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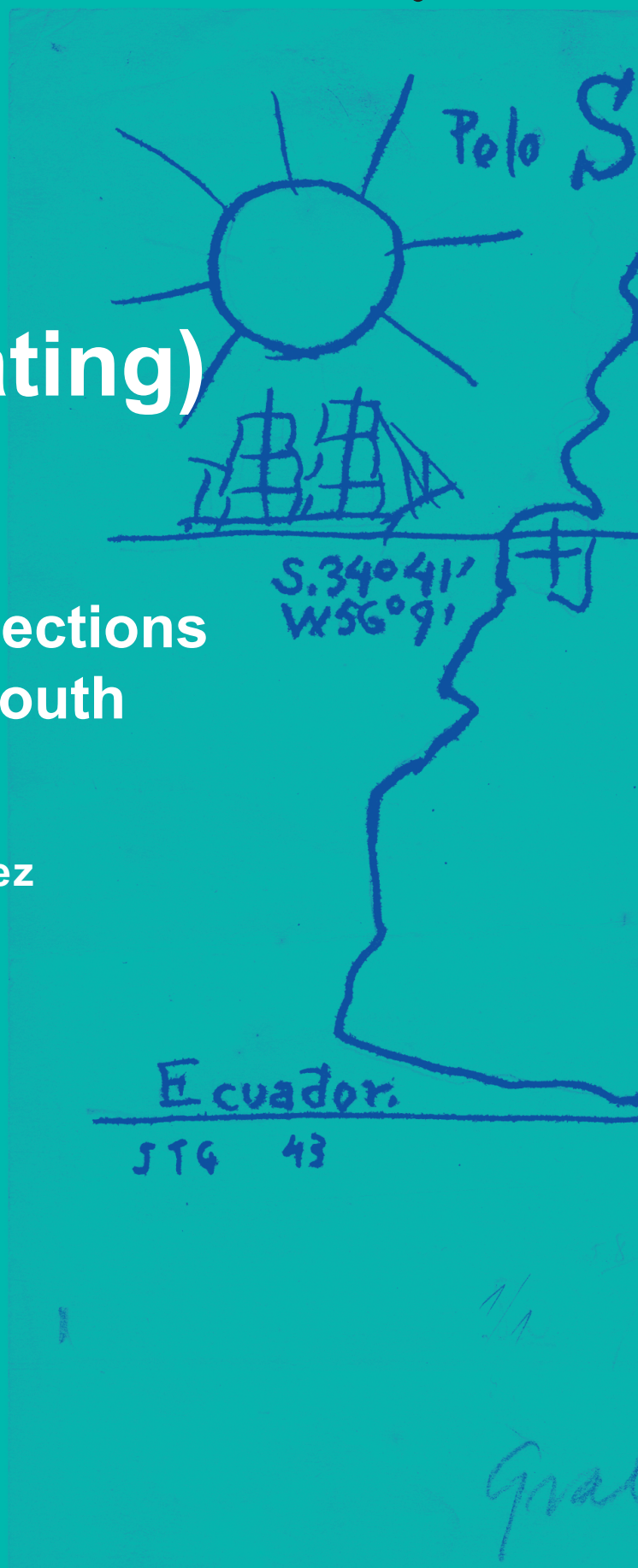
Towards the Integral (and Integrating) Museum:

Over 50 Years of Practices and Reflections From the Global South

by Bruno Brulon Soares, Mario Chagas, Leonardo Mellado González and Karin Weil



Joaquin Torres García, *América Invertida*, 1943
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Karin Weil is an anthropologist with an MBA degree and Diploma in Curatorship. She has over 20 years of experience working in museums, cultural heritage, and communities in southern Chile. She has led national and international teams and research on museums and communities, managed projects to enhance local heritage, curated and built spaces and exhibitions, as well as led training sessions for heritage professionals. She is also currently the Coordinator of the Internationalisation Strategy at the Austral University of Chile, promoting the diversity and polyphony of Chilean territories in various ways.

Held in 1972, the Santiago de Chile Round Table was a fundamental milestone in the historiography of museums and museology from the Global South, and a pivotal event for practices and reflections related to the 'social role' of museums. In the context of Latin American and Caribbean countries, it heralded a wave of transformations in the field of culture and cultural institutions that gained shape and visibility from 1972 onwards. While there were museums and museologies in our region prior to this milestone, the Round Table saw the conception of the 'integral museum', as it was termed in that moment. It was not merely a prospective or aspirational idea for museums of the future; rather it represented a call for the practices and experiences developed in the colonised countries of the Global South to be recognised in all their transformative and liberating power, and in the face of dominant agendas and theories. In this collaborative piece, the co-authors extend the concept to imagine an *integral*, *integrated* and *integrating* museum, discussing the conceptual legacy of the Round Table, as well as considering its present and future effects on museum practice and politics globally.

