to the majority of our visitors? And then, how should we best translate everything linguistically, too? The most crucial question was which language to begin with when writing the interpretation for the gallery, as our gallery texts are generally conceived in English and then translated into Arabic. This issue was particularly sensitive when it came to translating spiritual texts or religious terminology. The cultural and religious contexts and sensitivities of a community are extremely important in determining the language used for interpretative museum texts. For example, when one writes a text in English that includes phrases such as “in Islam” or “according to Muslim belief,” it seems as though the narrator is essentially talking to non-Muslims or to people who are not familiar with Islamic faith or tradition. This poses a problem, as most of our daily local and regional visitors are Muslims. For the

same reason, a direct Arabic translation would not work in our context either, since our local Arabic-speaking audiences are already familiar with the topic and the expressions would appear peculiar and alienating. But then again, to what extent can we always assume that this is the case? Ultimately, in this example we eventually implemented a combination of approaches. The majority of the texts were written separately in both languages and cross-checked for accuracy and consistency.

These examples do not attempt to provide a perfect answer to questions posed within this context. They only aim to illustrate how such decision processes, linked to issues of translation and the use of appropriate language in the context of museums, call for the development of a culturally appropriate language to foster a culturally appropriate museology.

In conclusion, museums can contribute significantly to the discourse surrounding intercultural communication through their exhibitions and programs. Sharjah's museums – and the projects, programs, and exhibitions presented within them – aim to open up channels of intercultural, interfaith, and intergenerational dialogue. In this particular context, “dialogue” clearly goes beyond the spoken or written word. The local setup of the emirate and the country has a direct influence on shaping the museums and the work they do. Within this context, the issue of intercultural translation is an important element to consider in appropriately addressing the cultural array of local and regional visitors as well as international tourists. As more than just a means of communication, language reflects peoples' cultures and conveys their identities. In the museum context, understanding these living cultures should be reflected in our linguistic and general sensitivity toward cultural differences.

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John-Paul Sumner

Challenges and Opportunities

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow: Its History, Collections, and Public Programs

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, Scotland, originally opened in 1902 and is the United Kingdom's most visited museum outside London. It welcomes approximately one million visitors per year, the majority of whom live within fifty miles of the museum. The museum displays more than 8,000 objects, related to art, science, history, and natural history. Entrance is free. Kelvingrove is part of Glasgow Museums and is managed by Glasgow Life. The museum service is paid for by Glasgow City Council through local taxes.

The collections on display in Kelvingrove include Italian and Dutch Old Master paintings, among them works by Rembrandt, Titian, and Botticelli; French Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings, with masterpieces by van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, and Matisse; late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Scottish art; the natural history of Scotland and the world, from

prehistoric fossils to birds in local gardens, to kangaroos and elephants; and art and artifacts from dozens of cultures all over the world.

Glasgow has a long history of intercultural dialogue. Mass migration in the early part of the nineteenth century saw people from a diverse range of backgrounds entering the British Isles, including people from India, Yemen, Malaya, and various other areas of the colonized British Empire. This migration was largely labor-driven, with migrants taking up employment in a number of trades and manual sectors. Many migrants also came to Britain as students, professionals, merchants, and servants. From the eighteenth century onward, Scotland received a large number of students from the Indian subcontinent, who traveled as a result of widespread interest in Western education among affluent families in South Asia. Muslim organizations began to grow, with the introduction of Jamiat Ittehad-ul-Muslimin, also known as the Muslim Mission, in Glasgow in 1940. The first mosque was established soon after. Today, South Asians from mainly India and Pakistan comprise the largest Muslim community in Scotland with about 32,000 members living in Glasgow (Kidd and Jamieson 2011, 8–9).

Glasgow has a long history of migration, and the city's founder, Saint Kentigern, was reputedly a refugee. As the city has grown, people have moved to Glasgow looking for work, refuge, and a better life. Many settled in the city, bringing and maintaining their own cultural identity while influencing those around them. The Glasgow Museum's collection reflects the city's migrant communities and community identities, with particular strengths in Glasgow's Gaelic, Jewish, Irish, Italian, Chinese, and South Asian communities.

From the South Asian communities, the museum collects costume, ephemera, and faith-related items such as a banner made by the Glasgow Sikh community to commemorate Vaisakhi 300. There is also a small collection of leaflets and other ephemera documenting immigrant communities' involvement in local and national politics. Glasgow has the country's larg-

est and most diverse refugee population. Recent acquisitions include Amrit Singh's 2002 watercolor "Mr Singh's India," depicting British Sikh life in Glasgow. Some items, such as a printed color poster of Ras-lila, Krishna, and Radha bought in Glasgow, are evidence of how communities keep cultural heritage alive. Rare items include the late-nineteenth-century "Lascars Only" cast-iron plaque in Bengali and English from an entrance to a toilet at Stobcross Quay designed for Lascar seamen (Hayes 2008, 2).

To meet the needs of our visitors, Glasgow Museums has a policy to make the museums as *inclusive, accessible, and engaging* as possible. The Museums' parent company, Glasgow Life, has strategic objectives to "encourage participation, involvement and engagement in culture and sport for all," among other reasons "to enhance the health and wellbeing of people who live, work and visit the City" and to "create a culture of learning and creativity that lets people flourish in their personal, family, community and working lives" (Glasgow Life 2014).

Kelvingrove offers two educational programs: "formal" and "informal." The formal program targets pre-five-year-olds, primary, secondary, further education, and higher education groups. It consists of mostly pre-booked, organized school visits during which students participate in a "hands-on" program of activities (Lane and Wallace 2007). There are over forty workshops for all levels that teachers can select from. Each workshop has a generic template that describes the activities, and each group receives exactly the same workshop and content. Occasionally we modify the content for groups that require additional support for learning or groups with English as a second language. Last year, Kelvingrove attracted more than 800 school visits with over 22,300 visitors attending formal educational events. On some peak days there can be up to 500 schoolchildren in the building. The most popular school visit topic at Kelvingrove is "Dinosaurs and Fossils," followed by "Ancient Egypt" (Glasgow Museums 2016, 8–11).

The informal education program at Kelvingrove runs during weekends and holidays and attracts families from all over Scotland. In 2014 and 2015, 23,260 visitors participated in the informal education program, comprising 360 events. Workshops for the informal learning sessions include family craft activities related to the collections. Families do not need to book, they simply find the activity at the museum and are encouraged to participate. Activities are free and designed to make the museum a friendly place for everyday Glaswegians. Any family and every family is encouraged to participate. Other programs are targeted to specific audiences: for example, “Contact the Elderly,” which supports vulnerable, disenfranchised older people and brings them to the museum.

At Kelvingrove, we run a successful Friday morning session for pre-five-year-old children called “Toddler Time,” during which songs and stories related to the collections are told. Each twenty-minute session can attract thirty to forty young children, plus their carers. One team of learning assistants and learning and access curators schedule and deliver the learning program, and learning assistants deliver the vast majority of the program.

Encounters: Audiences

When asked “Who is your audience?” many curators and impresarios will enthusiastically reply “Everybody! *Everything* is for *everybody*.” At Kelvingrove we have observed that there is a difference between the needs of a five-year-old toddler and a university professor of art history. What satisfies a five-year-old as a quality experience will not necessarily be stimulating for our professor – and vice-versa! We have defined six types of audience that exhibitions are aimed-at: families (intergenerational groups); teenagers; school groups (requiring appropriate interpretation for the curriculum); non-experts (text age ten to twelve, i.e., clear writing); visitors with sensory

impairments; and tourists with English as a second language. Whatever cultural background our visitors come from, they fall into at least one of these groups and will therefore be catered to at Kelvingrove. Each exhibition and program has a single audience, even if that excludes members of an alternative audience. At Kelvingrove not everything is for everyone, but there is something specific for every type of group (O'Neill 2006).

For example, a number of galleries and exhibitions make schoolchildren their target audience. The major proportion of visitors who come to Kelvingrove to study the topic of ancient Egypt are ten-year-old schoolchildren. All the interpretation in the ancient Egypt gallery has been developed with this audience in mind. The object label and graphic panel text is easily readable for a ten-year-old. The stories reflect the interests of young children. Story displays include "Jobs for the Boys and Girls in Ancient Egypt" and "The Process of Mummification," including the humorous warning, "Don't do this at home!" The style of the graphic panels mimics that of a child's comic.

All of the museum's programs are intended to facilitate social inclusion. We assume that within each audience group there will be a mix of cultures but that they all have a shared experience: for example, being four years old or being a teenager. So within our audience groups there is a range of cultures. In this way, everybody within each group receives the same messages and the same experience from the museum. Visitors do not get a different experience depending on their cultural, ethnic, gender, or economic background.

Culturally significant parts of the collection are presented and displayed according to this general scheme, so a culturally significant object is presented with a generic audience in mind. A culturally significant object would not normally be displayed for a specific, culturally relevant audience. And, with some exceptions, the same policy generally applies to the education program of events and activities.



Young people participating in the award-winning “TCoNE” program at Kelvingrove, which communicates using values important to the visitor. © CSC CIC Glasgow Museums Collection

This reflects the egalitarian traditions and principles of the city, whereby everybody (within a group of people) is treated equally. In Glasgow, our social inclusion ideas are embedded into our identity. Glasgow Life plays a key role in making Glasgow a city where all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, social background, marital status, gender, disability, age, or sexuality, are treated with respect, have full access to the range of services provided by Glasgow Life, and are able to have a quality of life that affords them independence and freedom from discrimination and harassment (Glasgow Life, Policy and Research 2012, 1).

Approaches

A museum institution can select its audiences by generic type, for example pre-five children at the exclusion of ten-year-olds or eighty-year-olds, and one expects that pre-five children from a culturally diverse spectrum of children will participate. This is considered a culturally neutral approach. Alternatively, the museum can develop programs for specific cultural groups, taking a culturally focused approach.

A Culturally Neutral Approach

This chapter has described how Kelvingrove offers a Friday morning program for pre-five-year-old children. Kelvingrove is located in the Hillhead and Woodside neighborhood, an area with one of Glasgow's highest proportions of culturally diverse children in its primary schools, with 65 percent of children in the neighborhood coming from culturally diverse backgrounds (Glasgow Centre for Population Health 2016). However, typically the majority of education program users still come from a white, middle class background. So perhaps a neutral approach to culturally diverse audiences is not as powerful as we might hope.

It is no doubt true that "visitors [are] motivated to visit a particular museum or exhibition because it speaks to their sense of heritage and/or ... personhood" (Falk and Dierking 2011, 62). On any particular day a person has their own identity, regardless of their cultural background. On any one day a person may be a mother, or a worker, or a tourist, and so it is to those groups that a "culturally blind" program would be catered.

A Culturally Focused Approach

Museums create specific engagement for specific cultural audiences. Once a museum has attracted this audience and demonstrated itself to be an interesting and friendly place, the ambition is that these audiences will be more likely to return to the museum on their own terms and use it as a resource. The key point is that prior to developing a program, a working knowledge of one's audience is required. The museum must develop an understanding of its audience's needs before it can develop a program of events or exhibitions for that audience. From 2013 to 2015, the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum in Berlin, a community museum, offered an Iftar dinner in cooperation with another institution, the Museum of Islamic Art, which introduced its work during the Iftar event. The concept worked very well, with an annual attendance of more than 500 visitors.

Communication

The first question for a museum regarding intercultural communication is, "Does the museum have a desire to communicate to people of diverse cultures?" I remember a conversation with the director of a children's museum, in which I asked if they ran a program for teenagers.

The director replied, "No."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because teenagers don't visit our museum."

So it is clear that there is a chicken-and-egg situation. Certain groups may not participate in a museum precisely because the museum does not offer them a valuable or meaningful experience. As Said Faiq, professor of translation and intercultural studies at the American University of Sharjah, observed during the conference: "Information is useless in its own right, unless it is used as a tool to create knowledge."

