

Introduction / editors' notes

Contemporary art: a tool for an inclusive museology

Margarida Brito Alves & Marta Jecu

This special issue of the *Journal of Sociomuseology* emerges within the framework of the research project CARIM – CONTEMPORARY ART : A TOOL FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND REGENERATED MUSEOLOGY, funded by the the Portuguese Foundation of Science and Technology (FCT 2022.04615.PTDC). The project developed a multidisciplinary perspective which explored conceptual art – in both historical and contemporary perspectives – as a reference for the development of innovative and counter-hegemonic museological methodologies in museums of material culture.

The project mapped the diverse and multifold experimentations around critical reform and democratization practices in museology which were operated with the tools of conceptual art. Additionally, it took as a reference the thinking developed by the School of Social Museology, which theorizes museological practices, as well as alternative approaches to work with heritage and communities, defending socially aware, de-colonizing, collaborative and inclusive perspectives.

CARIM aimed to demonstrate that various concerns regarding the arts during the 20th century, have found a consistent expression through various of the propositions and practices that conceptual art has been exploring – namely considering its institutional critique dimension and the dialogue with museums and non-european sources. More specifically, and regarding the many ways it engaged with a non-objectual, performative, collaborative and processual approach to heritage, conceptual art has profoundly innovated the processes through which museums envisage material and immaterial heritages.

Drawing from these ideas, this issue of the *Journal of Sociomuseology* extends this perspective by considering as its subject not only conceptual art, but contemporary art, opening therefore a broader line of argumentation. This choice is justified by the fact that, in response to the journal's call, we've received numerous stimulating contributions from the fields of education, museology and musicology, which accentuated the relevance of various contemporary artistic practices for the understanding of material and immaterial heritages.

The articles collected in this issue discuss both historical and more recent case-studies, theories and practices, in which contemporary art played a pivotal role for the reconsideration of heritage and collections. Within this wide frame, we can recognize that artistic strategies were essential for the awareness and revalorisation of heritage, as well as for the development of museology as a collaborative practice.

Many of the texts included in this publication are situated, from a disciplinary point of view, in the field of sociomuseology. From that standpoint, they analyse artworks according to their relevance for promoting de-colonial thinking in museums, for proposing multiple narratives, for including overshadowed objects and marginalised histories into the museological narrative, for promoting eco-social justice, or for expanding heritage to an immaterial dimension.

These articles explore, on the one hand, the connections between the principles of sociomuseology, which involves the immediate social reality in the museological practice – and, on the other hand, inclusive art practices that deal with critical museology and heritage.

This special issue of the *Journal of Sociomuseology* is divided in two complementary

sections. The first is dedicated to theoretical questions that explore the articulation between contemporary art and various other disciplines – such as sociomuseology, heritage studies, theory and history of art, education or musicology. The second section includes two "reports from the field", which adopt an anthropological perspective of participation-observation and collection of data.

In Section I, the article of **Adel Igor Pausini**, titled "Regional Museums and New Museology: The Regional Museum National Campaign between Modern and Contemporary Art", addresses a national endeavor that took place in Brazil during the 1960s. Exploring the implementation dynamics of that campaign, as well as the dialogues between the regional, national and international scenarios that framed it, the author analyses several dimensions of a programme that was aimed at promoting the decentralization of art museums in the country.

The collaborative text of **Arantxa Llanos Ciafrino** and **Adel Igor Pausini**, "A Sociomuseological Perspective on Contemporary Dance and Performance in Museums and their potential for Social and Institutional Transformation", analyses the importance of contemporary dance interventions in museums, for the development of new forms of transmission of knowledge in museology. In this text, the dancing body is understood as incorporating a knowledge that counteracts hegemonic forms of transmission of information in museums. Through movement, cultural identities, personal or collective worldviews go far beyond the written and documented sources and are able to engage the museum audience in ways that can offer museological alternatives.

