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**Museology and the Intangible Heritage**  
**Muséologie et le Patrimoine Immatériel**  
**Museología y el Patrimonio Intangible**  
**Museologie und das immaterielle Erbe**

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# Entre lo tangible y lo intangible

Nelly Decarolis - Argentina

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## 1. Introducción

En la imagen moderna del Universo, el espíritu y la realidad se han conciliado y se condicionan mutuamente como una identidad última entre lo ideal y lo real. Existe una solidaridad entre el conocimiento fáctico y el que versa sobre los principios, entre lo tangible y lo intangible. El lenguaje, el mito, la religión, el arte, la música, la danza, las tradiciones y leyendas son partes constitutivas de ese Universo y forman los diversos hilos que tejen la complicada urdimbre de lo intangible, esa red simbólica que trasciende la esfera de la vida práctica y concreta del hombre. La esencia de las cosas no depende de las circunstancias externas, depende de los valores que se les atribuyen. Ya Kant consideraba al espacio como la forma de nuestra experiencia externa y al tiempo como la de nuestra experiencia interna, de lo que se deduce que en la interpretación de su experiencia interna, el hombre tiene que abordar nuevos problemas que difieren de los del mundo físico-tangible.

La conexión entre símbolo y objeto es algo natural y no convencional. El objeto tangible se envuelve en formas lingüísticas, en imágenes artísticas, en símbolos míticos, en ritos religiosos, de tal manera que no se lo puede conocer sino a través de ellos mismos.

Como bien dice Cassirer "... podemos empeñarnos en ver 'La Escuela de Atenas' de Rafael tan sólo como un lienzo cubierto de manchas de color ordenadas de un modo formal en el espacio, pero a partir de ese momento la obra de arte se reducirá a un objeto más entre muchos otros. La diferencia sólo se restablecerá en el instante en que nos adentremos en la 'representación' del cuadro y nos entreguemos puramente a ella, a sus características de 'intangibilidad'. Son dos momentos fundamentales que, combinados y entrelazados, dan como resultado el todo del objeto cultural. Sus características peculiares tienen una función representativa referida al objeto mismo. Nos encontramos así frente a tres dimensiones que lo hacen formar parte del mundo de la cultura: la dimensión de su existencia física, la del objeto mismo representado en el museo y la de la valoración personal de quien lo contempla. De este modo, en el objeto cultural concurren 'lo tangible' y 'lo intangible', porque no es sólo su contenido objetivo, sino una actitud y una función del entendimiento las que conforman los rasgos que lo distinguen.<sup>1</sup> Siguiendo la línea de pensamiento de Ivo Maroevic, se podría decir que la significación o el valor inmaterial que se asigna al objeto que integra el patrimonio cultural es lo museal; que la musealidad comprende sus cualidades inmateriales y a la vez su propiedad de captar y documentar la realidad para convertirla en otra realidad diferente, en un proceso que le permite vivir dentro de un contexto museológico.

El objeto de museo o musealia es, pues, una suma de significados y la museología es la encargada de investigar, descubrir y realizar la lectura de la significación oculta del objeto, comunicándola a otras sociedades en un tiempo y un espacio dados.

## 2. El patrimonio cultural y los valores intangibles

Hoy el mundo está atravesando profundas transformaciones que afectan particularmente el patrimonio cultural intangible allí donde se encuentre.

Es dable recordar que la característica distintiva del hombre, la que define y determina su círculo de humanidad es su obra, cuya impronta es la expresión concreta e inmediata de sus sentimientos y emociones. La intangibilidad que subyace en ella sólo puede ser captada en un contexto de cualidades dinámicas diferenciadoras, adquiriendo así un valor simbólico. Cada

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1 Cassirer, Ernst. Las Ciencias de la Cultura. Breviarios del Fondo de Cultura Económica. México. 1993.

elemento, cada cosa, cada objeto, es la conjunción de lo material y de la derivación imprevisible de sus significados. La concatenación causal que subsiste entre los objetos materiales se transmite por medio de lo intangible al ámbito de las conexiones simbólicas.

Los lugares de significación cultural enriquecen la vida de los pueblos, proporcionando a menudo un profundo sentido de unión con la comunidad y el entorno, con el pasado y con las experiencias vividas. La significación cultural hace patentes los valores estéticos, históricos, científicos, sociales y espirituales para las generaciones pasadas, presentes y futuras.