Religious intolerance has received much media coverage in recent years, largely due to the rise in Islamophobia (unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of Muslims). Religious intolerance can take different forms, including intolerance by members within one denomination of a faith toward members of another denomination within the same faith (sectarianism). The issue of sectarianism is closely associated with Glasgow, where it is often seen as a specific reference to conflict between Christian Protestants and Catholics. Sectarianism can occur in different ways, either at an individual, group, cultural, or institutional level, and in Glasgow it is commonly linked to football and the rivalry between supporters of Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs. However, it should be understood that sectarianism occurs within other faiths as well. The Scottish government has suggested that the inextricable link between race, ethnicity, and religion in a number of Glasgow's faith communities means that, to be effective, measures to tackle racism and intolerance, as well as measures to promote diversity, must take religion into account (Glasgow Life, Policy and Research 2012, 22–23).

The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom has published guidance for building good relations with people of different faiths. It recommends respecting other people's freedom within the law to express beliefs and convictions, learning to understand the beliefs of different faith communities, and respecting the convictions of others (particularly regarding convictions about food, dress, and social etiquette). By following these guidelines, organizations can avoid causing needless offence to faith communities (Inter Faith Network for the UK 2005, 92–93).

Of course, Kelvingrove and Glasgow Museums are not completely culturally blind. We do contribute to programs that aim to welcome specific cultural groups, for example Black History Month, the Glasgow Mela, and Moving Minds (fashion, film, music, and drama, part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival, where people and organizations share their experiences of asylum, displacement, and wellbeing). However, our observation is

that there is a degree of segmentation within these audiences. If we curate a program for Black History Month, mostly people involved in Black history issues participate. It is self-selecting and segmented. It would be great if these activities were egalitarian and everybody participated with no cultural boundaries. But in reality, perhaps with the exception of the Mela, culturally focused programs tend to attract only members of the culture to which they are focused.

So we have a dilemma. Culturally neutral programs tend to attract a disproportionate number of middle-class, white Scottish residents. And culturally focused activities attract an exclusive segment of the population. In both cases, there is little intercultural dialogue.

Angelita Teo, director of the National Museum of Singapore, described a similar approach to Kelvingrove during the conference. Like Kelvingrove, her museum's objective is to engage more deeply with the collection and to communicate with visitors using issues that are relevant, appropriate, and interesting to those visitors. The philosophy is that the museum should be life-enhancing and life-sustaining, "a house of wonder." Heba Neyal Barakat, visiting professor at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, mentioned that in her experience, visitors find it easiest to communicate about how they *feel* rather than recall a factual response. Ciraj Rassool developed this idea, depicting the museum as a "process of expertise." There is no one view that is the sole museum voice.

Suggested approaches:

1. A clear and unambiguous idea of whom the museum would like to communicate to, and what objective the museum would like to achieve. One method to accomplish this would be to use an interpretation plan.

2. A spectrum of contributors participating in the development of the museum, exhibition, or program. One method to achieve this would be to measure the levels of participation by the museum's audiences.

Interpretation Plans

The traditional goal of interpretation can be summarized as aiming to improve and enrich the visitor experience by helping visitors understand the significance of the place they are visiting, and connecting those meanings to visitors' own personal lives (Heritage Lottery Fund 2013).

Interpretive planning is the process of developing a structured approach to interpreting these stories, messages, and pieces of information. The interpretative plan establishes these specific goals for a project and builds a structured vision of how to achieve them by communicating to an audience through appropriate and meaningful experiences. It combines developing, organizing, and analyzing content into relevant and engaging messages with creating exciting ways for visitors to experience this content. An interpretive plan establishes the communication process through which meanings and relationships are revealed to a visitor. In writing an interpretation plan we try to accommodate the question, "*Who* is doing the interpretation, and for *whom*?"

Participation

While engagement with visitors has been a step change forward over the past twenty years, the next major shift seems to be that of participation. Nina

Simon's book, *The Participatory Museum* has inspired our work at Kelvingrove. Simon defines participation as:

inviting people to actively engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers. As more people enjoy and become accustomed to participatory learning and entertainment experiences, they want to do more than just "attend" cultural events and institutions. The social Web has ushered in a dizzying set of tools and design patterns that make participation more accessible than ever. Visitors expect access to a broad spectrum of information sources and cultural perspectives. They expect the ability to respond and be taken seriously. They expect the ability to discuss, share, and remix what they consume. When people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life. ... Community engagement is especially relevant in a world of increasing participatory opportunities on the social Web. (Simon 2010, preface)

For a recent project with young people at Kelvingrove, we used the principal of participation to meet our users' needs. The objective was to develop an experience and interpretation tailored to the needs and preferences of a specific audience. How did we do this? We invited a group that was representative of the particular audience and asked them about their preferences, then we incorporated these preferences into the service we provide. Our audience for this service was young people aged eight to fourteen.

The Kelvingrove idea was that we would create a digital tour by young people, for young people. Young people went into the galleries and selected objects or paintings that had meaning for them or that they liked. The content – that is, interpretation – was written by the young people, and the tours were published as part of a treasure hunt tour for other young people. The app was downloaded about five hundred times in the following year.

The Need to Develop a Culturally Appropriate Language to Foster a Culturally Appropriate Museology

Clearly it is absolutely imperative that museums not reflect prejudice or discrimination. However, most of us – including a conscientious learning and access curator like me – remain unconscious of our own prejudices, assumptions, and snobberies. The greater the variety of voices heard in and echoed by the museum, the greater the chance of fostering a language of culturally appropriate museology. Perhaps the role of the curator is evolving from being the “voice” of the museum to being the facilitator and guide to many, many voices of the museum. Perhaps, in the future, visitors will co-curate the museum in their language, in their style, and in their voice.

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Kara McKeown and Sabrina DeTurk

Encounters with Interactive Technologies in UAE Museums

Introduction

For the past several decades, audio guides, frequently referred to as handheld guides, have become expected aids to the museum visitor's enjoyment and understanding of the museum experience. At one time such devices were available only in major institutions, but now even smaller, less visited museums and historic sites regularly offer a handheld audio experience for their visitors. The approach to the development of audio guides and their content has altered substantially as our understanding of the museum visitor's experience has changed. Advances in technology have enabled a range of technical possibilities that may enhance the visitor's experience by, for example, allowing the visitor to customize their tour, providing multiple versions of a tour on one device, and linking tour content to interactive features via a visitor's mobile phone. The potential for an audio guide to be much more than a "talking label" is infinite, and mobile phone technologies and apps provide a unique opportunity for museums to engage new audiences. Often these guides can be downloaded and reviewed even before the visitor physically encounters the museum.

Although some museums in the United Arab Emirates employ audio guides as part of their visitor engagement strategy, many have yet to fully exploit this opportunity. Moreover, UAE museums in general have yet to develop the kind of interactive technologies that can be integrated with visitors' own handheld digital devices, such as smartphones. These technologies can prepare the visitor for their museum experience, enhance that experience while at the museum, and encourage ongoing exploration of the objects and themes encountered after the visit is completed. This essay provides a brief overview of trends in the use of handheld audio and digital technology in museums internationally, surveys the current state of such technology in major UAE museums and historical sites, and offers some thoughts on how such technology might be further developed and deployed by these and other institutions in the future.

Literature Review

While few in the museum community would disagree that new technologies are impacting the ways in which museums present objects, provide information, and engage with visitors, there may be debate over the extent to which such technologies are forcing change and how quickly that change needs to happen. For some, participatory media (e.g., interactive audio guides and iPad apps) and Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., customizable online collections) are seen as add-ons to the core curatorial and display functions of the museum. For others, employing and adapting such technologies to serve a museum's education and attendance goals is an immediate imperative. Kjetil Sandvik (2011, 186) describes the stakes for museums in stark terms: "museums are challenged to shift from static standards to open and dynamic solutions in order to maintain or reclaim their status as agenda setting and culturally significant institutions." To face this challenge, museums have har-

nessed new technologies, including audio guides in both traditional and enhanced formats, in a variety of ways.

The primary purpose of audio guides and other mobile technologies in the museum is educational; these devices are traditionally intended to guide the visitor through a permanent collection, special exhibit, or cultural heritage site while providing expert information on the objects, architecture, or material culture on display. Jørgen Riber Christensen approaches the question of meaning-making in the museum context through a historical lens. Looking at the development of interpretive technologies in museums from the eighteenth century to today, he concludes that as these technologies have evolved, “the signification generating process has moved away from the historical context of the object and towards the contemporary world of the visitor” (Christensen 2011, 8). According to the author, this can be a destabilizing shift; however, he views the audio guide as an acceptable means of engaging the viewer, as the voice-over offers expert and trusted supplementary information about the object while still permitting the viewer to connect with the object on its (and their) own terms.

Fiona Cameron offers insight into the ways in which digital technologies are reshaping visitor interaction with museums. She states, “Changes are occurring in the way information is organized, in the construction of knowledge environments, and in the relationship between museums and users” (Cameron 2003, 327). New technologies mediate the user/visitor experience in ways that are shaped by both the developer(s) of those technologies and, ideally, by the individual’s own interests and preferences. Cameron acknowledges, however, that the imperative of the curator’s voice is hard to dislodge in the construction of any narrative around museum collections and that, particularly from a curator’s own perspective, there is a desire to “ensure that the museum’s voice retains authority in advancing acceptable collection interpretations” (2003, 332). This curatorial desire creates a tension with the acknowledged value of a more constructivist approach to the visitor’s expe-

rience with museum objects, a tension that can be seen in the development of audio guides as well as in museum websites.

Cameron's findings regarding young users' experiences of online museum collections may offer useful parallels for the development of audio guides and other technologies to enhance visitor experience of the museum space: "This group was less interested in prescribed material, choosing to drive their own pathways through collections and to explore object-centered narratives with rich streaming media, 3D objects and visual environments" (2003, 335). Such preferences may indicate that the standard approach to the audio tour, which generally relies on a particular path through the collection accompanied by presented knowledge, may be less suitable for younger museum visitors while still providing a positive and useful experience for older visitors. Such information would encourage the development of multiple options for audio tours that allow for both expert-guided and user-defined experiences. This multifaceted approach could incorporate not only different exploration methodologies but perhaps encourage the exploration of different relationships between objects. An older visitor might enjoy, for example, having an object connected to historical and cultural situations or values that they remember from their youth, whereas a younger visitor might appreciate situating an object within a more contemporary and global perspective.

Christensen (2011, 20) raises the possibility of audio guides serving as prompts for viewer interaction with museum objects based on physical presence: "The physical and bodily management of the museum visitor's movements adds a form of signification that has a high potential for participation." In other words, to the extent that audio guides and other mobile technologies can perceive and respond to a visitor's location within the museum, and perhaps even within a specific gallery, the devices can in essence "respond" to the visitor's real-time interests, thus developing a more participatory experience for the visitor. Sebastiano Colazzo, Franca Garzotto and Paolo Paolini (2005) further explore the possibilities and limitations of location-aware mo-

mobile technology use in museums. They note that while such technologies offer a uniquely enhanced user experience of the museum or heritage site, there are technological and semantic issues that must be addressed to ensure their successful use.

Engaging families as a group is an important goal for any museum education program, and the audio guide can play a role in facilitating observation and communication among family members of different ages. Sherry Spires (1989) discusses the production and reception of a family-oriented audio guide at the Tampa Museum of Art. She describes the varied tone and pace of the guide and the way in which the script “spoke” in turns to older and younger family members. To further focus viewer interaction and attention, the audio guide was designed to pause at certain points to create time for unscripted discussion and sustained viewing, as well as an opportunity to engage with family-themed activities in each section of the exhibit. Spires notes the “overwhelmingly positive” response to the guide and explains that the specially designed script encouraged “an exchange of leadership roles [between adult and child] in setting the pace and selecting objects for concentrated viewing” (Spire 1989, 13). Such sharing of the roles of teacher and learner further facilitated and encouraged ongoing conversation about the objects and themes of the exhibits.