"Beyond Words: Labels and the Power of Shaping of Narratives" is the title of **Chiara Ianeselli's** article – a contribution that, from a postcolonial standpoint, problematizes the power that institutions wield when it comes to presenting information through labels, whether in a permanent display or in the scope of temporary exhibitions.

Authored by **Erica Abreu**, "Cinemuseological Imagination: A Participatory Film Format", addresses participatory projects employing film production possibilities. Presenting fieldwork, the text focuses on three action-research processes that, exploring cinema as a creative tool, engaged with museums and tackled topics such as the city, gender and migration.

Mariana Harthental's article, titled "Mining the Museum: The Museum as Pick" draws from the project *Mining the Museum* – that, in 1992, was developed by the artist Fred Wilson at the Maryland Historical Society – and aims at analyzing how artistic interventions can lead to new, and fairer, ways for historical and ethnographical museums to deal with heritage. With that goal, the text additionally discusses the perspectives of authors such as Walter Mignolo, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Maurice Halbwachs and Paulo Freire.

Marta Guerreiro's contribution, "Biography and Proximity: Artist Books in the "Among Neighbors" project at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum", discusses an institutional initiative, developed since 2017, that aims at engaging with different participants who live in the museum neighborhood, for the definition of an annual cultural programme that responds to their interests and needs. Within this frame, the article questions how biography and proximity can be addressed as core elements in museological participatory projects.

In "Túlia Saldanha: Inside and Outside the Box", **Margarida Brito Alves** examines the installations and immersive works created by Portuguese artist Túlia Saldanha (1930-1988) during the 1970s. Analyzing the different ways those works were originally experienced and engaging with different temporalities, the article questions the relevance of these artworks when revisited, exhibited or recreated in current times.

Co-authored by **Nathália Pamio Luiz** and **Caio Pamio Portezan**, the article "Mute: Controversies between Music and Silences, Resources for opening up Dialogue at the Musée du Quai Branly", discusses silence as a form of retrieval of information. The text shows how, often, in ethnological museums the sounds associated to objects are left out from display, therefore invisibilising a key element of the original context where the objects were created. Recognising that muting the objects standardizes the content and subordinates the specificity of particular items to a dominant museological narrative, and proposing a countermodel, the authors address

the decolonial dialogue developed by the artist Youmna Saba, with her work *La Réserve des non-dits* [The Unspoken Reserve] – an intervention in the permanent display of musical instruments in the Museum Quai Branly in Paris, that was developed between 2022 and 2024.

Henrique Godoy text “*Looking into Kiluanji Kia Henda and Bruno Moraes Cabral ‘Terra (In)Submissa’: Poetical Narratives as Political Means*”, takes as a starting point the short film *Terra (In)Submissa* by the contemporary artists Kiluanji Kia Henda and Bruno Moraes Cabral, shown in 2024 at the Lisbon Aljube Museum. The article problematizes the way in which museums deal with social tensions and traumatic pasts (especially connected to the colonial context) and the role contemporary art can play in these processes.

In **Section II**, the contribution of **Cláudia Pola** and **Mabel Cavalcanti**, “*Quinta do Mocho: Art as a Viable Novelty*,” discusses Quinta do Mocho – an urban art site in Lisbon, developed since 2014, and which currently counts with more than 100 murals painted by the local community. The authors' approach is – as they explain – affective, drawing information from their familiarity with the inhabitants. Those murals are considered by them – in the perspective of sociomuseological practice – as a record of the actions of the community fighting for the preservation of its multiple culture.

The article of **Roberta Gonçalves** and **Margarida Belchior**, “*The School goes to the Geological Museum: Expanding and Giving New Meanings to the Relationship with Memory*” emerges out of a pedagogical experiment. Drawing from their experience, respectively, as a psychoanalyst, and a researcher and professor in sociodrama, the authors conducted a workshop for children in the Museum of Geology in Lisbon in 2023. Within that frame, they presented a video work of the indigenous artist Gustavo Caboco Wapichana, which problematizes the importance of stone in the indigenous cosmology – a presentation that led to a discussion on how the children who participated were able to reflect on the different ways in which the museum and the artwork addressed a symbolic dimension of a specific community.