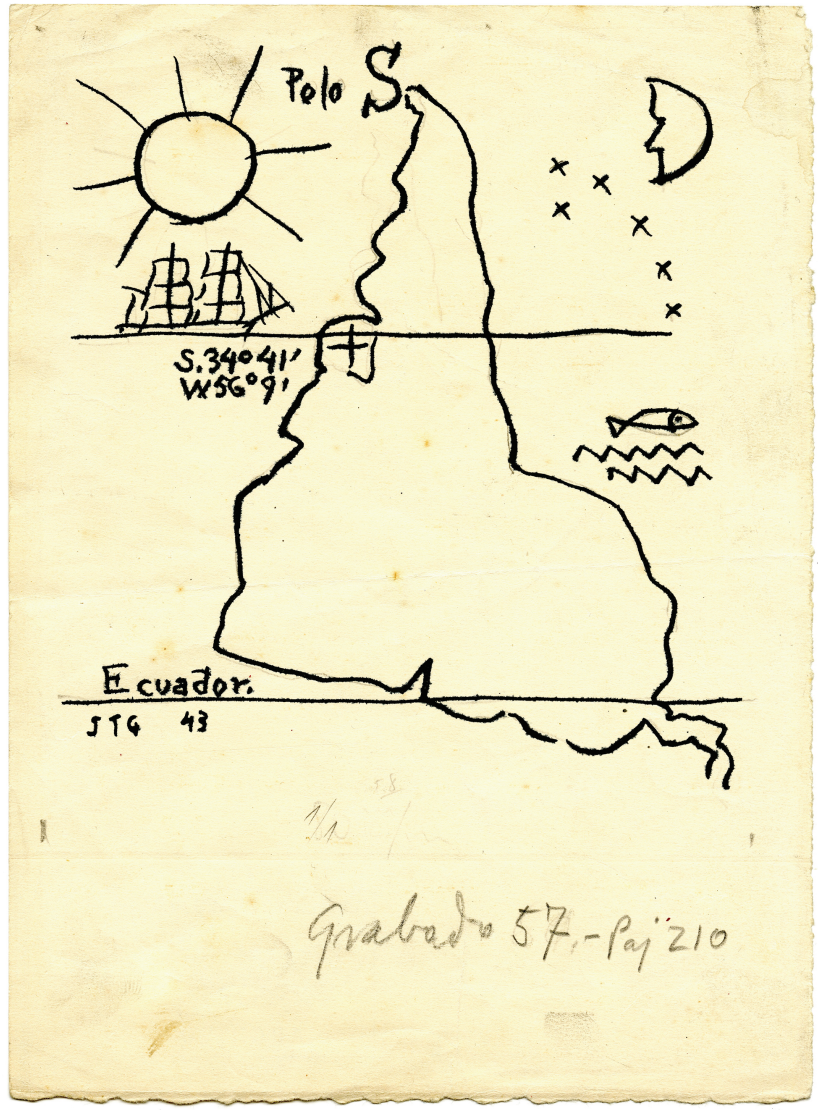
In this sense, it is worth remembering that the integral museum came to prevalence amidst an influx of new social perspectives which — in Latin American countries — arose under the influence of ideas in texts such as the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (1987; first published 1968) and the *Philosophy of Liberation* by Enrique Dussel (1977), both of which were concerned with the worldviews of oppressed classes. Since then, the concept has been the object of successive interpretations and appropriations, eventually transforming into an idea which brings together multiple strengths: at once reflecting necessities and utopias, whilst also identifying paths for new liberating practices, namely through integration.

The Round Table saw the conception of the 'integral museum', as it was termed in that moment. It was not merely a prospective or aspirational idea for museums of the future; rather it represented a call for the practices and experiences developed in the colonised countries of the Global South to be recognised in all their transformative and liberating power.

A decade earlier, Frantz Fanon, an Afro-Caribbean thinker who inspired anticolonial theories and practices, wrote that the colonial world is a compartmentalised one that divided colonised and coloniser (2004; first published 1961). Assuming his perspective, we can see the trajectory of decolonisation as a move to reconcile, or 'reintegrate', distinct parts of the colonial wound, different visions of the world and situated points of view, whose ties were severed by colonial violence. An integral (or integrated/integrating) museum can be read, 50 years after it was proposed in Santiago de Chile, as an invitation to reconnect histories and subjectivities, repair shredded ties and rethink our museal calling, reorienting it towards life so that it no longer perpetuates violence and death as consequences of the colonial wound.

The integral museum calls on museums to fulfil their social, humanitarian and environmental duties; but it also recognises the role and agency of social movements in penetrating the cultural fields, and the identity conflicts which mark decades of repression and authoritarianism in many countries in the region. Since 1972, museums have re-integrated themselves into societies by incorporating the perspectives and voices of various social groups; and museology has committed itself to diverse movements and identities which resist both the status quo and dominating ideologies. Furthermore, in the specific contexts of countries in our diverse and complex region — typically referred to as Latin America and the Caribbean — we see the flourishing of experimental practices, new models and designs which could serve as the basis for a museal movement of international dimensions. The now-dated New Museology, originally articulated by European thinkers in the 1980s, also has its foundations in the Global South. The ecomuseum, proposed in France and then disseminated as a practical model for community action, represents, amongst other things, the most widely-known application of the 'integral museum', reconfigured in light of the ecological agenda elaborated by thinkers of the Global North.

