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**History and education as bases for museum legitimacy in latin american museums: some comments for a discussion from a critical museology point of view**

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abstrakt | abstract ▷

Článek představuje koncepci „kritické muzeologie“ jako rámec pro analýzu sociální legitimacy muzeí. Kritická muzeologie je viděna jako teorie, která podporuje názor, že tradiční muzeologie je stejně jako jeden z jejích základních pojmů – muzealita – produktem společnosti, ve kterém byla vytvořena. To znamená, že je definována sociálním, politickým a ekonomickým kontextem, v němž muzeologové a muzejní instituce působí. Tento přístup by mohl vnést trochu světla na rozdíly mezi muzei v Latinské Americe a muzei v Evropě a Spojených Státech. To také podporuje myšlenku, že muzea by se měla stát prostorem, kde, když budeme parafrázovat Marxe a Engelse: „všechno co je pevné se rozplyne ve vzduchu, všechno co je svaté se znesvěťí a člověk je nakonec nucen čelit se strážlivými smysly svým skutečným podmínkám života a svým vztahům se svým vlastním druhem“.

The article introduces the concept of “critical museology” as a framework for the analysis of the social legitimacy of museums. Critical museology is seen as a theory that advocates the idea that traditional museology as well as one of its basic concepts – museality – is the product of the society in which is created i.e., it is defined by the social, political and economical context where the museologist and the museum institutions are immersed. This approach could shed some light on the differences between museums of Latin America and museums of Europe and United States. It also advocates the idea that museums should become spaces where, paraphrasing Marx and Engels: “all that is solid melts into air all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind”.

Oscar Navarro

# History and education as bases for museum legitimacy in latin american museums:

some comments for a discussion

from a critical museology point of view<sup>1</sup>

## Critical museology: A theoretical framework

Museology is a scientific discipline<sup>2</sup> as well as an academic discipline that studies certain relationships between human beings and their environment and in this sense museology entails the expression, valorization and affirmation of various forms of identity; therefore it has a wide social significance.<sup>3</sup> We defend that museology and consequently critical museology are scientific disciplines because they have a theoretical structured system that possesses a set of propositions accepted by a scientific community that expresses certain ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects related to its subject matter; it also has a special language that is different from the everyday language and is used to structure what we can call a “museological reality” and expresses a certain scientific knowledge in that sense. The museological knowledge also has a set of fundamental questions related

to relationship between human beings and their environment.

Although traditional museology deals in part with the inner workings (i.e., research, cataloguing, registering and exhibiting of objects) of museums, critical museology's scope transcends the walls of the museum and studies the place and function of museums in society, their social, political and economic roots and their possible role in the improvement of society. Thus, critical museology is the scientific discipline that studies – as we said it before – certain relationships that humankind establish with certain parcels of its environment pertaining not only its material surroundings but also the memory and history of civilization and how it manifests through time.

The idea of a critical museology is not new, it has been around since the late seventies in the Reinwardt Academy in the Netherlands and so far it does not have specific doctrinal principles<sup>4</sup> According to María del Mar Flórez Crespo “the critical museology arises from the constant crisis of the concept of museum as space of interaction between the public and the collection”<sup>5</sup> This interaction comprehends the use of history and education in the building-(re)presentation and communication of a message

<sup>1</sup> This article has been inspired by the conversations that took place in the last ICOFOM meeting (2006) in the city of Córdoba in the Republic of Argentina and by some ideas discussed with Professors Peter van Mensch and Ivo Maroevic through the years since I graduated from the Reinwardt Academy as well as with my Latin-American colleagues (v.gr., Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno, Luis Alegría, Georgina De Carli, Tereza Scheiner, Nelly Decarolis). It also contains a very short version of the ideas presented at the Symposium of Critical Museology in Malaga, Spain in the year 2011. A more detail version of the fundamentals of critical museology is presented in the proceedings of the symposium.