Lois Lydens, Yasuji Saito, and Tohru Inoue (2007) acknowledge the challenges as well as opportunities in presenting explanatory content in multiple languages within the museum setting. A personal digital assistant (PDA) guide developed for the National Science Museum of Japan is available in Japanese, English, Korean, and Mandarin. The authors note, however, that the non-Japanese options are condensed versions of the full guide; notably, they lack translations of conversational dialogue about each exhibit, instead relying on an exclusively narrative format. While this approach arguably limits the non-Japanese-speaking visitor’s experience of the exhibits, Lydens, Saito, and Inoue (2007) also explain that the translated audio guides have become an es-

sential tool for non-Japanese speakers, as the text-based content (wall labels, computer kiosks) in the exhibits is presented almost exclusively in Japanese.

Museums in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates was established as a constitutional federation in 1971 and is thus a very young country, still developing its cultural and artistic identity within and beyond the Gulf region. The first museums in the Emirates were developed largely to preserve archaeological finds from the region and to highlight the country's history and heritage (Al Ali 2013, 136). In recent years, an increasing number of museums have emerged in the country focusing on areas as diverse as maritime history, Islamic civilization, and contemporary art. Several of these are still in development, notably the Louvre, Guggenheim, and Zayed National Museum, which are under construction on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi. With the growth of a museum culture in the Emirates has come an increasing interest and investment in museum education as a key component of the museum experience and mission. Educational programs in UAE museums range from family workshops and film series to docent-led tours and, of course, audio guides. The museums in the Emirate of Sharjah have highly developed and comprehensive exhibition and education programs, and this essay will focus on that group of museums.

The Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA) was established in 2006 by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, member of the Supreme Council of the UAE and ruler of Sharjah, as an independent government department. As described on the website of the Sharjah Museums Authority, the vision and mission of the organization is:

To be a cultural beacon that enhances Sharjah's identity locally and internationally and contribute in nurturing a community aware of museums' importance as

a cultural, educational and enjoyable destination. ... [To] deliver the highest museum standards to preserve collections and enhance an appreciation of culture and learning through our exhibitions, educational and community programs. (SMA 2017)

SMA comprises sixteen museums, many of which are located in the Heart of Sharjah, the historic center of the Emirate's main city. Currently audio guides are available at three of these museums: Sharjah Fort (Al Hisn), Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, and Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Every site designs its own audio guide with the resident curator responsible for audio guide development. As such, each of these museums takes a slightly different approach to the guides, depending on the museum focus and anticipated audience.

Sharjah Fort (Al Hisn) reopened in April 2015 after a substantial renovation that included the development of an audio guide for the collection. Currently the guide is available in English and Arabic, and translation into additional languages is planned. The guide does not follow a specific path through the museum; visitors can select objects of interest in any order and use the guide to obtain information. The focus of the guide tends toward the factual rather than the interpretive and reinforces the information provided in the wall labels and other texts. Visitors listen to the content of the audio guide without using headsets, which may sometimes be distracting to other visitors; however, because of the spacious and open nature of the site, this is unlikely to be a significant problem.

Khuloud Al Houli, curator of Sharjah Fort (Al Hisn), observes that since human tour guides are available, many visitors, both local and international, are more likely to choose this option over an audio guide.¹ Since the museum is newly reopened and the audio guides have only been in place since September 2015, no statistics or feedback on the use of the guides are currently

1 Khuloud Al Houli (curator, Sharjah Fort), interview with Kara McKeown, Sharjah, October 29, 2015.

available, although the museum plans to put facilities in place that will provide this information. The text for the audio guide was written by a museum writer familiar with the Emirates in general and Sharjah specifically, drawing on the oral histories that had been gathered from the long-term inhabitants of the area around the fort. The stories were infused into the audio guide and the opportunity was taken to incorporate material that could not otherwise fit into the interpretation boards. The aim was to create a one-hour tour designed in such a way that visitors could walk through it in any order.

Al Houli was able to work on the development of the guides from inception to completion and feels that the end result is very satisfactory. The guides were written in English and Al Houli herself carefully translated the text into Arabic, although she observes that it might have been a better and more authentic process to have written the texts in Arabic and translated that version into English, and then into other languages. Care was taken to ensure that the speaker of the text on the Arabic guide has a discernably local accent. In the future, Al Houli hopes to incorporate more interactive technology into Al Hisn. She feels that the younger generation of museum visitors, both local and international, will respond positively to the availability of more digital options, such as QR codes. For the immediate future, the institution is planning to build an interactive database to capture visitors' stories; Al Houli believes that everyone who visits the museum has a story to tell.

The Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization (SMIC) is a much larger institution than Sharjah Fort and, consequently, the audio guide is longer and more complex. The guide provides a more object-oriented focus than that of Sharjah Fort, and visitors use headphones to hear the narration, perhaps because the quieter space of this museum's galleries would be easily disturbed if all visitors could hear the audio. At the SMIC, audio guides have been in place since 2012. In an interview with the authors,² Ulrike Al-Khamis, stra-

2 Ulrike Al-Khamis (advisor to the Sharjah Museums Authority, formerly Sharjah Museums Department), interview with Kara McKeown, Sharjah, October 29, 2015.

tegitic advisor to the Sharjah Museums Authority, made the following observations on the background and use of audio guides at SMIC. The very first English and Arabic texts used were based on a tour guide training manual developed for the museum, which, in turn, had originally evolved from the initial museum guidebook. According to Al-Khamis:

The first audio guides were developed in a very pragmatic way, intended to provide an added general service to the wide range of visitors, which include Arab and South Asian audiences, coming largely from Sharjah, the UAE and the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council], as well as an increasing contingent of overseas visitors coming mainly from continental Europe as well as South and East Asia. As SMIC gets to know the profiles of both the consistent and newly evolving audiences better, it is adding further key languages: Urdu and Russian versions for audio guides at the SMIC are under way, and a Chinese version is planned for the near future.

While committed to ever improving visitor experience at the Sharjah Museums Authority to match international standards and expectations, the museum staff remains keenly conscious of the need to be flexible in acknowledging and catering to the culturally diverse and specific ways in which its various audiences may choose to engage with what is on offer. With regard to the provision of audio guides in particular, Al-Khamis observes that many Arab and Asian visitors – in contrast to European or “Western” visitors – prefer to experience museums in a collective rather than individual fashion: for example, in intergenerational family groups that learn and gather information by conveying and analyzing orally what they experience, either with each other or with the help of a museum guide. In such a setting, wearing headphones to follow an audio tour may not be appropriate, as it tends to isolate an individual from the rest of the family group in a way that would not be customary and could disrupt the collective experience. Furthermore, Al-Khamis has noted that during collective museum visiting, particularly in an Arab and Asian context, groups such as families tend to intuitively create their own tours, so to speak, reacting to specific objects that attract their attention along the way and then stopping in front of these objects to engage

with them through discussion. Sometimes, the elder members of the group might take the lead in selecting objects, perhaps to explain something to their children or to recall a memory. On other occasions it may be the children who are drawn to a particular piece. Often, Al-Khamis observes that local Emirati museum guides are asked to provide a standard museum tour, but with their extensive experience they are always ready to modify it in order to fall in and engage meaningfully with any visitor-led tour pattern such as the two outlined above.

On the whole, it can be said that while audio guides should certainly be part of a museum's visitor services to provide added value and choice, it appears – based on these observations in the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization – that their successful implementation in a multicultural setting requires in-depth knowledge of the diverse audiences that will visit the museum. These audiences bring culturally specific expectations and preferences that inform their approach to visiting a museum and influence their preferred ways of engaging with what is on offer.

At the Sharjah Archaeology Museum, as at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, the audio guide is directed toward specific objects, and the narrative often highlights the story behind the object while placing it in the broader context of the prehistoric and ancient culture of the United Arab Emirates. The information provided is the most detailed of the three tours and includes both factual and interpretive comments, with sixty audio records in total. However, including this level of detail has resulted in an audio script that likely extends beyond the attention span (or available visiting time) of all but specialist visitors. The audio guide is available in five languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, and Russian. According to Mohamed Yousif Al Zarooni,³ curatorial assistant at the museum, because the docents can offer tours only in Arabic and English, the audio guide provides an important way

3 Mohamed Yousif Al Zarooni (curatorial assistant, Sharjah Archaeology Museum), personal communication, October 27, 2015.

to connect with more visitors in their own languages. Visitor statistics show that the usage of the guides varies by season, with the winter months of January through March seeing the highest use. Throughout the year, the majority of visitors using the guide are international rather than local, perhaps supporting the idea that the guide primarily makes the museum exhibits accessible to visitors who do not speak Arabic or English. Al Zarooni explains that the museum is currently seeking feedback from visitors to use in future development of the audio guide.

In addition to the audio guide, each gallery in the museum features an introductory video in both English and Arabic that serves as a complement to the guide. There are also kiosks in some galleries that were not in operation at the time of the authors' visit. However, it is assumed that these offer another channel through which to provide supplementary information to enhance the visitor experience.

Visitor Experience at the UAE Museums

Although museums in the United Arab Emirates generally present "Visitor Books" that museum visitors are encouraged to sign, there has been a lack of museum visitor evaluation or visitor studies in the Emirates. At a 2006 seminar on museums in the UAE, it was agreed that museum attendance among the local population is low (Al Ali 2013, 140). Al Ali references Abdullah Al Mutairi's list of possible reasons for this limited attendance:

- Families do not take or encourage their children to visit museums, resulting in lack of visitorship when children grow up.
- Emirati families are not aware of the importance of museums as places which collect, preserve, and care for collections.
- Schools do not include museums and heritage sites as components of curricula.

- Staff in museums limit the role of museums to that of displaying objects, rather than having a broader educational outlook.
- There is a lack of targeted marketing, and in some cases museums are uninterested in promoting museums to local people.
- Objects, their interpretation, and display are not appealing or interesting to local visitors. (Al Ali 2013, 140–41)

With the rapid and recent growth of the museum field in the Emirates, the situation today has clearly improved over that of 2006. However, at least some of the challenges identified by Al Mutairi remain. While the development of appealing and engaging audio guides or other digital interpretative aids cannot resolve all of these challenges, the innovative use of such technologies might address some of them. By developing interpretative guides specifically designed for an Emirati audience, museum staff could perhaps play a greater role in educational outreach to the local population.

Although the study of museums and their audiences on the Arabian Peninsula is still in its early stages, Pamela Erskine-Loftus, director of the Media Majlis at Northwestern University in Qatar, has edited a volume that contributes significantly to our understanding of the roles museums play in the culture and community of this region. Erskine-Loftus (2013, 41) suggests that the role of the museum may be similar to that of the *majlis*, which served “historically and culturally as the forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions ... a site of assembly and hospitality seen as a multigenerational area for dialogue and learning.” The physical and conceptual construction of the museum as the type of community space for dialogue seen in the traditional *majlis* is supported by the findings of several contributors to Erskine-Loftus’s collection of essays titled *Reimagining Museums: Practice in the Arabian Peninsula*. In that volume, several authors address the topic of how audiences in the Gulf region interact with, navigate and respond to museums.

John Bull and Shaikha Hamad Al Thani (2013), working through the Qatar Museums Authority, conducted extensive audience research with families to

try to identify and understand “family needs in relation to museums” (339). Among their findings were the discoveries that families are likely to see social interactions as a primary motivating factor behind a museum visit; that local (Qatari and Emirati) families generally do not use maps of the museum, nor do they read interpretative materials (such as wall texts or object labels); and that although extended families often visit museums in large groups, they do not always remain together in the museum space but rather break up into smaller groups, often by age.

In the same volume, Salwa Mikdadi (2013) shares her experience working with non-governmental, non-profit art and culture organizations (NPOs) in the region and some of the ways in which these organizations are working at a grassroots level to create collaborative settings for the experience and appreciation of local arts and culture. Mikdadi (2013, 152) sees NPOs as ideally placed to experiment with innovative approaches to meeting community needs in ways that larger museums may prefer not to undertake. Although Mikdadi does not specifically use Erskine-Loftus’ construct of the museum as *majlis*, it is possible to see how the collaborative and engaged arts spaces fostered by NPOs could fulfill a similar function in their respective communities.