The Round Table — which took place in Santiago de Chile between 20 and 31 May 1972, and was organised collaboratively by ICOM and UNESCO — promoted regional debate on 'the role of museums in relation to the social and economic needs of modern Latin America' (UNESCO 1973). This event was considered by some as a milestone in the process of redefining museums and re-evaluating practices in the region; but the Round Table was also critiqued for assimilating the national developmentalist agenda of certain nation states, disseminating a liberal agenda which had been gaining momentum in the region. Despite the ambiguity of the debates, and participation being limited to intellectuals and state agents, we cannot deny the revolutionary character of the Round Table on museology. In the particular context of ICOM, it was the first international event conducted entirely in Spanish, and that engaged with local issues such as agricultural reform, social inequality between urban and rural environments, education and culture as the basis for social transformation, etc. It was also in Santiago de Chile that a new definition of the museum was proposed, considering for the first time the active role of communities in the running of these institutions (see related article on updating the museum definition in this issue).



Joaquin Torres García, *América Invertida*, 1943 © Museo Torres García — www.torresgarcia.org.uy

The concept of the 'integral museum' would serve as the grounds for countless negotiations between the states of countries in the region and civil society around the purpose and potential of the contemporary museum. The undeniable importance of the Round Table in opening museums up to their respective societies is connected to the related promise for future rural and urban development, which brought to the fore the effects of international regulations and criteria (such as those promoted by ICOM and UNESCO) on groups who are marginalised and excluded from institutions linked to the state's power.

But whilst attempting to mediate competing debates, participants of the Round Table — among them the Argentine Mario Teruggi and Mexican Mario Vázquez — proposed the idea of the 'social museum', synonymous with the 'integral museum' or 'integrated museum'. The concept capitalised on this pragmatic notion which came out of the 'question of integration between rural and urban issues' in contemporary societies (Guido 2012/1972). The debates of Santiago de Chile no doubt influenced the subsequent development of ecomuseums in France, with the compelling idea of a 'museum integrated with societies and its environment'. In the context of Brazil and other South American countries, however, it was predominantly the idea of the 'social museum' which would be revived, some years later, with the resurgence of social museology, directly linked to the principles of New Museology propagated by MINOM and ICOM (Declaration of Québec 1984).

It was against the panorama of political transformations taking place in Latin America and following the end of totalitarian regimes in several countries in the region, particularly in the 1980s, that social museums would assume 'insurgent' outlooks: ones pertinent to a moment in which society, culture and memory were being democratised. Memory, in particular, was conceived as a right acquired by different marginal groups and minorities who had started to become visible to the state; in the case of Brazil, following the Federal Constitution of 1988. What is today referred to as 'social museology' represents the appropriation of museums and the occupation of heritage by minority groups, as well as recognition by the state of the need to re-democratise the cultural heritage field in Brazil.

The texts that follow are the result of a dialogue between different visions of the Santiago de Chile Round Table's legacy on museology — a museology that has been transformed by the integrating character of practices and ideas from the Global South. The authors invited to contribute to this discussion depart from a common starting point: the legacy of the 'integral museum' as proposed in Chile 50 years ago. They set out the debated practices and potential transformations, but also consider the liberating power of the ideas that circulated in Santiago from 1973 and won the hearts of museologists across the world. Far from representing a mere ideology, the integral and integrating museum is a call to action. This is the sort of collaborative and cooperative action that Fanon drew our attention to, and which allows for the mending of ties between 'colonisers' and the 'colonised' — and for the reconstruction, from fragments of the past, of a future forged in hope and courage.

Bruno Brulon Soares

Forging the Integral-Integrated-Integrating Museum

Leonardo Mellado González

This text is the result of diverse reflections and exchanges which have been developed over a number of decades by the Iberic-American museum and museological community, particularly a branch of which considers itself the inheritor of one of the most important museological milestones in this vast cultural region. We refer to the 'Round Table on the development and role of museums in the contemporary world', or as it is popularly known, the Santiago de Chile Round Table of 1972.

In 2022, we commemorated 50 years since this significant event, which has left an enduring mark to the present day, and which saw the confluence of diverse ideas, practices, revisions, proposals, experiences and challenges that we cannot ignore.

In the diverse meetings, conventions, seminars, symposiums and conferences that took place as part of the commemorative event, a number of comparisons between past and present emerged, such as the appearance, or rise in, a number of social and environmental issues being tackled by museums and their communities. We thus share the common notion that our societies are passing through a moment of undeniable crisis — while also acknowledging contextual differences.

If the assertion that museums are 'at the service of society' remains relevant and is formally promoted in the updated museum definition, it is no less certain that society has changed, and so the premise of a museum at the service of society must also be rethought.

A question of crisis

Let us remind ourselves that the Round Table of Santiago highlighted the following in its opening Resolution:

> *Considering that the social, economic and cultural changes occurring in the world, and particularly in many under developed areas, constitute a challenge to museology. That mankind is living through a profound crisis; that technology has produced an enormous advance of civilization which is not matched by cultural development; that this has led to an imbalance between the countries which have achieved great material development and others which remain on the periphery of development and are still enslaved as a result of their history; that most of the problems revealed by contemporary society have their roots in situations of injustice and cannot be solved until those injustices are rectified.* (Round Table 1972, p. 13)

Springing from these premises, the 'crisis' cited here is understood as an opportunity for wide-reaching regional change: one which, from diverse points of view, is beneficial to society and in which the museum becomes a decisive actor, called on to contribute to transformations which benefit the people.