<sup>2</sup> This idea has been well defended by professionals as Peter van Mensch, Ivo Maroevic and Z. Stransky and the members of ICOFOM along the years and their constant work in this matter has been fruitful in many aspects.

<sup>3</sup> Ivo Maroevic. “Museology as a discipline of information sciences”. *Nordisk Museologi*, 2(1997), p.77.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this subject see: Jesús Pedro Lorente Lorente. “Nuevas tendencias en la teoría museológica: a vueltas con la Museología crítica”. *Museos.es: Revista de la Subdirección General de Museos Estatales*, 2(2006), pp. 24-33.

<sup>5</sup> María del Mar Flórez Crespo. “La museología crítica y los estudios de público en los museos de arte contemporáneo: caso del museo de arte contemporáneo del museo de Castilla y León, MUSAC”. *De arte: revista de historia del arte*, 5(2006), pp. 231-243.

that implies a certain notion of identity, culture and nation as well as progress and science.

The ideas presented in the critical museology are the product of the concatenation of several disciplines that until recently were not in contact with the museological and museistic phenomenon, i.e., philosophy, sociology, theory of culture and cultural studies (mostly the ones originated in the United Kingdom and proposed by Stuart Hall, Paul DuGay, Mike Featherstone, etc.).

From theory of culture it analyzes the communication strategies of museum institutions crystallized in the exhibition through the categories of „poetic“ and „politics“ applied to them. A basic text on this approach is the one edited in 1997 by Stuart Hall entitled „Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices“, this book introduces the concept of representation and posits that „...Representation connects meaning and language to culture ... [Representation] means using language to say something meaningful about or to represent, the world meaningfully to other people ... is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things“ (p. 15) Thus representation is the production of meaning through language, translating it to the museological phenomenon, and returning to the poetic and politics concepts applied the exhibits, we can say that the former refers to the production of meaning through the arrangement, conjugation and structuring of the elements of the display (i.e., objects, labels, activities, pictures, speeches, etc.) and in this sense can be cataloged as a significant practice in the production of shared meanings (i.e., culture) The politics of the exhibition refers to the role of the exhibit and the museum institution in the production of social knowledge, of an imaginary that is presented as the crystallization of the values and beliefs of a particular community. Thus, such knowledge is essential in the creation of „citizenship“, the „homeland“ and „patriots“ in the (re) configuration of civil society. Similarly, cultural studies and theory of culture allow a glimpse of the construction of otherness and identity in museums, issues that are at the heart of the processes of exclusion as inclusion inside the museological institution.

The sociology and philosophy contribute their expertise in the analysis both of the museums as social forms determined by economic, social, historical and political forces, seeking not only the physical manifestations of their actions but also its guiding and foundational

principles. Cultural studies, sociology and philosophy when combined in critical museology propose an approach that focuses on the study of museum institutions at both of its management and administration level as well as its ideological-political and philosophical character.

The critical museology idea that we will use here is based on these ideas and centred on the doctrinal principles of the critical philosophy and sociology set by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer. So, when we say critical museology, we are referring to a theory that advocates the idea that traditional museology as well as one of its basic concepts –museality– is the product of the society in which is created i.e., it is defined by the social, political and economical context where the museologist and the museum institutions are immersed. So the theoretical framework goes beyond the one provided by the information sciences to engulf an historical-dialectical approach of this relationship between human beings and their reality. In this sense we can say that the action and work of the museological institutions are conditioned and determined by constraints that limited and guided its policies and its relationship with its communities. The constraints that limit the degrees of freedom of the museological institutions are historical, structural, professional, economical, philosophical and sociological in character. The historical factor refers to the conditions of creation

Thus, critical museology proposes that the knowledge produced and displaced in museums is culturally, politically as well as economically bounded and therefore reflects a specific moment of that society. That is why, in order to understand and manage these institutions we must be aware of their cultural, political and economical setting.