Future Developments

The United Arab Emirates has positioned itself as a country driven by innovation, particularly in the area of technology adoption and integration. Initiatives to improve technology capabilities in government services and education are high priorities in all of the Emirates, with the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai showing particular interest in developing technology capabilities across sectors. Among other key initiatives, in 2012 His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president of the UAE and prime minister and ruler of Dubai, launched the Federal Higher Education Mobile

Learning Initiative, an ambitious plan for the UAE Federal Higher Education institutions, initiated by His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan to support the delivery of course material anytime, anywhere, and to encourage innovative pedagogical practices in the classroom (Higher Colleges of Technology 2012).

A 2015 study conducted by BT-Avaya shows that UAE consumers are among the most tech-savvy in the world, particularly when it comes to the use of social media and communication applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype (Ndichu 2015). Such a high usage of social media technology might suggest that the audio guide of the future for the Emirates should incorporate an interactive platform designed to allow real-time, multiparty communication, perhaps the ability to join a chat with other museumgoers or share on social networks information about what the visitor is viewing.

Given this embrace of new technology and the UAE's status as a global leader in the use of mobile technology and social media, what could be the future of audio guide technology in the country? Audio guides have existed in museums for decades, and while sound quality and ease of playback have improved dramatically in recent years, the technology is fundamentally linked to an older style of interaction between museums and their visitors. Is it perhaps appropriate – and likely – that museums in the Emirates will move very rapidly beyond the development of audio guides into new approaches to visitor engagement through technology.

The museums under development on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi (Louvre Abu Dhabi, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, and Zayed National Museum) are exploring ways in which interactive digital technologies can enhance the visitor experience both before and during the museum visit. Speaking in Abu Dhabi in 2014, Sree Sreenivasan, the first chief digital officer appointed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, urged UAE museums to use tools such as digitization and online display of their collections to cultivate and engage their au-

diences. Quoted in the UAE newspaper *The National*, Sreenivasan explained, “You have to make the virtual museums so enticing that people will want to come to see the physical museums. It’s all about storytelling” (Sahoo 2015). The Louvre Abu Dhabi has already taken steps in this direction with an ambitious project to digitize the museum’s collection of artwork, and the “Explore the Collection” feature on the museum’s website allows visitors to access high-resolution images and expanded descriptions of some key objects in the collection (Louvre Abu Dhabi 2014). It is worth noting, however, that the interface does not currently provide the kind of sophisticated interaction with the objects (multiple views, zoom-in capacity) offered by similar areas of many international museum websites.

In October 2015 a global partnership was announced with the goal to “help preserve the archaeological sites in the [Gulf] region by documenting them using three-dimensional imaging technology to rebuild them through 3D printing technology if they are exposed to any threats” (Dubai Future Foundation 2015). Partners include the Dubai Museum of the Future Foundation with UNESCO and the UK-based Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA), a joint venture between Harvard University and the University of Oxford. In support of this initiative, the Dubai Museum of the Future Foundation “will distribute 5,000 3D cameras to partners and volunteers to photograph the heritage sites in the region” (Emirates News Agency 2015). Will including local residents as active participants in the co-creation of a visual knowledge-base encourage them to visit the Dubai Museum of the Future? Time will tell, but the approach certainly ushers in a new world of possibilities for museum and visitor interaction well beyond the audio guide tradition.

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The SAWA Experience – Appropriate Museum Studies across Continents and Cultures

Introduction

The SAWA Museum Academy is a joint initiative of the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), the Berlin State Museums (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), and the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, together with the University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin. It is aimed at students of museum studies and young museum professionals from the Gulf Region and Germany. The unique program is designed to foster an intercultural learning environment for the participants, offering innovative approaches and methods in culturally appropriate museology.

In 2016, the six-day course took place from September 3 to 8 at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization and comprised three modules, which addressed different thematic fields: Participative Strategies in Collecting and Documenting (lecturers: Danielle Kuijten, Khuloud Al Houli), Curatori-

al Strategies: From Single to Shared Authorship (lecturers: Nadja Tomoum, Alya Al Mulla), and Developing an Interpretational Plan (lecturers: John-Paul Sumner, Ayla Burhaima). The group was comprised of six German students from the master's program Management and Communication in Museums at the HTW Berlin and five museum professionals from Egypt and Bahrain. The participants learned and worked together on various exercises over the course of the program.

Reflecting on this cross-cultural and intercultural experience, this chapter presents the content of each module and the results of our teamwork, with a special focus on the emerging aspects of intercultural communication. It is written jointly by the participating MA students from the HTW.

Module 1: Participative Strategies in Collecting and Documenting

Anne Gaffrontke

Theoretical Basis

From Monologues to Dialogues

“In museums we have History, but what we need is stories” (Pamuk 2016). This statement from Orhan Pamuk, Nobel Prize-winning author and founder of the Museum of Innocence in Istanbul, could have been a tagline for the first module of the SAWA Summer School, titled “Participative Strategies in Collecting and Documenting.” Stories enable us to portray the depths of humanity rather than solely representing history (Pamuk 2016). They are a form of expression, they are individual, and more importantly they are universal; in the end, everyone has a story to tell. Stories have the ability to function as

intercultural links and thus can be seen as an important foundation of communication. But why are stories so important for museums?

The answer is simple: “Museums are all about stories!” (British Museum [2014?]). Every object and every person, even the floor or the surrounding environment, everyone and everything has a story to tell. Considering the emotional aspect of storytelling, it is undeniable that stories have the power to reduce distance and create a direct connection with the listener. Thus, storytelling is a suitable medium with which to generate meaning in museum contexts, as well as to encourage participation and interaction and thereby strengthen the relationship between museum and visitor.

Nevertheless, museums often tend to stage objects as testimonies of specific narratives while neglecting alternative narratives (HKW 2016). But an understanding of the museum as a “temple of the muses,” where objects of the past and present are displayed for their aesthetic or historical value only, bears no relation to its contemporary role in society. On the contrary, it is crucial for museums to include people and their experiences as coequal narrators to achieve a wide spectrum of contextual perspectives, initiate cultural dialogues, and work as an influential forum for contemporary public and social discussions. In fact, the museum of today should be a reflection of society and serve as a meeting point for people to participate in open debates and induce cultural, social, or political exchange. It is only then that the institution will be able to justify and maintain its social relevance and public value¹ and pursue a more activist approach, for example as demanded by Sandell, Dodd, and Garland-Thomson (2010, ch. 1).

1 In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon (2010) elucidates how cultural institutions like museums can reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value and relevance in contemporary life.

Why Do We Need Participation?

Looking at the current state of the international museum landscape, it is undeniable that museums are increasingly facing a crisis of identity caused by their growing lack of relevance in modern-day society. Although most cultural institutions claim to have programs of cultural and social value, reality shows that museums are more often abandoned by potential visitors in search of entertainment, knowledge, or conversation (Simon 2010, i). In a globalized and digital world, the status and significance of museums are being negatively affected by their frequently disrupted relationship to the public.

By questioning the meaning and self-perception of museums as public institutions, the two-day module instructed by Danielle Kuijten (curator and founder of Heritage Concepting) and Khuloud Al Houli (curator at Sharjah Al Hisn Museum) addressed the tricky issue of participation and engagement. Kuijten and Al Houli portrayed these strategies as crucial aspects of appropriate contemporary museology with the objective of reconnecting with the public and building a fruitful, intercultural dialogue, as well as collecting and capturing the present. One dilemma, they argued, is that most museums acknowledge this, but they have failed and still fail to attract and stay in contact with the people they should serve. In many cases museums only present monologues rather than opening space for dialogue. And instead of being recognized as active cultural participants, museum visitors are often downgraded to passive consumers without any intrinsic motivation for cultural involvement. Visitor research, however, has shown that people with various and diverse backgrounds visit museums for many different reasons. It is evident that monologues no longer work as narratives in contemporary and appropriate museum contexts. By excluding certain people from the cultural dialogue and not involving them in institutional processes, museums ultimately fail to meet their democratic and educational obligations. A failure to include concepts of diversity and inclusion, along with ignorance toward alternative

and collaborative projects, eventually creates distance between the cultural institution and its visitors, causing a stagnant and disrupted relationship.

The Fear of Being Obsolete

Despite acknowledgment worldwide, participative strategies still meet with critical attitudes among many museum experts because they “challeng[e] the autonomy and authority of the museum professional” (Meijer-van Mensch 2013, 10). With a shifting concept of “the expert,” traditional hierarchies dissolve into new types of constellations that redefine and simultaneously question the role of the museum professional and his or her status. It is this rearrangement of power relations that poses major challenges for a majority of museum employees and thereby enhances skepticism and reluctance.

Other reasons to reject participative strategies concern aspects such as the “quality” and “authenticity” of museum objects and collections. But since the “criteria of authenticity are not necessarily objective but rather have to do with the rules by which the self allows or disallows its own experience” (Walker Percy, quoted in Cepeda 2015), these aspects are being critically questioned more and more within the “new museology” movement. With the development of alternative, innovative, and progressive approaches, the core functions of the museum are being reformed, ultimately leaving behind anyone who lacks openness to novelty.

However, as Nina Simon points out in *The Participatory Museum*, participative strategies should be seen more as an opportunity than a burden or threat for museum workers; they can be used as instruments to transform cultural institutions into spaces of dialog and meaning, where visitors can “create, share, and connect with each other around content” (Simon 2010, ii). In doing so, the museum can keep up with the times and remain relevant and valuable to the public.

In her book, Simon introduces four types of participation according to the proportion of the museum's influence on the projects (Simon 2010, 187):

1. *Contributory projects*: "Visitors are solicited to provide limited and specified objects, actions, or ideas to an institutionally controlled process" (e.g., boards and story-sharing kiosks).
2. *Collaborative projects*: "Visitors are invited to serve as active partners in the creation of institutional projects that are originated and ultimately controlled by the institution."
3. *Co-creative projects*: "Community members work together with institutional staff members from the beginning to define the project's goals and to generate the program or exhibit based on community interests."
4. *Hosted projects*: "The institution turns over a portion of its facilities and/or resources to present programs developed and implemented by public groups or casual visitors."

Although these participatory models are distinct, institutions can incorporate elements from each of them into their exhibitions to enhance visitor participation in various and individual ways (Simon 2010, 187).

Finding a Suitable Way

Museums often still fail to acknowledge and empower their own active role in society, forfeiting their potential to be key platforms for intercultural dialogue and social change. But by using participative strategies and including the diverse visitors and their narratives in exhibitions, museums can master the difficult challenge of maintaining their relevance, especially in this globalized world.

There is no “right” or “wrong,” no panacea or winning formula when it comes to generating and developing participative strategies for a museum. The key to success rather lies in creating individual concepts for the various institutions, heterogeneous audiences, and diverse programs, and in considering these aspects when thinking about the different ways for visitors to participate and tell or find their own narratives in museum contexts. And although these processes may involve great effort – not only in terms of time and cost but also in terms of creative thinking, shared responsibility, or flexibility and engagement – and the outcome may differ from the museum’s initial objectives or expectations, the resulting experiences will ultimately add value for both the participants and the museum. We should never forget that everybody is a collector, a contributor, or a narrator. It is essential to recognize that every story is worth being told and displayed, especially in social and public spaces like museums.

Florian Fischer

Practical Exercises

Day 1 – Collaboration and Co-creation

After the presentation of participative strategies from new museology, the Summer School participants were invited to deepen their freshly gained knowledge through a practical exercise. In mixed groups of four to five people, the participants were asked to outline a participative project in one of three different scenarios. The task was to develop three fictitious sites – an old indoor market place, an old industrial site, or an old hospital – into a museum. All had been economically and socially important to the area surrounding the particular building, but they were closed long ago and not many objects remained. The imagined museum project had to connect with and engage the citizens of the city using either the collaboration or co-creation

approach. There were a lot of questions to answer, but the two most important were: How much authority were we able to give away, and how different would it be to build the museum in Egypt, Bahrain, UAE, or Germany?