Today, this sense of profound change is becoming increasingly relevant, as demonstrated, for example, by cultural and identity-based tensions, democratic crises in the complex contemporary political arena; the consequences of global warming and problems of environmental and sustainability; public health crises; the growing concentration of wealth among the most privileged groups amid economic uncertainty, amongst many other pressures. We cannot argue that the problems engendered by these crises are the same, but their domains are closely related, as they reveal similar global issues. However, I wish to underline one notable difference that separates them (from my point of view.): In the past, the region's museums had utopian visions of themselves as potential agents of social change: as promoters and defenders of rights. Today, however, this vision is largely limited to declarations of intent; to strong intellectual and theoretical content that emphasises museums as social actors, but museological practices whose transformative approach is more performative and gimmicky than real, analogous to the special effects used in cinema. This, of course, does not rule out isolated museum initiatives that are born within communities and are worthy of praise.

'Linking past with present'

With respect to the past, another important element which links us to the Santiago Round Table (its past and its present) and which we have inherited in our very definition of the museum, is the foregrounding of the institution's social role, as endorsed by the 26th ICOM General Meeting held in Prague in August 2022, at the ICOM Extraordinary General Assembly.

In the 1972 Round Table's resolutions, the Integral Museum was defined as

> *an institution in the service of society of which it forms an inseparable part and, of its very nature, contains the elements which enable it to help in moulding the consciousness of the communities it serves, through which it can stimulate those communities to action by projecting forward its historical activities so that they culminate in the presentation of contemporary problems; that is to say, by linking together past and present, identifying itself with indispensable structural changes and calling forth others appropriate to its particular national context.* (Round Table 1972, p. 14)

In August 2022, following an 18-month-long participatory process in which hundreds of museum professionals from 126 National Committees across the world took part, the following updated definition was agreed upon:

> *A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution at the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability.*

They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing. (ICOM 2022, online)

If the assertion that museums are 'at the service of society' remains relevant and is formally promoted in the updated museum definition, it is no less certain that society has changed, and so the premise of a museum at the service of society must also be rethought. The focus around development and technological advances to improve social conditions assumes a paradigm which is viewed sceptically in the present day, given that material development has not translated into genuine and significant change for inhabitants of the region, and social differences, cultural discrimination and segregation continue to be realities. This exposes a subtle shift in the paradigm of the social/integral museum, obliging us to pay attention to the current needs of society which should be met by museums.

From the integral-integrated museum to the integrating museum

In line with the Santiago Round Table resolutions, the museum should be *integral*, in order to understand the diverse issues that make up reality, and to attempt to find solutions to the problems that have been raised, taking inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives. It should be *integrated*, because it is an inalienable part of the society in which it exists; yet it also runs the risk of being essentialist — of managing to disguise outdated, and supposedly neutral, conservative ideologies; or of propagating the invented traditions of imagined, supposedly neutral communities whose motivations are purportedly 'natural' and impartial.

While museums should strive to be integral and integrated, it should be consciously recognised that *neutral* museums do not exist; rather than encyclopaedic pseudo-possessors of truth and expert knowledge, they are always biased in some way — by omission, as is the case of many history museums which have erased the existence of historical subjects including workers, women, children, sexual dissidents, amongst others; or by advancing a whitewashed, collective narrative, generally from economic, social and cultural elites, in which Indigenous people and people of African descent are rendered invisible, excluded from the historical construction of collective memory.

In light of these inherent biases, the contemporary, integral and integrated museum also must be *integrating*. For example, art museums should be able to assume that the meagre presence of female artistic production in collections is more the result of bias than a lack of available examples. Similarly, the stories of all people — whether Indigenous, African, *mestizo*, male, female or children — can be shared and reinscribed with equal value, whilst respecting their differences, diverse knowledges and beliefs; but these stories should be promoted through *intercultural* rather than *multicultural* perspectives: that is to say, in an integrating, but never fundamentalist way. Sexual diversity should, moreover, not be obscured or ignored as part of the diversity of human experience, nor should people with disabilities be excluded — just as other groups, such as people experiencing homelessness or urban poverty, migrants or rural inhabitants, were previously considered in 1972.

It is doubtless that such diversities are much more visible today than they were in the past, including in museum contexts, but not necessarily because conventional or traditional museums have done anything to change conditions. Rather, communities have decided to create their own museums, such as eco-museums, local and neighbourhood-based museums situated in favelas, in the open air, in schools, amongst others, and which, instead of adopting museological theories in advance, have been paving the way as they go, leaving an indelible mark on museum-based action for many decades.

But *integrating* also means bridging any gaps which could impede communities' access to, and participation in, museums. Reducing the cost of entry is not enough; it is also important to create sliding scales to take into consideration audiences such as children, the elderly and people with reduced mobility. This might also mean using simple language for explanatory texts, or collaboratively engaging in educational activities and outreach initiatives with a pedagogical focus, rather than a simply promotional one — thus generating deeper learning opportunities, or simply humanising cultural initiatives and exhibitions that are often more preoccupied with aesthetic designs that meet procedure and protocol, rather than focusing on being meaningful for people.

One factor to consider in the quest towards greater integration is how new technologies might bridge, or exacerbate, certain inequalities. It is impossible to deny that new technologies play an important role in today's world, although the digital divide, which widened during the pandemic, does reproduce a number of inequalities, such as that between rural and urban populations, for example — above all in terms of who is able to visit museums. The same is true of cultural and educational divides, which in many cases create more segregation. It is here that museums, in their service to society, need to transform themselves into conscious agents that promote change: true drivers of integrating social transformation that are, at the same time, socially and environmentally sustainable.