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EDITORS' BIOS:

Margarida Brito Alves (IHA – NOVA/FCSH, Lisbon)

Margarida Brito Alves is an Associate Professor with Aggregation of the Department of Art History at NOVA/FCSH – Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She coordinates NOVA/FCSH's Artistic Studies Autonomous Section, besides being the coordinator of the PhD in Art History, the vice-coordinator of the PhD in Artistic Studies – Art and Mediations and the co-coordinator of the post-graduation program in Art Curatorship. Additionally, she is an integrated researcher at IHA – Art History Institute, where she leads the research line on "Spatial Practices in Contemporary Art."

Her research, in the fields of Contemporary Art History and Artistic Studies, is more specifically focused on two areas: “Art, Architecture, and the City”, and “Art, Research, and Education”. She is the author of numerous publications in scientific journals, edited books and exhibition catalogues, and of the books *A Revista Colóquio / Artes* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2007) and *O Espaço na Criação Artística do Século XX. Heterogeneidade. Tridimensionalidade. Performatividade*. (Lisbon: Colibri, 2012).

Complementarily, she co-curated several exhibitions, including *Salette Tavares: Visual Poetry* (Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, 2014), *Co-Habitar* (Casa das Galeotas, Lisbon, 2016), *As Leis próprias do Mar, distante do Mundo dirigido pelas Leis da Terra* (Convento dos Capuchos, Lisbon, 2021) and *Amor I Love You* (Pavilhão 31, Lisbon, 2024)

For a complete CV, see: <https://www.cienciavitae.pt/portal/en/6118-204D-AB9F>

Marta Jecu (CeIED, Lusofona University, Lisbon)

Marta Jecu is researcher and professor at CeIED, Universidade Lusofona, Lisbon (contemporary art and theory and museology), as well as an independent curator. Previous positions: researcher at Imera Aix Marseille University, Marseille and at *Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*, Paris (2017-2019). PhD at Freie Universitaet Berlin in Interdisciplinary Artistic Studies. She regularly publishes her research in edited volumes, in academic journals and magazines like: *Journal of Curatorial Studies* /Routledge, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*/ Routledge, *Heritage and Society*, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, *Pidgin Magazine*/Princeton University, *Esse Arts + Opinions*, and is a regular contributor at *Berlin Art Link* and *Umbigo*. She is currently the leader of the research project CARIM, funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation. In 2017, she has initiated the research and curatorial project EXODUS STATIONS (www.exodusstations.com) on the role of contemporary art for new museology. The project includes curated exhibitions, publications, conferences and research projects in following venues: Museu Carlos Machado Azores (2017), Iwalewahaus Bayreuth Germany (2017), Quai Branly Museum Paris (2019), MuCEM Marseille (2019), Centre Pompidou, Paris (2019). In 2022 she curated: 'Stone Alive' at the Museum of Geology Lisbon, 'Pierres Vivantes' at the Museum of Mineralogy Paris, 'Artists, Heritage and the Museum' at the Museum of Natural History in Lisbon (part of the official Saison France-Portugal). Other curated exhibition: 'ON Landscape' at the Romanian Cultural Center in Lisbon (2021). 'A Cultural Interpretation of Stone part I and II (Galerie Cabinet d'Ulysse Marseille and Galeria Sá da Costa, Lisbon, 2019). Solo Show Tadashi Kawamata (Museum of Art and Architecture MAAT, Lisbon, 2017) and many others. She organized numerous international symposiums in Germany, Portugal and France.

Recent authored and edited volumes: *Stone Alive. A Cultural Interpretation of Stone*, London: Intellect Books (2024), *Towards an Inclusive Museology in Material Culture Museums:*

Conceptual Art as a Method, London: Routledge (2025), *Artists, Heritage and the Anticipated Museum*, Berlin: DeGruyter (2024), *Architecture and the Virtual* (2017), University of Chicago Press and Intellect Books.

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