Three groups were formed, consisting equally of Egyptians, Bahrainis, Emiratis, and Germans, and each group chose one of the scenarios listed above. Understanding each other was difficult at times because of linguistic and cultural gaps, so we always listened and asked for each other's opinions. Working together was enjoyable, informative, and successful because of the participants' mutual respect and openness. The results were to be presented and discussed with the whole class. It became clear during the process that some ideas would work easier in a European context. Some participants from Bahrain, Egypt, and the Emirates were cautious toward ideas such as urban gardening and other self-organized concepts, assuming that their fellow citizens needed more guidance and lacked interest in community work. In reality, however, such concepts already exist and function well, for example in Egypt, where Usama El-Behairy, a professor of agriculture at Ain Shams University, has held courses in rooftop gardening. As he describes: "When we started in 2000, we thought that people would refuse it. ... We were supposed to do 10 training courses, and each course would have about 40 people. And when we ended, we had 15 courses, and each course had about 50 people and a waiting list of about 100" (quoted in Esterman 2015).

To give an example, one scenario was the revival of an abandoned industrial site. This group took a very community-centered approach with the goal of making the site a useful focus for the surrounding neighborhood. The idea was to work together with the neighborhood in a combination of collaboration and co-creation, in order to turn an old steel plant into something that connected to the past but was also completely new. The outside of the steel plant would be transformed into an urban garden and meeting space, where it would be possible for everyone to grow their own vegetables or other plants. Growing one's own food is not very common today, and regional

vegetables and agricultural methods need to be preserved. In earlier times, the workers of a steel plant would have their own gardens to grow food; this project would bring that tradition to life. Inside the steel plant, the craftsmanship of steelwork would form the central attraction. The people who worked in the factory before it was closed would decide what to do with it. Maybe they would want to tell their stories about what it was like to work there, maybe they would want to build a garage to repair steel products, or maybe they would want to demonstrate how to traditionally forge iron. To initiate the project different workshops would be useful, for example in urban gardening. What the group did not formulate was how, precisely, to involve the community, in particular how community members could contribute to recreating a historical site.

Day 2 – Oral History

The second day of the first module took place in the newly constructed Sharjah Fort Al Hisn, a heritage site built solely based on a few photographs and the memories of contemporary witnesses. The building was the former residence of the sheikh. Located at the periphery of the city, it was the center of administration, festivities, adjudication, and the key point of the city's defense. It was built during the first half of the nineteenth century. After being nearly demolished in the early 1970s, except for a single tower, Al Hisn was reconstructed in the mid-1990s – a process that required the memory of the surrounding community and the people who once inhabited the castle. Some details, such as the position of the tree in the courtyard, were remembered incorrectly and could be reconstructed with photographs; others may simply be wrong. But witnesses who knew the fort from before were pleased with the accuracy of the reconstruction. Not only the building's exterior but also minute details and even smells were included. Without the method of oral history, it would have been impossible to rebuild Al Hisn.

Oral history as a method was established in the 1930s by Allen Nevins and Louis Starr (Baum 1984 [1996], 23; Nevins 1966 [1996], 29). According to Louis Starr (1977 [1996], 40), “oral history is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words – generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews – of persons deemed to harbour hitherto unavailable information worth preserving.”

Oral history is used to preserve personal material that might otherwise be lost. It differs from oral tradition in that the latter refers to the cultural practice of preserving an entire society’s history through oral means. With oral history, researchers try to access individual memories through interviews, most often in societies that are predominantly script-based and often ignore such individual memories (Cobet 1988, 227). At the same time, the method can be especially fruitful in places with a strong oral tradition – such as the Emirates and other Islamic countries (Hurriez 2013, 31) – because it is close to people’s own ways of preserving history (Schuster 1988, 60). Recording hours of material and letting the interviewee decide what to tell enables the researcher to access information that he or she might not have asked (Starr 1977 [1996], 40). Of course it is dangerous for the researcher to rely on this information alone, since human memory is not accurate and the interviewee has his or her own intention. Another aspect is the ethical practice of the researcher: the interviewee has to decide what to talk about, and the interviewee may not be tricked into an interview, especially if he or she is psychologically hindered or otherwise not in control of the situation. But although the method has its flaws, it brings history to life and makes it personal (Fry 1984 [1996], 163).

Instead of getting a lecture, we explored the method by listening to examples and trying it out with each other. At first we learned about language by exploring the Arabic alphabet. The second step was getting to know the stories of each other’s families. We told each other stories about our grandmothers, listened, and then told the class the story of our conversation part-

ner. This task was difficult not only because we had to remember the details; it was also a challenge to fill in the cultural gap. When someone from Bahrain talked about a “big family,” for example, there was a huge difference to a big family in Germany: a family with one hundred members is not very common in Germany, but a family with a few thousand members is normal in Bahrain.

The last exercise was the most difficult. We were instructed to ask a staff member of the museum to describe how the king’s bedroom – a room we had not yet visited – looked and smelled, and what it felt like to be there. The staff members only spoke Arabic for this exercise, so one of the Arab colleagues had to translate. The rooms that our three groups imagined and drew based on these descriptions looked quite different from each other. After that we went to see the room. The bed in particular was very different from what we expected, since no one had asked how high the mattress was (it was much higher than Europeans are accustomed to), and no one had imagined that there was a gate through which to enter the bed. Colors, textures, motifs in the wood carvings – so many details were missing in our reconstruction.

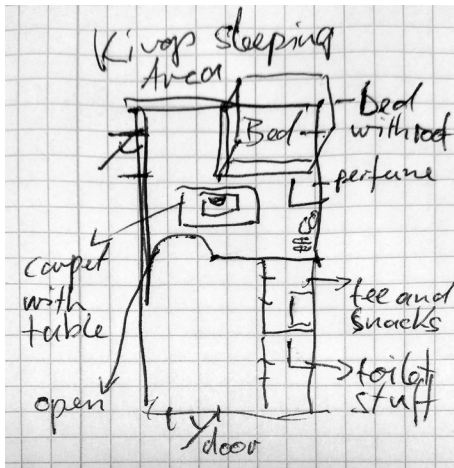


image 1 Drawing of the king’s sleeping room based on the oral exercise



image 2 Photograph of the reconstructed room

But when we started the exercise, we could not have imagined how much information we would be able to gather. The Bahraini, Egyptian and Emirati professionals provided a lot of context, and without it our descriptions and drawings would have been useless, no more than a reflection of how Europeans might envision a sheik's palace.

In conclusion, we realized that the images in our heads are determined by our language and cultural background. Our conditioning makes it difficult to understand each other directly, so we must find a way to overcome this cultural gap; working together with researchers from the specific culture of the interviewee is mandatory. The advantage of oral history is that the researcher can ask the source direct questions, but he or she has to find the right ones. Although we found out a lot in the interview together, many facts remained hidden or were lost in translation. And facts such as the height of the bed or the little gate to enter it – things taken for granted in each society – are the very things that fill the room with life.

Module 2: Curatorial Strategies: From Single to Shared Authorship

Julia Arndt

Theoretical Basis

Questioning the Role of the Curator – Struggles and Opportunities

It is important to rethink the position and possibilities of curators and museums because their visitors are changing and have different needs and approaches. Younger visitors, the so-called millennials or generation Y, are the next leading generation; they should be the target group that museums

aim to attract. As digital natives, millennials have adopted new ways of communicating. This generation likes to share things that are important to them mainly in digital ways. With full access to digital and multimedia products and an appreciation of leisure time, people in this generation are used to having a choice about what they consume, what information they gather, and what they find important and not important.

Curators always had to face new societal developments and find ways to design exhibitions that appeal to their audiences. “Curatorship” can refer not only to museums but also to collecting objects, photos, or clothing and presenting these collections in a suitable format. Such collections can be found in private homes, on the internet, or even in one’s own purse (see Cairns and Birchall 2013). People want to share what is important to them and transfer personal meaning by displaying these things to others, for example by sharing photos via Instagram with people they do not know. They want to convey meaning to their viewers, taking on a kind of curatorial role (see Cairns and Birchall 2013). The same approach can be transferred to museums: visitors want to be part of the decision-making process, and they want to connect to the objects and make meaning on a personal level (see Rounds 1999, 5–8). The curator is a key figure in that organic process. He or she can take part as a vessel of knowledge and expertise but must interact with the target audiences and initiate a dialogue (see Cohen-Stratyner 2013).² Lucy Worsley, chief curator at the Historic Royal Palaces London, describes the role of a curator: “Curating isn’t just a matter of taste. It involves building up real knowledge of the items in your care. As the world gets quicker, and shallower, and bite-sized, retaining our ability to take a deep dive into history is more and more important” (quoted in *Guardian* 2016).

2 Cohen-Stratyner (2013) deepens the topic of meaning-making by contextualizing it in the digital era. She claims that contemporary meaning-making needs new ways of engaging with the target audiences. The audiences should be involved in developing the narrative to a more complex level.

Recent developments in designing museum exhibitions move away from single authorship. Shared authorship allows space for more critical and current issues³ on the basis of discussions and collaborations with external parties. One example is the Plastic Garbage Project (Museum für Gestaltung Zürich 2017), where visitors could bring their collected garbage to be shown in the exhibition. The exhibition grew with the garbage the audience brought. This allowed audiences to see how much garbage was in their home and the homes of other visitors; through the mass of trash they could reflect on their own consumer behavior. The exhibition also gave visitors a platform to discuss with other participants the problems and feelings that arose when reflecting on what they saw. Beyond the museum, there are many digital projects that focus on an attempt at shared authorship, such as the *eflux* or *89Plus* online platforms. These are examples of successful critical projects where people are given a platform to exchange personal experiences on a specific topic and share their expertise with others. Everybody has a story to tell and share. For some curators, however, it is difficult to let others be involved in designing their exhibition concept (see Fotiadi 2016).⁴ In the Gulf Region, collaboration focuses on discussion and the opportunity to hear the voices of everyone who works for the museum, as well as parties not involved in the museum at all.

Overcoming the Challenges of Intercultural Curation

In the Museum of Civilization in Sharjah, it is common for curators to discuss the content and design of exhibitions with their staff, their family members, and the audiences. The tasks of curators at museums in the UAE are broad; in general they have a greater number of responsibilities than their

3 For example, globalization, climate change, and so on.

4 Fotiadi describes curators' struggles using the example of *documenta 5* (1972 in Kassel). *Documenta* is one of the most important exhibitions of contemporary art and has taken place in Kassel every five years since 1955.

more specialized counterparts in Berlin. These include management and financial aspects, as well as communication among the departments. They are all-rounders and need to have a good overview, but they must also see details and be experts in their fields. This leads to a great variety of interpretative attempts and opinions, eliciting very diverse target groups. In both Europe and the Gulf Region, curators should know their audiences and build connections between them and the objects.

Most problems that arise during exhibition development and curation are related to three main issues. First: Which parties are involved, where does the museum get the exhibit, and which content is on display? In other words, who is involved in the whole process? The curator must be diplomatic and keep the needs and wishes of the parties and the message of the exhibition in mind. It can be a hard task to keep everybody satisfied and not offend anyone involved. The second issue is how familiar the region is with the artist or historical content: What do people know about the artist or the content already? The most important thing in dealing with this difficulty is the cultural sensitivity of the curator and his or her team. For example, an artist might be famous in Germany but hardly known at all in Egypt. The curator should help visitors understand the work in the best way possible, for example through panels designed specifically for each context. The curator should not use the same panels in Egypt as in Germany.

The third issue is internal communication: if team members do not acknowledge and recognize their own assumptions, the situation can cause confusion and impede communication. Language barriers can even affect teams from the same region. In a group of German-speakers, if some team members have a strong dialect or use a kind of slang the others are not familiar with, the situation can become a challenge or obstacle that the curator must address. In some countries like the United States, people tend to use small talk before discussing urgent matters. In Germany, people take a more direct approach; such matters are discussed right away, without chitchat.

The search for ways to communicate across these differences (intercultural communication) requires patience and empathy, “focusing on the relations among people” (Nina Simon 2014). It is important to remember that our own background distinguishes us from other people, and that every background is individual. A general sensitivity – and in the context of the Summer School, a cultural sensitivity – is necessary to understand why other people behave the way they do, to make the best of the different experiences team members bring and turn any obstacles into value.