In short, *integrating*, for states and of course for museums, means protecting and promoting cultural diversity: a fundamental pillar of peoples' identities, and one that is inseparable from respect for human dignity and for all human rights, embodied in cultural heritage as declared at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022). In other words, in this context, *integrating* also means taking responsibility for environmental issues, memory and the recognition of cultural diversities, as well as the search for regional integration.

It is for all these reasons that museums in general, and especially those of Latin America and the Caribbean, must welcome the changes that arise from intellectual, social and cultural movements: they must be open to new (and not-so-new) approaches, with the aim of recognising diversity in all its facets (for example, gender, sexual, cultural diversity, etc.). Thus, as was pointed out in 1972, museums must be comprehensive and *integrated*; but also (as we now argue) *integrating*: broadly representative and equality-seeking, inter and transdisciplinary, intergenerational (highlighting the role of children, youth and adults), purposeful, inclusive, intercultural, sustainable and contextualised; they should be situated within regional approaches,

given that museums have the power to transform and improve the world.

These have been our aims in the most recent commemorations of the 1972 Round Table, and in the realisation of a new Santiago Round Table, entitled 'Revisions of the past, problems of the present and challenges for the future. Meeting and critical reflection on the role of museums from LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) to the world'. Through this new initiative, we propose to revisit history and identify current trends and opportunities in the field of museology, with the active participation of communities as a central tenet.

In conclusion, we must assume collective responsibility to ensure that museums are social tools, situated at the center of communities and their territories. We must ensure that they encourage local participation in creating change, thus forging new narratives in their approach to contemporary issues; we must also ensure that they respect the past and the positions they have gained, while looking to the future. They must question the concept of identity, asking 'who are we?' In addition, they must be places where narratives are forged by consensus and through diversity. While the 1972 Santiago Round Table raised many challenges that did not fully address the contemporary issues we now face, it remains the motivation, drive, and even justification for questioning how to incorporate new approaches and practices into global museology.

Community museums, experiences of integration in the service of planetary health: examples from southern Chile

Karin Weil

'Each people have its history, no doubt unable to be repeated,
and it is evident that where a group of families
come together to live,
whether spontaneously or in a planned way,
that is where communal life is created,
where knowledge appears and the very difficulties of existence
are faced…' (From the website of the Museo La Casa de la Bandera)[1]

The Round Table on the development and role of museums in the contemporary world is considered a significant milestone, particularly for the so-called New Museology: not only thanks to its wide convening of specialists in sectors as diverse as agriculture, town planning, science and technology, education and museology, but also since it has challenged museums to become agents capable of facing the crisis scenarios in which society is mired, as outlined by Mostny (1972).

Fifty years on from this meeting, the first of many calls to consider museums, their purpose and contents from a perspective that more fully incorporates the needs and concerns of its territories, was no chimera. The concept of the integral museum is palpable in many corners of the Latin American and Caribbean region today. Community museums, living examples of the so-called integral museum, are vibrant grassroots organisations in which a social function is not only central to, but also transversal in its museological purpose. They develop in a concrete territory, responsive to and potentially impactful on the socio-cultural dynamics that play out within them. They become crucial social actors which contribute to the regeneration of the social fabric of communities, principally because they reflect different social, political, cultural, economic and environmental processes which take place within these communities.

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, these museums tend to confidently embody their integral nature, emerging from their grassroots origins and their situated practice, and centred on the deep processes which concern the lives, emotions and well-being of the people and their territory. In this way, they become safe spaces that build diversity, complicity and fellowship.

If the historical, political and social contexts in which the Santiago de Chile Round Table of 1972 took place are indeed not the ones which exist in the region today, the same challenges and socioeconomic inequalities persist. Issues such as unequal access to natural resources, struggles to legitimate diversity, the integration of Indigenous peoples, as well as the normalisation of precarity in cultural and museum work, remain latent, continue to be disputed — and are in some cases even invisible. This is why, today more than ever, the concept of the integral museum has renewed weight, alluding as it does not only to a building, but also its surrounding territory, its cultural and natural dimensions, and the past and present of those inhabiting its ecosystem. Putting the museum's exhibitions, collections, contents and narrative at the service of well-being and territory, facilitating the discussion process, pushing for diversity, promoting spaces that allow for social change: all of these seem to be the new challenges that museums find themselves interrogating. These social changes likewise seem to represent a new way of understanding social function, with museums now viewing it as something more akin to that which seeks to integrate the past and present, the diversity of species cohabiting within an ecosystem, and the importance of considering histories and memories from a situated perspective that respects polyphony.

The Cases of La Casa de la Bandera Museum and the Despierta Hermano de Malalhue Museum

La Villa Santa Lucía[2] is a small village or homestead in southern Chile, located on the western side of the Andes mountain range in an area that has historically been subject to glacial landform and volcanic activity. The village was founded in 1982 during the construction of the Carretera Austral (Chile's Route 7), a project headed by the dictator Augusto Pinochet, whose purpose was to better connect the southern part of the country, unifying the most isolated regions with overland routes all the way to Chilean Patagonia. The village is located in the commune of Chaitén, in the Lagos region, with a population of approximately 136 inhabitants and 71 households. In December 2017, a large area of the village was washed away by a flood produced by the heavy rains that fell over the weekend together with a glacial landslide. This was one of southern Chile's biggest catastrophes, washing away all the area's flora and fauna and entirely destroying 28 houses as well as public infrastructure; it also left the village completely flooded and cut off. 21 people died and 11 were injured, not just by the flood, but also by several fires that erupted minutes after the natural disaster.