Furthermore the critical museology approach proposes the idea that inside the museum we can find a dual process in relation with the objects that will become *musealia*; first we have the musealization process and then patrimonialization process. The first one takes place during the process of acquisition, documentation, registration and research. In this stage the object is in the store rooms of the institution and has already acquired the aura that makes it a “museum object”. The process of acquisition itself is the product of a decision bounded by the cultural, economical and political framework; this first step shows a conscious decision on the part of the collector. The object becomes heritage (or “patrimonialized”) once it is exhibited and used as an educational means. Therefore an object becomes a “museum object” when it reaches its full potential as an infor-

mation carrier and as an educative tool, in other words, the musealization process gives the potentiality while the exhibiting of the object inside a certain discourse and certain educational strategy (i.e. patrimonialization) actualizes its condition of heritage. In this sense musealization involves more than the conservation of the composing elements of the object or a group of objects and the thorough analysis of the spatial arrangement of the components inside the museum settings. Its study of the meaning of an object is related not only to its present setting but also its socio-economical and political conditions of production.

Although this process of musealization along history has ended in the decontextualization of objects and cultures in order to produce a culturally homogenized, administered citizenry, critical museology defends the idea of the museum institutions as means to produce knowledge through the musealization and patrimonialization of the heritage of a community and an institution that should foster the improvement of the human condition i.e., the interest of museology at large is to promote a better society through the analysis, study and communication of the heritage and the people that created it. In this sense museology should include not only the museum objects i.e., *musealia* but also the whole field of cultural and natural heritage in their social, historical, political and economical framework.

In this sense the critical museology as presented here proposes that the focus of museology should not be constraint to the object and the museological functions but also with the museum institution and its social, historical, political and economical contexts; these contexts are the ones that will provide us with the means for the legitimacy of the museum institution. Although for many museums workers and theoretical museologist museums do not need to be legitimized as a institution of memory and heritage, the fact remains that they do in light of the economical and political constrains they have endured since the decade of the eighties of the last century. We must not forget that very often the focus on the objects precludes certain important aspects that could explain why certain exhibitions – despite the efforts and technology used- “do not work”.

Museums as memory institutions are a privileged cultural agents, they have an emancipatory dimension, they produce meaningful, visual and textual (re)constructions that seek to communicate and convey a message in order to improve the quality of life in the society. In a nutshell, museums should use their collections for the betterment of the community

they serve; they should become living places for debate.

## Museums, history and memory: We all live in a yellow submarine

As I mentioned earlier museums as well as the knowledge they present are culture<sup>6</sup> and politically bounded displays of people's heritage in such a way that they contribute to the process of "nation building"; and, by doing this they can become a "virtual site" in the service of the nation's need for political positioning and imaging, they can have political, economical, and psychological influence on people. They can be instruments in the social, economic, cultural and political development of nations and regions; in this sense museums "are tools which can serve the ends of nation building."<sup>7</sup> They appropriated the history and memory of the people to devise a coherent account for the nation's origins and development in order "to find [and present] some meaning in the chronological sequence of events ...creating a shared experience." And this shared experience was intended "to generate pride, and to foster consensus and identification."<sup>8</sup> This activity is carried by the discourses of the scientific disciplines inside the museum in conjunction with several communication and educational strategies.

Museums are historically determined and that is why we can see so many differences between museums of Europe and USA with museums of the Developing World. The origin of the museums in Latin America is not related to the epistemological and ontological reasons behind the *kunstkammers* and the cabinets of curiosities. In the case of the Latin American museums (and we can include the rest of the Developing World) they are the product not only of a colonial past but also of a colonialist development (i.e., the museums exhibits follow the colonial discourse in its presentation of the aboriginal people).

The origin of the museums in Latin America has defined their present role and dilemmas, by being more political than cultural institutions when created they currently are facing certain problems that are not present in the majority of museums of Europe and U.S.A.