Clarifying communication processes is key. We live in a digital age, where it is easy to communicate because everybody is connected through the internet and by phone. Some people can be reached at any time but others prefer not to be so readily available, and not everyone uses email or even has an email account – a reality that can lead to communication barriers. Different generations relate to communication methods in different ways: Social media and cloud storage may be more familiar to younger colleagues, the millennials, while working via phone, fax, or mail may be more suitable for older users. At the same time, many people find social media inappropriate for work-related discussions because these platforms blur the lines between the private and professional spheres. The different channels also have different sets of manners and ways to address issues. In a face-to-face meeting, for example, people tend to be more sensitive and concerned than when they write emails. And when communication is based on too many different channels, the situation can be confusing for everyone involved. One solution here can be a communication plan, listing simple rules for how and when to use the different channels. Additionally, in considering interactions with a museum’s audience, curators should keep in mind that the anonymity of certain communication channels invites rudeness or even violent language – for example, in the commentary section of *YouTube* videos. Producers of the original content should never engage with or descend to the same personal level as their angry counterparts. As a curator, it is important to be aware of a potential for such behavior in online forums, especially when the topic is inherently personal.

To handle these challenges adequately, museums need patience and diplomatic sensitivity. Intercultural dialogue is essential for working together and finding the right solutions for a given exhibition in a given region. While the audience should have some idea of the discussions that led to decisions in creating an exhibition, a clear message should still shine through the whole process. Communication should be effective and simple, without upsetting team members, partners, or artists on the other end – always with a view to future cooperation.

Ann-Christin Lepper

Practical Exercises

Working Together – Sharing Thoughts

For the practical part of the second module we concentrated on one exercise, which focused on curating in an international and multicultural team. In this exercise, “Shared Authorship in Curating,” four objects or themes were presented, and we had to conceptualize an exhibition around or about them. The following questions served as guidelines for our work: What is the storyline? What are the sub-stories? What can the objects contribute? Who are our target groups? What do we need? Are any other objects needed?

We, the participants, could select the objects, and we also made sure that the teams were mixed. The first object was a group of coins, the second the poem “On Children” by Gibran Khail Gibran, the third the broad topic “water,” and the fourth the Kiswa al Kaaba.⁵ Nobody wanted to deal with the coins, so in the end we worked in three groups. Although all of the results of the exercise are worthwhile, the group that worked with the Kiswa al Kaaba is

5 The Kiswa is a piece of cloth taken from the cover of the Kaaba in Mecca, which is made new every year.



image 3 Participants presenting their results from the exercise “Shared Authorship in Curating” © Danielle Kuijten, 2016

most interesting because it best demonstrates the advantages of intercultural communication and intercultural curation.

What set this group apart was the fact that the Kiswa al Kaaba is a religious object. The group, consisting of religious and non-religious participants, used the practical exercise to create access to a religious object that was suitable for everyone, regardless of his or her confession. The concept considered the Kiswa al Kaaba as both an artistic and a religious masterpiece. Simultaneously, the object’s presentation created a space for dialogue, exchange, and togetherness. On the one side, the object’s presentation included information such as videos and interviews with pilgrims, who talked about their emotions and feelings during the pilgrimage to Mecca and recreated the atmosphere of the Hadj. On the other side, the concept offered information about how the Kiswa al Kaaba is made, as well as its history, meaning, message, and geographical context. This approach created multiple ways for viewers to find access to the object.

The exercise and this particular result underline the fundamentally emotional nature of curation. Every curator brings his or her own opinions, views, and perspectives into the exhibition, and each visitor does the same. Because of this, a high level of intercultural competence is needed to achieve a positive result. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink writes that intercultural competence increases through experiences in the field of intercultural communication and intercultural learning, which ultimately leads to a better understanding and acceptance of the “other” and with it an appreciation of his or her personality and culture (see Lüsebrink 2012, 52). Thus, this exercise helped us develop our intercultural competence and learn to deal with sensitive themes like religion, enabling us to see other perspectives on an object and think about how to incorporate them into our curatorial practice.

Certainly, the work would have unfolded differently had one of the non-religious participants wanted to mention certain critical themes, such as the interpretational sovereignty of Saudi Arabia in the context of the *Kiswa al Kaaba*. This and other topics might be seen differently by the religious participants; they are topics that could be hurtful and are difficult to discuss in any team. In 1996, Guo-Ming Chen and William J. Starosta developed a model for intercultural competence, composed of three perspectives: the affective, or intercultural sensitivity; the cognitive, or intercultural awareness; and the behavioral, or intercultural adroitness (see Chen/Starosta 1996, 362). Only with intercultural communication competence and by keeping these perspectives in mind can we resolve potential conflicts through appropriate and respectful discussion. Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe (2011, 216–17) underlines that appreciation and empathy in the cultural and religious structures behind our opinions are especially essential in these cases.

The added value of working in an intercultural team was also visible in the results of the two other groups, which handled the topic of water and the poem. Both concepts drew on the inherent benefits of these topics, namely that they can be understood everywhere: water is one of the most



image 4 Participants in discussion during an expert meeting © Danielle Kuijten, 2016

important goods in the world, and raising children, the subject of the poem, is also a universal theme. Both contain emotions such as love, fear, or uncertainty, which both groups used for their exhibitions in order to establish an intercultural approach and add perspectives they might have omitted if working in a non-international team. Also worth mentioning is that every team conceived of points in the exhibitions where visitors could voice their views and experiences. This approach helps prevent showing only the curator's views in an exhibition and expresses that the visitor's opinion is just as important as that of the curator.

The second exercise in this module was called the “expert meeting” and came about very spontaneously. Some of the participants already working in museums mentioned problems they were currently encountering. In response, we separated into small groups and gathered ideas for possible solutions, for example, generating new audiences or increasing income. The exercise showed how enriching it is to talk about challenges with people who are not directly involved and who are used to taking different approaches due to

cultural differences. Rather than imposing one's own opinion on somebody else, it is crucial to come to good collective considerations through respectful dialogue. This spontaneous reaction to individual situations facing the participants is what made the SAWA Summer School especially effective.

Our Shared Benefit

Far away from university classes, we benefitted from the different cultural backgrounds and life experiences of the Summer School participants. Again and again we were challenged to rethink and possibly correct our sometimes deadlocked perspectives on certain themes and to adjust them based on the input of others, using intercultural competence. Alone, any of us might have brought entirely different perspectives to the fore, but through discussion we developed a multiperspective view on a given object, in contrast to working with colleagues in a regional team. In 1979, David S. Hoopes described what he saw as six developmental stages in intercultural learning: the first is ethnocentricity, which leads via awareness, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation to a selective adoption of foreign cultural practices (see Hoopes 1979, 9–38). Practical exercises such as those in the second module help participants pass through these phases of intercultural learning and expand their intercultural competence. During the lessons we all passed through these stages, regardless of the fact that each of us began somewhere different. Some of the participants already had experience in intercultural communication, having traveled a lot or studied abroad. On the other side were participants who had never left their home countries and were not entirely comfortable speaking English. All of us were speaking in languages other than our mother tongues, so we had to overcome language barriers. In their book *Interkulturelle Kommunikation*, Stefan Müller und Katja Gelbrich argue that language has a massive influence on intercultural communication because we each employ culture-specific linguistic usage. We experience dif-

ferences in language codes, language routine, language structure, and linguistic style (see Müller and Gelbrich 2014, 313–22). The exercises described above highlighted the importance of dialogue, but while we may have been able to understand and integrate the opinions of our counterparts, the language challenge was still present.

Also, the question arises as to whether a person ever completes his or her intercultural communication training. It does not matter how much experience one has in intercultural communication; in getting to know new people, we always start from scratch in order to become acquainted with new stories, backgrounds, and opinions. Nevertheless, at the SAWA Summer School we all gained experience, we all changed our ways of thinking through intercultural communication, and we all left with more intercultural competence that we can use for our later work in museums and the rest of our lives.

Module 3: Access, Engagement, and Interpretation – Developing an Interpretational Plan

Isabel Jäger

Theoretical Basis

Access, engagement, and interpretation are essential approaches in the museum world. These elements also constituted the main content of Module 3 at the SAWA Summer School in Sharjah. Who the visitor is and what he or she brings to the museum is becoming increasingly important. More museums are transforming from traditional into participatory institutions. They let the audience be a part of the exhibition, and a collaborative relationship is replacing the visitor's role as a pure observer. Visitors' stories, objects, critique, and suggestions can become a part of the museum's work. Additionally,

it is the museum staff's duty to open the museum as widely as possible to as many different types of people as possible (in terms of age, gender, disability, sexuality, and so on) and to encourage a dialogue between the museum and the community. Interpretation is the method used to communicate with the audience. This can be via computer, websites, text panels, graphics, or other interpretational media. The museum communicates and expresses objects, facts, and stories through the format of an exhibition. But sometimes the visitor can receive a message that the museum staff did not intend to transfer: "We may believe we are communicating certain content to our visitors, only to learn that our messages as they receive them are confused, or that exhibits using advanced technologies are getting in the way of learning from the collections" (Piacente and Lord 2012, 94). Because of this, museums need to find a way to avoid this kind of miscommunication and respond to the visitor. One tool is the *interpretational plan* – but what is it, and why should it exist?

Questions We Need to Ask

To create an interpretational plan, the museum team has to ask itself a number of key questions: Why? What? Who? How? So the question, "Why are we doing this museum/exhibition/display?" can contain the vision statement, mission statement, and goals of the institution. The team members should be clear about what they want to express with the exhibition – they should concentrate on one big idea! The question, "What is the subject matter?" addresses the issue of whether the visitor should learn skills or ideas. "Encouraging exploration" and "conveying ideas" are two approaches that a museum might consider. The museum staff has to find the right interpretation strategy to support the visitor in his or her exploration and understanding of the exhibition. The procedure has an impact on the learning effect. "Who is it for?" or "Who are the audiences?" These questions remind the museum staff to have a closer look at their visitors. Visitors represent not just

different ages, genders, and so on, but also different interests, understandings, values, and experiences. Everyone comes from a different background and has different needs and expectations. The museum staff should be aware of this. The last main question, “How should we develop our media?” targets modes of communication, the tools used to transport information and content. A museum should determine which kinds of media are useful in transferring key messages from special objects and the exhibition to the audience, for example through labels, graphic panels, or multimedia devices like audio guides, videos, and so on. The answers to all of these questions – the vision statement, objectives, key messages, target audience, and interpretive methods – constitute an interpretational plan (see Sumner 2016, 3–14).

A Communication Process

In developing an interpretational plan, the museum staff commits to an extensive internal communication process. Staff members have to define the aspects described above and transfer their conclusions to the presentation of a display. This process encourages dialogue among everyone involved (see Sumner 2016, 15). It is important to remember that an interpretational plan is not a short-term program: “Planning should be a dynamic, continuing process not only tied to development or solving the issue of the day, but a continuum that supports daily operations in the context of realizing a long-range vision for visitors and resources” (Harpers Ferry Center 1998, 4).

An essential part of any interpretational plan is its evaluation. At the end, the museum has to ask itself how well the plan worked and whether it achieved the goals determined at the outset. The results of the evaluation will show whether the new interpretation strategy had the right effect or whether certain deficits still exist. Good interpretation attracts not only the visitor but also governing and funding bodies. With a well-elaborated interpreta-

tional plan, the museum and staff will gain self-esteem and courage to direct toward new projects (see Sumner 2016, 17; Sumner's chapter in this volume).

The Intercultural Aspect

The audience represents an important part of an interpretational plan, but it is not easy to understand an extremely heterogeneous group. In a museum we find variation not only in age range but also in cultural background. Some museums contain objects from all over the world, and people may have different associations and connections to special objects. The museum staff has to find a way to conquer these difficulties through their chosen forms of interpretation.