A year after the catastrophe, La Casa de la Bandera Museum was created, as a meeting place for neighbours and friends of the family whose house was only partially destroyed.[3] That same family created a space at the service of the community which does not seek to emphasise the lived tragedy, but rather considers how to transform it into an opportunity for reflection and discussion — on life and that which transcends it. It is a testimonial and affective museum: one that offers a simple account of the tragedy, without any museographic pretense aside from sharing with the community the history of the town of Villa Santa Lucía, highlighting its origins, daily life and environment. It is likewise a space of memory and family catharsis, paying homage to those who took part in the recovery; and it envisions itself as a place whose recent history advocates for collective resilience and the hope of seeing life reborn. In a country which is quite vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis and in which extreme climactic events are increasing in frequency and intensity, this space is also an invitation to think about the intrinsic relationship between human beings and their environment.

Malalhue is a small urban town, administratively dependent on the commune of Lanco, in the northern part of the present-day Región de los Ríos in the River Leufucade valley. It is an area populated by roughly 2,500 inhabitants, most of whom have a vocation in agriculture. Since its territorial incorporation in 1917, the date on which the commune of Lanco was administratively created, the locality has played a significant role in the human and cultural life of its inhabitants. Its roots are found in Mapuche culture from roughly the 19th century, when Chilean settlers began to inhabit the territory, particularly those associated with the extraction of wood and forestry. Amid inter-ethnic and intercultural tensions during the 1940s, local people found themselves in vulnerable social and administrative circumstances. Thanks to the civic organising efforts of the Malalhuina people, it achieved recognition as a village in 1947. Etymologically, the word *Malalhue* comes from Mapuche communities who have historically inhabited this area; its meaning refers to the place where the waters meet in an 'enclosed space' and the livestock are brought to drink.

The Despierta Hermano de Malalhue Museum (Wake Up, Brother! Museum of Malalhue)[4] was born in 1996 from a community-school proposal, with the aim of salvaging the memory of Mapuche culture, remembering (and anchoring in the present-day) the belonging of the village to the community, and constructing the value of interculturalism in a participatory way. It resulted from the efforts of an extracurricular group from the Liceo República del Brasil of the same city, who collaborated with traditional organisations of the native peoples inhabiting the region. The museum has now become a familiar treasure chest, holding diverse objects which have been preserved and passed down for generations, thereby safeguarding the identity of all members of the Malalhue community.

Such initiatives foster and promote cultural integration — and a sense of community based on respect for diversity and the environment. Both cases presented here clearly exemplify how museums can become spaces that facilitate processes of transforming social reality, highlighting their responses to various sociopolitical, socio-cultural or socio-natural conflicts, and how they can collaborate in the construction of more resilient and context-sensitive societies. Both cases also demonstrate the role of the museum as an agent for social change; as an asset in which a feeling of belonging is projected and embodied in a community: one that privileges collaborative and reciprocal relationships based on affection and the common good.

Issues such as unequal access to natural resources, struggles to legitimate diversity, the integration of Indigenous peoples, as well as the normalisation of precarity in cultural and museum work, remain latent, continue to be disputed — and are in some cases even invisible.

The Santiago de Chile Round Table and Eshu's Stone

Mario Chagas

Eshu killed a bird yesterday
with a stone he threw today.

I

The Yoruba expression in the epigraph above puts us face to face with time as a theorical, abstract and philosophical notion. In this expression, past, present and future move not in a straight line, but are instead winding, moving forwards, backwards and in circles. This is an ancestral aphorism which reminds us that Eshu — Orisha[5] of communication and language, messenger between different spheres — has the ability to travel across time. If Eshu can kill yesterday with a stone he threw today, we could also say that he is able to kill today with a stone he threw yesterday, or with a stone he is going to throw tomorrow. In this sense, Eshu is a time traveller. Thus, the connection between museums and Eshu are stronger than one might have imagined. Museums can also travel through time, connecting yesterday with today (and even tomorrow) and today with yesterday — which once was today, before becoming tomorrow.

II

The spirit of the Santiago de Chile Round Table (MRSC) is perhaps a kind of Eshu. It has the ability to move from the present (and therefore from the future), towards the past and from the past (that once was future) towards the present. The Round Table throws a stone from the past which reaches the present and throws a stone from the present which reaches the past. Might it have been the grace of Eshu that laid the foundations for the Santiago de Chile Round Table? It is a good theory.

III

The historical-political map of Latin America in 1972, from a democratic perspective, points to Chile as a source of inspiration. At the time, the country was living under a socialist and democratically elected government. At the dawn of the 1970s, Chile was a democratic island surrounded by dictatorships on all sides and, for this very reason, welcomed exiled Brazilians. There was Mario Pedrosa, who conceived the Museo de la Solidaridad (Museum of Solidarity) in Chile in 1972;[6] Darcy Ribeiro;[7] Juca Ferreira,[8] and others.