In general, we can say that museums play many roles in society but mostly, they are the preservers of the cultural and historical memory of the people. They are also a means through which people get in touch with aspects of reality that are beyond their space-time framework. These functions create the basis for the establishment of their legitimacy: they protect and document our past, our memory but above all we are supposed to find in them our identity expressed in their discourses and objects.

The need to establish a state and a nation was of paramount importance for the development of Latin America. National museums grew along the development of these newborn Latin American states during the nineteenth century. These museums served to create the idea of identity and history of these states.

This political and ideological role of museums began shortly after the independence wars that swept the continent. New museums were influenced by the ideas present in Europe at that time. These ideas reached Latin America thanks to the commercial interests of the European colonial powers and U.S.A and the immigration of Europeans. Museums became a place for ostentation, "a monument to commemorate the names of their founders and to glorify those prominent individuals and their acts of civic benevolence." They were also "a symbolic infrastructure of colonial power" and they achieved this by using the same strategy of presenting non-European cultures done by the museums in Europe. They evolved to be among the institutions that bore witness to the domination of a few groups of power over less fortunate groups (i.e. the indigenous peoples and the black slaves). The scientific principles taken from the newly created anthropology as well as the discussions on evolution were the basis on which the wealthy classes of Latin America molded the history and identity of the newborn states.

In the discourses created as the basis of the new republics pre-Columbian cultures were set aside. As in European Ethnographical museums these cultures have been presented as something totally alien to the actual indigenous groups. Their history is presented via the history of their "art", via biology and/ or ethnographic discourses. The forefathers of Latin American nations – as all of the authorities of the colonial powers – tried to erase the achievements of pre-Columbian cultures by talking about history from the independence war on. Independence meant not only the rupture with the Spanish dominion but also with the idea of the indigenous peoples taking part in the

creation of the new nations. Being conquered cultures they were expelled of history.

In these museums the four logics<sup>9</sup> of research, ostentation, domination and appropriation acquire a different meaning; they "bore witness to the domination of a few great centres of power over other regions and peoples".<sup>10</sup> Museums in Latin America emerged out of the need for affirmation of the new countries<sup>11</sup> and as a manifestation of their "modernisation." Museums are the sign of the incorporation of these countries to the "civilised western world" they were the product of a specific *Zeitgeist*.<sup>12</sup> In a sense the discourses displayed in the museums created a sanitized reality where words as "conflict" or "extermination" were presented as things of the past that were overcome to reach the "white" middle class society that we enjoy today, it is like if we all live in a yellow submarine, where the captain is our equal and the society is this safe environment that protect us from the maladies of the outside world.

This way of representation was present during the whole XX century and it became the centre of many debates in different meetings of ICOM professionals however, nothing was really done about it in order to solve this problem. At the beginning of the XXI century is still a subject to be debated, it is of vital importance for the theoretical as well as for the historical museology to document the process of how the pre-Columbian cultures as well the minorities have been exhibited in National Museums along Latin America. Such a study must show the where these decisions came from, why some museologists supported this type of representation. We must question these decisions and

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Montpetit, 'Museums and Knowledge: Sharing Awareness, Addressing Desire', in Michel Cote, ed., *Museums: Where Knowledge is shared*. Québec 1995, pp. 31-45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Marta Dujovne, *Entre musas y musarañas. Una visita al museo*. Argentina, p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to mention that in Europe we can find two examples of the development of national narratives that seek to create a sense of nation similar to the processes in Latin America. The examples are Greece and the Unified Germany; in the case of Greece we not also see the presence of the rationale behind the *kunstkammers* and the cabinets of curiosities but also the logic of the nation building that began during the XIX century with the revision of the current theories of the origins of the Greek civilisation and thus, the whole Western Civilisation. The case of the new German Historical Museum is a very interesting example on the inquiry into national identity and the symbolic narratives behind the memory of the divided Germany and the cold war era in order – as Hans-Martin Hinz explains – "to help citizens attain clarity about who they are as Germans and Europeans, as inhabitants of a region and members of a worldwide civilization". See: Martin Bernal, 'The Image of Ancient Greece as a tool for Colonialism and European Hegemony', in George Clement Bond & Angela Gillian, Eds. *Social Construction of the Past. Representations of Power*, United Kingdom 1994. Hans-Martin Hinz, 'Museology and the New National Museums of History and Culture', in: Hildegard K. Viereg, Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, Regina Schiller & Martha Troncoso, eds., *Museology – Field of Knowledge. Museology and History*. Germany/Argentine 2006, pp.14-22.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Pröslér, 'Museums and Globalization', in: Sharon MacDonald and Gordon Fyfe, eds. *Theorizing Museums*. London 1996, pp. 21-45.