In the twenty-first century, we are seeing more and more cooperation between different museums and increasing diversity within the museum teams. The institutions therefore deal with this factor internally as well as externally. In this context, creating an interpretational plan also includes the process of intercultural communication.

Mandy Ullmann

Practical Exercises

Cultural Differences and Their Effect on Intercultural Cooperation

One task of the third module, "Access, Engagement and Interpretation," was to develop a vision statement for Bait Al Naboodah Museum in Sharjah. The purpose of this task was to show the uniqueness of the historical site,



image 5 Bait Al Naboodah,
view of the inner courtyard
© Alya Burhaima, 2016



image 6 Bait Al Naboodah,
two-story building © Alya
Burhaima, 2016

create a strategic goal (“the big idea”), and discuss the methods required to attain this goal.

Rather than provide an overview of each group’s work, this section will use Bait Al Naboodah Museum to highlight specific aspects of interculturality. It will focus on the conceptual differences in restoration approaches at Bait Al Naboodah since the 1990s.

The last person to own this grand coastal house was a prominent pearl merchant named Obaid Bin Eissa Bin Ali Al Shamsi, nicknamed Al Naboodah (1860s–1940s). The house was built around 1845 and underwent continual expansion over the years to fit the needs of Al Naboodah’s growing family (he had fourteen children and many grandchildren). Members of the Al Naboodah family lived here until the 1970s (Burhaima 2016, 2). Due to his very successful work as a pearl trader and his positive contribution to Sharjah’s economy and society, Obaid Al Naboodah’s status in the community was one of wealth and reputation. His home became a very important landmark in Sharjah in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Burhaima 2016, 5).

Alya Burhaima, manager of the Interpretation and Education Department at the Sharjah Museums Authority, mentioned in her presentation of Bait Al Naboodah Museum that it already underwent partial restoration in the 1990s in cooperation with foreign specialists. Restoration measures included the use of new materials that are commonly utilized in Western countries to preserve the “traditional setting” (ICOMOS 1964). However, due to the climatic conditions in Sharjah, some materials have proven to be unsuitable. In consequence, and due to other required maintenance, Bait Al Naboodah has undergone new restoration measures since 2014 focusing on the use of authentic materials such as coral. It is assumed that coral was incorporated into the building process in the past as a method to naturally climatize houses (Burhaima 2016, 8).

Bait Al Naboodah Museum and the SAWA Summer School program provide good examples of cultural differences and the difficulties that can be caused by misunderstanding on the one side and ignorance on the other side of an intercultural cooperation.

A Different Notion of Authenticity

According to Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe (2011, 32), our communication and interpretation of information is always characterized by our own culture, ethnicity, and individual experience. Often we are not fully aware of cultural differences, nor do we communicate them to each other. Bait Al Naboodah is an example that gives us an idea of different approaches to restoring archaeological sites, which are based on different cultural assumptions and, if not communicated, can cause undesirable results. The current restoration measures also show that these concepts are not only based on ethnicity, culture, and individual experiences but also characterized by time and the cultural shifts that come with its passage.

The restoration measures of the 1990s were shaped by the goal of preserving the current state of this historically important site, its materiality, and therefore its authenticity, which was a common conceptual approach to restoration in Western countries, especially Europe. The “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites” (Venice Charter) from 1964 states that the aim of restoration is to “preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value [of historic monuments] based on respect for original material ... and to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity” (ICOMOS 1964). Authenticity in this context is often linked to a perceived aura surrounding an original object and its material evidence of the past. Replicas are not considered to have that aura since they lack the same witness-like quality.

But the notion of authenticity – its existence and meaning – has been a subject of controversial discussions for years. The UNESCO “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention” from 1977 states that authenticity “does not limit consideration to original form and structure [of a monument or an object] but includes all subsequent modifications and additions, over the course of time, which in themselves pos-

sess artistic or historical values” (UNESCO 1977). According to this statement, objects are not limited to one meaning but are considered carriers of complex histories, consisting of multiple layers of contexts that have evolved and changed over time. Authenticity is not seen as an absolute state that defines an object as original or not; it is rather understood as a process-like construct of attributing or withdrawing an object’s authentic quality (for example, an “authentic” painting can be proven to be a forgery). Modern science often refers to this process as *authentication*.

In the context of historical sites in Sharjah, the concept of authenticity often refers to using original materials and documents, such as photographs, to reconstruct something to look like the original at the time it was created. For instance, wooden elements used for building and decorating houses (Bait Al Naboodah has extensive wooden features and elements defining its appearance) have to be replaced from time to time due to Sharjah’s extreme climatic conditions. The focus of this restoration approach is to show the importance of Bait Al Naboodah for Sharjah and its history and therefore to reconstruct it to perfection, which can be seen as an approach to authenticating the site.

These different definitions of the term *authenticity* show that the very idea of an object’s qualities is a construct of time-bound criteria, as well as individual decisions made by people involved in restoration measures, who are shaped by their own ethnicities and cultures. The restoration measures at Bait Al Naboodah in the 1990s were based on the knowledge and experience of foreign specialists. Despite an increasing focus on local education and qualification, engaging the service of foreign specialists for educational and cultural disciplines was and still is a common practice in the United Arab Emirates, and cultural discrepancies in definitions and ideals often contain potential for conflict.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Another aspect of interculturality I would like to address is communication in an intercultural context. According to Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe (2011, 37), there are two major aspects to consider: verbal and nonverbal communication. During the SAWA Summer School 2016, English was used as the lingua franca throughout the program period. Nearly all of the participants spoke fluent English due to their education and the fact that some had studied abroad or had international work experience. Although the relatively high level of English language skills made verbal communication easier, using a second language as the communication language can lead to misunderstandings, as discussed in the section above by Ann-Christin Lepper.

Another important aspect to consider in an intercultural context is the potential to misinterpret nonverbal communication signals from people with different cultural backgrounds. A seemingly harmless body posture, facial expression, or gesture can be interpreted as disrespectful behavior. Many of the Arab cultural habits and patterns of interaction are very different from German habits. Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe provides a few examples to illustrate this. For instance, people with an Arab cultural background mostly use only the right hand for eating, drinking, or other social interactions, such as greeting and passing things. The left hand is said to be impure. Also, pointing the soles of one's feet at someone – for example, while stretching – is a very offensive gesture in Arab cultures (Broszinsky-Schwabe 2011, 37).

Meeting Foreign Cultures on an Equal Footing

Nonverbal communication in particular requires knowledge of the cultural habits and traditions of a given country or region. During the SAWA Summer School, none of the normative patterns of nonverbal communication

mentioned above were an issue for the German participants in communicating with the Arab participants. We did know about some of the nonverbal social interaction signals in Arab culture: for example, using the right hand to greet others or pass things. And as much as we were aware of some of the Arab cultural habits, the Arab participants were most likely familiar with many of the cultural and social habits of Western societies, too, in particular Germany. Although we tried to adopt and respect these cultural and social differences in interaction, we would sometimes, out of habit, forget about them. Our Arab colleagues never seemed irritated by this, nor did it have a noticeable effect on further communication.

As mentioned above, almost all of the participants already had international experience due to education, working internationally, or other reasons. Two of the seventeen participants (including lecturers) were male; everyone else was female. The lack of diversity in gender and age, the equal level of education, the shared professional background and motivations to take part in this program, and a general openness toward other cultures made the similarities among participants more vivid than the differences, rendering communication easier. Moreover, the fact that we were all aware that some aspects of the other culture may differ from our own made it easier to interact, since everyone saw the other culture as equal to his or her own.

As a participant of the SAWA Summer School 2016, it was very important for me to show tolerance of and interest in the Arab culture. Different cultural systems should always be considered equivalent to our own. Empathy toward other cultural structures such as social hierarchies, philosophies of life, or religious issues can help us overcome cultural misunderstandings and stereotypical thinking, making it a very important aspect of interculturality. The extensive interactive part of the program provided an environment that allowed stimulating discussions, respectful interaction without prejudice, and cooperation based on equality. These are important aspects not only for intercultural collaboration but for all areas of life.

Conclusion – Facing the Future Together

“Sawa” is the Arabic word for “together,” and for the SAWA Museum Academy, the name says it all. Coming together to share thoughts and to discuss and learn from each other is one of the best things life can offer. Intercultural communication may not be the easiest endeavor, but when it works, it is one of the most enriching. Today, in our globalized world, intercultural communication is becoming more and more important, and the SAWA Museum Academy helps young museum professionals gain intercultural competence. This experience has the power to influence the way we work in museums on an intercultural basis in the future.

In three very different modules we dealt with interesting and current issues facing museums, particularly curators. This gave us the opportunity to get to know these issues intellectually while dealing with them on a practical level.

Since the program is directed at young professionals, the group automatically had a lot in common: all participants had a higher education qualification, shared similar interests, and spoke English as a lingua franca. This context also meant that the intercultural communication did not take place between foreign experts and a local public; it was rather a discussion of professional challenges among experts. To learn about the different needs of the region’s stakeholders and potential visitors, it would be helpful to deepen the experience through direct contact with the local public. But despite this missing element, we started to rethink our perspectives and opinions through discussion with the other participants and learned to be more sensitive when dealing with other opinions. Notwithstanding different levels of English proficiency within the group and the fact that some information was lost in translation, this is the main task of effective intercultural communication: to overcome any cultural gap in a peaceful way.

The SAWA Museum Academy was a great opportunity to network and get to know the museum landscape and workflows of another region. Instead of simply implementing an idea at an institution based in a different culture, we acquired the insight that a regional solution can only be found in cooperation, though a dialogic process. Imperialistic ways of dealing with other cultures are not only erroneous, but they can never be as successful as more nuanced approaches. For us, SAWA was all about being open minded and working together.

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About the Authors



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Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis is co-director of the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization and strategic advisor to the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA). She was instrumental in the opening of the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization in 2008, taking charge of all curatorial and museological responsibilities including senior project management.

Currently Dr. Al-Khamis teaches art history-related subjects at the American University of Sharjah, the University of Sharjah, HCT Sharjah, Zayed University Dubai, and Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. She is also an advisor on intercultural and interreligious issues for local, regional, and international stakeholders, both governmental and nongovernmental. Prior to joining SMA in 2007, she was a principal curator for the Middle East and South Asia at the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Dr. Al-Khamis studied art history, history, and Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Münster, as well as Islamic art, Islamic history, and Arabic studies at the University of London. She earned a PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 1994, focusing on early Islamic bronze and brass ewers from the seventh to thirteenth century.

Over more than twenty years Dr. Al-Khamis has curated numerous exhibitions, including the *Heaven and Hell* interfaith exhibition (2000) and *Dunya – Glimpses of Muslim Life in Europe – The Photography of Ahmed Krausen* (2010) at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization. She has authored many publications, including the catalogue *So That You Might Know Each Other – The World of Islam from North Africa to China and Beyond, from the Collections of the Vatican Ethnological Museum* (with Nadia Fiussello et al., 2014). In February 2009 she spoke at the United Nations High-Level Working Session “Harmonious Cities: Music, Technology, Culture and Health.”



Manal Ataya

Manal Ataya is director-general of the Sharjah Museums Authority, which manages sixteen museums in the emirate of Sharjah. She is responsible for the strategic development of future museum projects, fostering partnerships with the international museum community, and leading efforts to deliver best practice in museum services. The current museum offering includes Islamic

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Since 2004 Gundula Avenarius has worked as a coach and mentor for museums and cultural institutions as well as an instructor for educational visitor services, using her innovative dialogic approach. In 2012 she founded KULTUR IM DIALOG, a consulting company. Her own educational background is interdisciplinary, with studies in cultural anthropology, political science, a master's degree in adult education, and an MA in art history and English/American studies from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She has lectured, researched, and given workshops at a variety of national and international institutions, including the Schallaburg, Austria and the Berlin State Museums. She has also worked with the educational departments of several

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She has authored many articles on topics in cultural studies, cultural theory, literary anthropology, and questions of translation as an analytical category. She has served on the editorial board of *Translation Studies* since 2008.