1972 brought many key developments, tragedies, tensions and contradictions to Brazil and to the world. Exiled in London, the composer and singer Caetano Veloso recorded the emblematic and revolutionary album *Transa*;[5] the Tropicália musician Torquato Neto[9] committed suicide, and the libertarian actress Leila Diniz[10] died in an aeroplane accident. In the same year, then-US President Richard Nixon[11] was re-elected, resigning two years later as a result of the political corruption scandal which became known as Watergate. The goal of this resignation was to bypass the avoidable process of impeachment.

IV

Much has happened in Chile since the coup of 11 September 1973 in Chile. Supported by a North American government marked by Watergate, the coup overturned Chile's Democratic State of Law, imposed a bloody military dictatorship and defiled democratic institutions. In museal terms the coup interrupted an extraordinary process that was then underway with the Santiago de Chile Declaration, and with the building of the Museum of Solidarity,[12] the result of Mario Pedrosa's creative efforts.

Despite the silencing imposed by the dictatorship's repressive environment on all progressive initiatives — among them the Declaration of the Santiago de Chile Round Table — the Round Table's impact in Latin America, and to a certain extent across the world, has been remarkable, especially since the 1980s. In this sense, the reverberations triggered by the Declarations of Quebec (Canada) and of Oaxtepec (Mexico), both in 1984, merit recognition. In particular, the Declaration of Quebec is responsible for launching the International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM), which was subsequently founded in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1985.

In 1992, amidst the Earth Summit of 1992, the First International Meeting of Ecomuseums was held in Rio de Janeiro. This Meeting was both significant and transformative. Partnerships between Portuguese and Brazilian professors and researchers, which continue into the present day, were formed during this event, with significant outcomes in terms of research, courses, seminars, theses, dissertations, publications and more.

Over the last 50 years, we have witnessed the Round Table's many achievements, but can also identify its limitations. It undoubtedly constitutes an enormous advance in highlighting the social function of museums, in recognising the responsibility of museums in combatting social injustices, in defending permanent education and so forth. However, we can also identify limitations in its liberal developmentalist agenda; in its lack of a participatory perspective; in its orientation towards the practice of a museology 'for' rather than 'with' — and it is even less oriented towards an in-world museology.

V

The resumption of libertarian (non-conservative or reactionary) museal perspectives in Latin America has been gradual and systematic. One might cite the emergence of a social museology, a critical museology, a popular museology, a decolonial museology, an insurgent or non-submissive museology, or even a biophilous museology[13] — as opposed to what Achille Mbembe (2019) terms necropolitics: 'the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die' (p. 66).[14] What is important to recognise in each of these cases is that we are talking about a museology that does not end with discourse, that does not become imprisoned in the disciplinary minutiae of academic methods, but rather calls on the academy to take on social commitments; it is anchored and sustained in practical life, in praxis.

There have been frequent attempts to block the advancement of social museology in Brazil, particularly in the first decade of the 21st century — but these have been tackled systematically and rigorously, as much in discourse as in practice. The multiplication of social museology experiences throughout Brazil have effectively (though temporarily) silenced more sceptical voices, especially those that camouflaged themselves as

politically neutral and kept to the shadows behind pseudo-technical-scientific screens.

This is why, in Brazil, social museology bears the signs of advancement, innovation and change. It is the normative, conservative and disciplined museology that shows resistance, that is reactionary.

Synthesis: the past, present and future of the Round Table together make up the seed which sprouts in the here and now, and, to some extent, they are the stone thrown by Eshu from today to yesterday, from yesterday to today, from tomorrow to today, from today to tomorrow, and so on.

VI

The progress of social museology from the 21st century onwards has been radical. In the context of Brazil, I would argue that acknowledging the connection between social museology and democracy is vital. Not just any sort of democracy, but a participatory and radical democracy. In this sense, democratising public access to museums, whilst positive, is not enough; from a social museological point of view, it is necessary to democratise the museum tool, museums' means of production. It is necessary to invest in cultural citizenship (Chaui 2021) and recognise that access to culture and education, to cultural and educational institutions is not equal for everyone. The pandemic, in particular, contributed to exposing inequalities, widening structural racism as well as anti-republican and necropolitical practices.

A museology that is committed to citizenship, to human rights, to democracy, to the common good and to a good life is deeply rooted in Latin America. This does not mean we can relax and let our guard down. On the contrary, it is necessary to defend, and support on a daily basis, biophilous museology over necropolitics. It is clearly important to defend archives and heritage, which engage with the process of identity formation; but even so, we must recognise that our greatest heritage is life and well-being; it is our ancestors, our rivers, our forests, our seas, harmony with nature.

Synthesis: A museology that does not serve life, serves nothing! A museology that does not take care of life doesn't take care of anything!

VII

A critical reading of the Round Table acknowledges its importance, as well as the need to advance and break past its limitations. In this sense, it is essential, in building public policy for museums, to assume a commitment to education; to full accessibility; to the fight against structural racism and religious racism; to the radical defence of human dignity, human rights and citizenship; to the defence of the rights of Indigenous peoples, *quilombolas*,[15] traditional communities, favela inhabitants and the LGBTQIA+ community; to the defence of nature and nonhuman rights. It is also indispensable to commit to the articulation of networks of museums that can work towards building a future with greater cultural citizenship, that undertake systematic efforts toward democratising the media, and that affirm a commitment to producing more health, joy, enchantment and happiness: creating a museum that is, therefore in favour of museophilia (Chagas 2020).