<sup>7</sup> Karyl Robb, *Museums and Nation Building: the Role of Museums in the National Development of Costa Rica. A Contribution to the Study of Culture and Development*. Indiana University: PhD Dissertation, 1992, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

decisions makers from the ethics point of view in order to actualize the displays.

In these conditions where the scientific discourses coming from the different disciplines inside the museum were the first and most important source of the way the knowledge should be presented, the museum education became a mean to pass a non critical view of the history of the society and its struggles. Museums became an instrument of cultural domination, their lack of real understanding of the educational and communication role made them relegate the education departments to a mere formality.

History is often related to the process of memory and the museum is the best example of a mnemonic device, the museum represents in itself a paradox: is the place where we can see the presence of something that no longer exists. In this sense museums are material manifestations of the collective memory that builds on the individual memories trying to create the sensation of "I was there". They appropriate the history and memory of the people and create a coherent discourse of the origins and development of a nation. Inside their exhibitions rooms the idea of a "Motherland" or a "Vaterland" –that place where the heroes and martyrs lived and died and for which they happily gave their lives– is build and in doing this in a logical sequence the museum creates a series of events that gives the illusion of a shared experience.

In many cases this created experience is directed towards the generation of a national pride and promote certain consensus and the assimilation of a certain social imaginary. A history museum and specially the national museums try to create a sense of existence (i.e., sense of purpose or sense of meaning) and they do it by the appropriation of the culture and creating new meanings as well as shaping and re-shaping the relationship between humankind and the real. By appropriating this space of interpretations (i.e., culture) museums are able to produce the attributions of sense and meaning for the natural and social world. In this sense<sup>34</sup>, as Henning (2006:7) explains, museological institutions are characterized by "culturally determined acts of interpretation...that allow us to distinguish between the significant and the insignificant".

The work done by the museum workers as well as the theoretical museologist are not neutral

independent activities from the historical framed in which they are carried out. Their work and its related activities as well as the museological institutions in which they work are the products of the general social praxis and it obeys the specific guidelines of the professions involved in a determined historical moment. In this sense, all the exhibitions are the products of the beliefs, knowledge, decisions and values of a group of people and, this subjective process is carried out under the idea of neutrality and objectivity of the scientific knowledge employed in its creation.

This perception is based on the assumption that museum workers are the ones called to be the givers of knowledge and certainty and that the visitors trust them for the production and presentation of the knowledge. Nevertheless, in most instances this perception is the product of the beliefs, values and visions of the people involved in this process as well as their oppositions to involved minorities as well as the represented in their collections in the decision making process pertaining the design and implementation of the exhibitions an it related activities.

Under this framework National and history museums create a social imaginary<sup>35</sup>, i.e. a symbolic (re)construction of the ethical, aesthetical, cognitive and cultural horizons of the everyday life by means of communicative instances that appropriate culture creating a social reality, spaces of coexistence as well as spaces of aggression and domination forming and reforming the relationship between people and the real. Hence museums legitimize or sanction certain ways of being, seeing, felling and behaving and construct certain identity to which assigns a specific memory and history. We must not forget that behind every collection that supports an identity is a process of exclusion, an ongoing creation of "otherness".