Selected publications: *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture* (2016; original in German, 6th edition, 2018); *The Trans/National Study of Culture: A Translational Perspective* (ed., 2014); “The Translational Turn,” spe-

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Dr. Barakat has worked as a project manager at the Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage in Cairo, researching and documenting Cairo's presidential palaces of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She has also documented the early Islamic papyrus collection and the Persian illuminated and illustrated collection at the Egyptian National Library (Dar el kotub), where she focused on the pigment analysis of early miniatures.

In her current position, Dr. Barakat is overseeing the refurbishment of IAMM's permanent galleries, while researching artifacts, curating exhibitions, and writing and editing exhibition catalogues in connection with the museum's special galleries. As a bilingual manager, she also trains specialized teams in researching and displaying Islamic art.

Selected publications: *Al Qur'an: The Sacred Art of Revelation*, vol. 2 (2014); *Mosques of the United States of America: The Dar Al Islam Mosque and Complex, Abiquiu, New Mexico* (2014); *The Timeline of Islamic Civilisations Featuring the Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia* (2012); *Lasting Impressions: Seals from the Islamic World* (contributor, 2012); *Ann Dunham's Legacy: A Collection of Indonesian Batik* (2012); *Treasures of the Illustrated & Illuminated Persian Manuscripts at the National Library of Egypt* (2008).



Aisha Deemas

Aisha Deemas became director of executive affairs at the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), UAE, in June 2012. She is responsible for long-term planning and overall management of the services provided to all museums under SMA management.

Aisha Deemas's career at SMA began in 2006 with a two-year curatorial training program following completion of her bachelor's degree in interna-

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From 2008 she served as curator at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, where she oversaw the museum's collections, organized exhibitions and events, developed national and international collaborations, and managed the museum's day-to-day operations.



Dr. Sabrina DeTurk

Dr. Sabrina DeTurk is currently assistant professor at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University in Dubai. From 2008 to 2014, she served as associate dean and executive director of graduate arts and sciences at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. She previously held faculty and administrative positions at La Salle University (Philadelphia) and Salem College (Winston-Salem, North Carolina). Dr. DeTurk's research interests center on art as a form of social commentary; the contemporary visual culture of trauma and conflict; and the development of global art history curricula. Current projects include a comparative study of memorial architecture and memorial museums in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as research on street art and visual culture in the Middle East and North Africa. Dr. DeTurk received her BA in the history of art from Wellesley College and her MA and PhD in the history of art from Bryn Mawr College.

Recent conference presentations include “Earth as Means and Metaphor in Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial” (College Art Association Annual Conference, 2016); “Street Art and Cultural Context in the MENA Region” (HISTART ’15, 2015); “Martyrs and Victims: Memorial Architecture in Iran and the U.S.” (BRISMES/AUD Conference, 2015). Recent publications: “SALTWATER: The 14th Istanbul Biennial,” *Afterimage: The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism* (2016); “The ‘Banksy Effect’ and Street Art in the Middle East,” *Street Art and Urban Creativity Scientific Journal* (2015).



Dr. Said Faiq

Dr. Said Faiq, Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts (UK), is a professor of intercultural studies and translation at the American University of Sharjah (UAE), where he has served as chair of the department (2003–7, 2009–10) and director of the graduate program in translation and interpreting (2002–11). He is currently a visiting professor at Exeter University, UK. Prior to his current position, he worked in Africa, the Middle East, and the United Kingdom. He was director of studies for undergraduate and graduate programs in Arabic/English translation and interpreting at Salford University from 1990 to 2003 and a visiting lecturer in applied linguistics at Leeds University from 1996 to 1998. He has advised private and public organizations in education-related sectors and serves on a number of academic editorial and consultancy boards and agencies. He is an expert in intercultural and translation studies and has supervised and examined graduate research (e.g., at Cambridge, McGill).

Selected publications: *Agency and Patronage in Eastern Translatology* (ed. with Ahmed Ankit, 2015); *Culguage in/of Translation from Arabic* (ed. with Ovidi Carbonnel and Ali AlManaa, 2014); *Beyond Denotation in Arabic Translation* (ed. with Allen Clark, 2010); *Cultures in Dialogue: A Translational Perspective* (2010); *Trans-lated: Translation and Cultural Manipulation* (2007); *Identity and Representation in Intercultural Communication* (2006); *Cultural Encounters in Translation from Arabic* (2004).



Dr. Susan Kamel

Dr. Susan Kamel is professor of museum studies at the University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin. From 2006 to 2014 she conducted research on the curation of Islamic art and cultural history in the Arab World and Europe. Dr. Kamel has curated many exhibitions, including *Hamida's Song: 100 Years of Muslim Life in Berlin* at the Museum of Islamic Art, *Adolf Bastian's Heritage in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin* at the Ethnological Museum, and *Shoe Size 7 – Women's Soccer in Egypt, Palestine, Turkey and Berlin* at the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Berlin. Her recent participatory exhibitions (for example, *New in Stock: On Migration and Cultural Diversity in Berlin Museum Collections*) aim to include new communities in the process of exhibition development. These projects have shown that “inreach” – a reorganization of institutional structures – is a necessary first step toward increasing the accessibility of the institution as a whole.

Dr. Kamel has published numerous articles on museums, social inclusion, representation, and Islamicate objects. She is currently involved in content and audience development at various museums in the Middle East (Yemen, Israel, and the Gulf states). Since 2014 she has worked as a project manager at the Goethe-Institut Abu Dhabi, setting up a curriculum for museum professionals from Germany and the UAE.

Selected Publications: *Experimentierfeld Museum. Internationale Perspektiven auf Museen, Islam und Inklusion* (ed. with Christine Gerbich, 2014); *From Imperial Museum to Communication Centre? On the New Role of Museums as Mediators between Science and Non-Western Societies* (ed. with Lidia Guzy and Rainer Hatoum, 2010); *Wege zur Vermittlung von Religionen in Berliner Museen. Black Kaaba Meets White Cube* (2004).



Dr. Gabriele Landwehr

Dr. Gabriele Landwehr graduated from the University of Stuttgart, where she went on to receive her doctorate in German literature and history. She has worked for the Goethe-Institut since 1978, since September 2013 as executive manager and regional director for the Gulf region, based in Abu Dhabi. Prior to her current position, she served as an education expert in Munich and Rome and as the executive manager/director of the Goethe-Institut branches in Los Angeles, Mexico City, New York, and Chennai. From 2008 to

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Dr. Landwehr has produced several films on German themes and published numerous books and articles on cultural issues. She is a member of German professional organizations and serves on boards of various foundations. She lectures regularly at academic institutions on international relations, cultural management, and topics related to Germany.



Kara McKeown

Kara McKeown has been teaching in Europe and the Middle East since the 1980s. She has worked in Dubai since 2004 and at Zayed University since 2009, where she teaches English, art history, and museum studies. She holds a BA in the history of art from the University of Sussex, UK, a masters degree in the teaching of English from the University of Kent, UK, and an MA in museum studies from the University of Leicester, UK. She has worked with the Sharjah Museums on a voluntary basis since 2010. In the field of education, her particular interest lies in the application of mobile technology to the learning environment. In the museum field she concentrates on the collection and use of oral history. Her current research projects include an investigation of how young UAE nationals perceive the role and function of museums, and an examination of jewelry as an indicator of social change within Emirati society.



Dr. Ciraj **Rassool**

Dr. Ciraj Rassool was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He is a professor of history and director of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), where he also earned his PhD and serves on the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Humanities Research. He chaired the board of the District Six Museum until 2015 and the Council of Iziko Museums of South Africa until 2013. He has served on the councils of the South African Heritage Resources Agency and the National Heritage Council and is a member of the Human Remains Repatriation Advisory Committee under South Africa's Minister of Arts and Culture. Dr. Rassool has coauthored and coedited a number of books about museums, collecting, and public culture, and is a member of the editorial board for the Berghahn journal *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research*.

Selected publications: *The Politics of Heritage in Africa* (ed. with Derek R. Peterson and Kodzo Gavua, 2015); *Popular Snapshots and Tracks to the Past: Cape Town, Nairobi, Lubumbashi* (ed. with Danielle de Lame, 2010); "Community Museums, Memory Politics and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (author and contributing editor with Ivan Karp et al., 2006); *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum* (ed. with Sandra Prosalendis, 2001); *Skeletons in the Cupboard: South African Museums and the Trade in Human Remains, 1907–1917* (with Martin Legassick, 2015 [2000]).



Dr. John-Paul Sumner

Dr. John-Paul Sumner is audience development curator at the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin. He graduated in 1995 from the University of Glasgow with a PhD in biological sciences, after which he joined the BBC as a radio producer. In the year 2000, John-Paul Sumner was appointed Staff Scientist on Scotland's flagship Millennium Project, the Glasgow Science Centre. He later moved to become project curator at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. His role was to produce exhibitions that targeted new audiences, foster new ways of interpretation, and maximize access to the collections. In this capacity he helped develop an award-winning multimedia experience to improve confidence and self-esteem in young people.

In 2016 John-Paul Sumner won a place in the prestigious Kulturstiftung des Bundes "Fellow Me" program for international curators and began work at the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin. This project involved the development of new communication techniques to engage audiences with the collection and narrative. In his current capacity, John-Paul Sumner curates exhibitions with particular attention to engaging with a wide range of audiences in the upcoming re-display of the collections in the Pergamon Museum.



Angelita Teo

Angelita Teo was appointed director of the National Museum of Singapore in July 2013. In addition to her ongoing quest to reach out to new audiences, she has overseen the museum's major revamp of its permanent galleries, completed in 2015. In 2014 she was awarded Singapore's Public Administration Medal (bronze) for her exemplary contributions to developing a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore.

Prior to her current appointment, Angelita Teo worked at the National Museum from 2002 to 2008. From 2002 to 2007 she served as assistant project director, responsible for seeing through the conservation and redevelopment of the museum's 121-year-old historic building. She was also involved in several cultural development and heritage revitalization projects, for example with the National Art Gallery of Singapore, Malay Heritage Center, and Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall. As deputy director of the museum in 2008, she managed all aspects of the institution's daily operations, supervised the business development team, and built joint projects with artists and foreign museums. From 2012 to 2013, Angelita Teo ran the Festivals and Precinct Development Division of the National Heritage Board, which showcases Singaporean culture through events such as the Singapore Night Festival and the Singapore Heritage Festival.

Majoring in anthropology, Angelita Teo completed her BA at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 1995. She began her museum career

with the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore as an assistant curator in 1996. In 2011, she received an MA in art curatorship from the University of Melbourne with a full Singapore government scholarship.



SAWA Participants



Julia Arndt, Florian Fischer, Anne Gaffrontke, Isabel Jäger, Ann-Christin Lepper, and Mandy Ullman began their MA studies in museum management und communication at the University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin in 2015. They participated in the SAWA Museum Academy (formerly Summer School) 2016 in Sharjah, UAE.

Julia Arndt previously trained as a media and information specialist at the university library in Frankfurt/Main. She graduated from the University of Marburg with a BA in comparative cultural and religious studies with a focus on European ethnology.

Florian Fischer completed an apprenticeship in communication design at Tillmanns Ogilvy in Düsseldorf. He went on to study education and fine art before earning a BA in sociology and history from Martin Luther University in Halle. He has worked as a German teacher and exhibition developer.

Anne Gaffrontke graduated in 2012 from Philipps-Universität in Marburg with a BA in the program “Art, Music and Media Studies: Organisation and Education.” Subsequently she undertook one year of voluntary service via Kulturweit to work in the cultural department of the Goethe-Institut La Paz in Bolivia.

Isabel Jäger previously worked with an agency for artists, where she gained experience in public relations and project management. In 2015 she earned a BA in culture and technology from the Technische Universität Berlin.

Ann-Christin Lepper has completed two museum internships in Cologne and Koblenz, Germany. She graduated in 2015 from the University of Würzburg with a BA in museology and public law.

Mandy Ullmann graduated in 2015 from the University of Applied Science in Potsdam with a BA in archival studies. Later that year she completed an internship at Dundee University, Scotland, organizing an exhibition at the Scottish Parliament.