VIII

Commemorating 50 years of the Santiago de Chile Round Table puts us face to face with the stone of Eshu. Thrown from the present towards the past or from the past towards the present, the stone produces impacts. It can equally ask questions from the present of the past, and carry questions from the past to the present. The stone of Eshu shows us that everything is in flux. The past has not passed, it continues; the future and present also continue.

There is an Eshu stone cast into the middle of the path of the contemporary museal world, and it needs to be faced. From a poetic point of view, we are referring to an identity-driven agenda, a kind of Eshu's stone in the middle of the path. How can universalities and singularities be put in dialogue with one another? How can a fertile dialogue be maintained between universal and identity-based agendas?

To my way of thinking, in the contemporary world identity-driven agendas cannot be given up; they are urgent and require action. Hunger is urgent, and it is Black and Indigenous and Brown. Combatting environmental crime is urgent. Fighting religious and structural racism is urgent. Resisting and denouncing the genocide of Black people in Brazil is urgent. Supporting the fight and fighting against the systematic decimation of Indigenous peoples is urgent. Combatting crimes perpetrated against women and the LGBTQIA+ community is also urgent.

A museology that is committed to citizenship, to human rights, to democracy, to the common good and to a good life is deeply rooted in Latin America. This does not mean we can relax and let our guard down.

To my way of thinking, one cannot and should not abandon identity-driven agendas: they are urgent and fundamental; but it is necessary to open up a creative dialogue with universalist agendas which have aggregative power, which have the capacity to produce unity and connection to greater and transformative causes and battles: ones capable of creating common social benefits.

From the poetic and mythic point of view, it does not matter in which time period Eshu threw the stone; what matters is that the stone was thrown and that it will reach its target. Movement between distinct times; the ability to act as a bridge between distinct knowledges, between distinct cultures; the ability to act as a link, a connection: these are all abilities that belong to the museum and to the Round Table. Celebrating 50 years since the Round Table, we realise that it is one of Eshu's stones.

Notes

1 Unless otherwise specified, translations from the Spanish and Portuguese in this text are the work of a *Museum International* translator.

2 See this video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdoAE644dLw [Accessed 2 June 2023].

3 For more information, see the following website: https://www.registromuseoschile.cl/663/w3-article-115410.html.

4 For more information on the Museo Comunitario Despierta Hermano de Malalhue, see this page: https://www.registromuseoschile.cl/663/w3-article-88482.html [Accessed 2 June 2023].

5 *Orisha* is a term derived from Yoruba culture, which designates the deities of their religious pantheon and was adopted by the cosmovisions of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé.

6 Mario Pedrosa was born in 1900, in Timbaúba (Pernambuco) and died in 1981, in Rio de Janeiro. He was a lawyer, writer, journalist, and art critic. See more about the Museu de la Solidaridad at this website: https://santiagodochile.com/museu-de-la-solidaridad-salvador-allende/.

7 Darcy Ribeiro was born in 1922 in Montes Claros (Minas Gerais) and died in 1997, in Brasília (Distrito Federal). He was an anthropologist, educator and politician who founded the Museu do Índio (Indian Museum) in Rio de Janeiro, in 1953, as well as other museums.

8 Juca Ferreira was born in Bahia in 1949. He is a sociologist and politician. He was State Minister for Culture under the governments of Lula and Dilma, and is a supporter of Brazil's National Museums Policy.

9 *Transa* is an LP recorded in 1971 at Chappell Recording Studios, in London, and released by Philips Records company in January 1972.

10 Torquato Neto was born in 1944, in Teresina (Piauí) and died in 1972, in Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro). He was a poet, lyricist and one of the founders of the Tropicália movement.

11 Leila Diniz was born in 1945, in Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro) and died in 1972. She was a talented actress who broke with conservative behaviour and challenged, in her own way, the military dictatorship.

12 Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994) was the 37th president of the United States (1969-1974).

13 Following the coup of September 1973, those who had been working on the creation of the Solidarity Museum were forced into exile; the Museum of Contemporary Art, where the works already donated to the collection were located, was closed. The Solidarity Museum reopened in 1991. The Declaration of the Round Table was silenced and cast into oblivion. In 1984,during ICOM's International Conference in Quebec, Canada, the proceedings of the Round Table of Santiago de Chile were resumed.

14 The idea of a 'biophilous museology' derives from the concept of *biophilia* developed by Erich Fromm (1900-1980), defined as 'the passionate love of life and of all that is alive', which manifests as the 'wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea, or a social group' (Fromm, 1973, p. 406). *Necrophilia*, the opposite of *biophilia*, is 'the passion to destroy life and the attraction for all that is dead, in decay and purely mechanical' (Fromm 1973, p. 25). Also see Fromm, 1964. *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*. New York: Harper and Row.

15 Mbembe analyses contemporary social forces that subjugate life to the power of death in his work of 2019.

12 The term denotes the territories where Afro-Brazilian residents, or 'quilombolas', live. Quilombos are settlements that were historically established in Brazil by enslaved people who had escaped.

► *This article was originally written in Portuguese and Spanish. The original version is available on ICOM's website.*

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