Due to the globalization process and the need to re-affirm the identity as well as the need for political positioning that will ensure funds, museums have become a fertile soil for discussions on who and how are the different cultures and minorities going to be exhibited, and how to become socially relevant in a changing society. At the moment museums are addressing these issues by reinforcing the educational activities and trying to relate their collections to the national curriculum. This situation has also spiked an overwhelming need to focus more on the visitors and the pedagogy used. The problem is that they are doing this without looking into the discourse that is presented

in the museum. In conclusion the problem of the social legitimacy of the museum starts with the discussion of how history is been used in the production of exhibitions.

## Critical museology and social relevance: The function of education and history in museums

Economical problems as well as the boom in visitor studies and theoretical approaches that shifted the focus from the object to the audiences change the situation just a little bit. Although education is seen nowadays as one of the basic tasks of the museums, the participation of educators in the development of exhibitions is scarce in many Latin American museums.

Although there have been discussions on professionalisation, this discussions were related to the professionalisation in fields such as documentation, exhibition design, visitor studies but it was not related to the professionalisation of the profession in terms of freeing it from ideological decisions such the ones we have mentioned.) This situation defines one of the ideas behind the critical museology approach: a lot of museologists and museums are forgetting the social relevance of the museum institution and are confusing social relevance with number of visitors, they are focussing more on the techniques of presentation rather than the message that is being sent. They want to enter in the twenty first century without solving the identity of the museum.

As a consequence of this now we are forced to re-conceptualize the role of history and education in museums as well as their use in the legitimization of the museum institution. It also calls for a change in how we perceive the differences between the Latin American and the Developing World museums with those of Europe and the rest of the First World in the ongoing process of globalization.

Because of their specific historical contexts, museums in Latin America are not perceived in the same way by their communities as the museums in Europe or United States of America are being perceived by their communities. This is due to the historical role that museums have played in Latin America. Furthermore being part of this heritage, museums although are the bearers of the identity of the people, they have suffered from the lack of vision of the politicians in relation to the role of these institutions

<sup>34</sup> Diana Farjalla Correia Lima, 'Memória Social e a Insituição Museu: reflexões acerca da erença Cultural (re) interpretada', in: ICOFOM-LAM (1997) *VI Encuentro regional ICOFOM-LAM Museos, Memoria y Patrimonio en América Latina y el Caribe*, Ecuador 1997, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Jiménez, 'Este país donde nuca estuvimos', *Revista de Filosofía de la Universidad de Costa Rica*, Vol. XXXV, 86(1997), pp. 161-168.

in the development of a nation; museums have the information on the “know how” and “when” that could help understand the historical and economical conditions of the country.

A museum is a space where knowledge can be constructed and acquired.<sup>16</sup> Is because of that the discussion on the strategies (i.e., the ones related to the planning of an exhibition) as well as the stratagems (i.e., a plan or scheme intended to outwit an opponent, a plan to con or as the Germans say: “*ein Trick oder eine manipulative Aktion im politischen,*”) historically employed by museums in the (re)presentation of their messages is of a capital importance. If we understand the historical role of museums in the construction of a homogenized past in Latin America hence we will, hopefully, be ready to take one step ahead and make the museum a place for learning and discussion.

But what kind of education should museums provide in order to become socially relevant and how this new approach to education is related to the history presented in their exhibition rooms? In an article titled “How to defend society from science”, Paul K. Feyerabend criticises the education that does not show the real process in the production of scientific knowledge; his critique is based on the idea that the method of education is to teach a myth and in this case the myth consist of defending cer-

tain visions about science, knowledge in general and their relationship with the reality.<sup>17</sup>

Museums are places of knowledge from which social change can emerge; it must focus on creating social awareness about the current situation of the world. Sadly our museums still do not educate us in the art of recognizing the “archaic myths” originally presented by them, by what Eileen Hooper-Greenhill calls a “master narrative”<sup>18</sup>; they do not teach us how to develop a critical thinking attitude. They teach us to read ourselves under foreign perspectives<sup>19</sup> that create a sense of impotence when confronted with countries of the so called Developed World.

Recapitulating, if any museum wants to be socially relevant first of all has to admit that all the knowledge produced and displayed in museums is culturally, politically as well as economically bounded and therefore reflects a specific moment of the society it belongs. That is why, in order to understand and manage it, museum professionals must be aware of their cultural, political and economical settings.

To be socially relevant a museum must become the space for a communicative action, where the visitor is confronted with the dilemmas of the contemporary society through the eyes of the history and memory with an ethical

perspective and be able to respond and react to what is exhibited. Museums must face controversy and make it explicit.<sup>20</sup> In this sense museums should not be happy with reducing interactivity by providing questions and selected answers using technology but with their exhibitions they should engage and provoke the visitors. Visitors should be encouraged to “falsify” the exhibition.<sup>21</sup> Being social means becoming a rebellious space as well as a negotiating point between visitors and their society, turning the museum -a social institution- to a mediator. Thus the museum must become an instrument for change that promotes the social participation of the members of the community in the political, social and economical life of their communities.<sup>22</sup>

From a critical perspective museums first of all must recognize the bias in their exhibitions and bring to light the history and the collective memories of the forgotten groups of the society; this means that museums should take into account the communities they serve.

Although there have been some discussions amongst some museum professionals in Latin America on professionalisation and the need to review the exhibition policies, these discussions were related to the professionalisation in fields such as documentation, exhibition design, visitor studies but not related to the

<sup>16</sup> Olga Bartolomé. *El museo como espacio de legitimación social*, in Hans-Martin Hinz, 'Museology and the New National Museums of History and Culture', in: Hildegard K. Viereg, Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, Regina Schiller & Martha Troncoso, eds., *Museology – Field of Knowledge. Museology and History. Germany/Argentina 2006*, pp. 130-138.

<sup>17</sup> Feyerabend, P. K., 'Cómo defender a la sociedad de la ciencia', in Ian Hacking, ed., *Revoluciones Científicas*, México 1985, p. 307.

<sup>18</sup> Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London 2003, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> María Cristina Holguin. 'La búsqueda de la identidad de los museos históricos a través de los objetos y del espacio', in: Hans-Martin Hinz, 'Museology and the New National Museums of History and Culture', in: Hildegard K. Viereg, Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, Regina Schiller & Martha Troncoso, eds., *Museology – Field of Knowledge. Museology and History. Germany/Argentina 2006*, pp. 340-345.

<sup>20</sup> Peter van Mensch, 'Convergence and divergence. Museums of science and technology in historical perspective', in: Cyril

<sup>21</sup> The term “falsify” is taken from the philosophical ideas of Karl Popper.

<sup>22</sup> Tomás Sepúlveda, et al. 'Museologías Sociales en Chile: los casos de Curarrehue y San Pedro de Atacama', in Hans-Martin Hinz, 'Museology and the New National Museums of History and Culture', in: Hildegard K. Viereg, Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, Regina Schiller & Martha Troncoso, eds., *Museology – Field of Knowledge. Museology and History. Germany/Argentina 2006*, pp. 454-461.

professionalisation of the profession in terms of freeing it from ideological decisions like the ones I have mentioned above. We museologists must be critical in front of these types of actions in our museums; we cannot allow these unethical practices. We cannot talk about a museology for the XXI century when we have not resolved the problem of the restitution of the history of the pre-Columbian cultures, indigenous cultures, etc, in our museums. Under this pretext ethics must question the historical and theoretical museology as well as the history that is employed in our museological institutions.

Critical museology advocates that all museums should become spaces where, paraphrasing Marx and Engels: "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind". Therefore, we museologists must be critical towards our museums, we cannot allow unethical practices pertaining the (re)presentation of minority groups. We cannot speak of a museology for the XXI century if have not resolved the issues concerning the heritage of other cultures displayed in museums outside their country of origin. A critical museological approach entails an ethical questioning of the historical practices of museums. ■

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#### Klíčová slova:

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