Lo tangible sólo se puede interpretar mediante lo intangible, si bien en el discurso y la práctica internacional la noción de patrimonio se ha limitado durante mucho tiempo a lo que es tangible. Las conexiones especiales que existen entre la gente, los lugares y los objetos pueden incluir tanto los valores sociales o espirituales como las responsabilidades culturales. Sus significados patentizan lo que significa un determinado lugar, lo que indica, lo que evoca, lo que expresa y cómo lo relaciona con sus aspectos intangibles, con sus cualidades simbólicas y su memoria. El interés creciente por el patrimonio intangible de la humanidad pone de relieve cuestiones de orden ético que afectan especialmente a las culturas tradicionales, donde se evidencia una masa de saberes fragmentados que hay que reconstruir. Urge, por lo tanto, formar a las poblaciones en aquellas disciplinas que les permitan interpretar con conocimiento de causa sus propias culturas y su propio pasado.

### 3. El simbolismo del mito

“Cuanto el hombre crea y sale de sus manos está rodeado en un principio de un misterio inescrutable. Cuando, inicialmente, atribuye un origen a sus propias obras, éste no puede ser otro que un origen mítico. Estos mitos culturales cruzan la mitología de todos los tiempos en todos los pueblos. [...] El mito es una realidad cultural extremadamente compleja, que puede abordarse e interpretarse desde perspectivas múltiples y complementarias. [...] Cuenta una historia sagrada, relata un acontecimiento que ha tenido lugar en el tiempo primordial, el tiempo fabuloso de los comienzos ...”<sup>2</sup>

Es la primera tentativa del hombre para responder los interrogantes acerca del mundo y se refiere siempre a realidades: el mito cosmogónico es verdadero porque la existencia del Mundo está allí para probarlo. El mito del origen de la muerte también, puesto que la mortalidad del hombre lo prueba, y así sucesivamente.

Es necesario situar al mito en su contexto socio-religioso original para poder captar incluso los modos de conducta y las actividades profanas del hombre, que encuentra sus modelos en las gestas sobrenaturales de los seres míticos. La principal función del mito es revelar modelos ejemplares de ritos y actividades humanas significativas: alimentación, matrimonio, trabajo, educación, arte, sabiduría ... Esta concepción es importante para comprender al hombre y la obra producto de su creatividad que ha trascendido en el tiempo y el espacio, intentando descubrir la presencia del mito en ámbitos no míticos de su experiencia y de su pensamiento. Para los antropólogos modernos, el mito es una forma de conocimiento que completa la racionalidad de los temas de la vida. No es una proyección fantástica de la realidad, sino una revelación de su sentido profundo. Pertenece a la estructura del ser humano, como la razón, y cada época va forjando los suyos. El mito es una realidad - dice Eliade - y hay que contar con esa realidad no sólo como imagen del pasado, sino también como técnica del hombre moderno utilizada para renovarse y para percibir lo eterno.

Desde principios del siglo XX, en la historia del Arte occidental, tanto en las artes plásticas como en la literatura, la música, la poesía y el teatro, se han conocido transformaciones tan radicales que se ha llegado a hablar de una verdadera “destrucción del lenguaje artístico”. Mircea Eliade considera que en muchos casos esto se debe a una destrucción intencional del Universo artístico establecido, una regresión al Caos, a una especie de *massa confusa* primordial ... Es éste un proceso de revalorización del *Mito del Fin del Mundo* donde algunos artistas actuales pretenden recrear con sus obras un nuevo Universo ... Este fenómeno cultural es muy significativo, porque los artistas representan un importante segmento de las fuerzas creadoras de una sociedad, que suele anticipar lo que sucederá en los demás sectores de la vida cultural.

2 Eliade, Mircea Mito y Realidad. Editorial Labor S. A. Colombia. 1994.

El escenario mítico-ritual de la regeneración anual del mundo, donde lo esencial no es el hecho del fin sino la certidumbre de un nuevo comienzo, caracteriza al hombre de las sociedades arcaicas. Este nuevo comienzo es la réplica del comienzo absoluto, de la cosmogonía.

La cognición del origen de cada cosa confiere la certitud de recuperar el pasado y, si bien existen varias posibilidades de volver hacia atrás, una de ellas se vincula directamente con la herencia cultural: es la rememoración progresiva, minuciosa y exhaustiva de los acontecimientos personales e históricos. La plena consciencia del origen y de la historia ejemplar de las cosas confiere al hombre una sensación de dominio mágico sobre ellas. En el pensamiento mítico, la memoria es considerada el conocimiento por excelencia y el hecho de recordar atribuye al individuo una fuerza mágico-religiosa más importante aún que la del que el que sólo conoce el origen de las cosas. Hay que tener en cuenta que fue la magia la primera escuela por donde tuvo que pasar el hombre para lograr confianza en sus propias fuerzas y sentirse capaz de controlar las de la naturaleza. Y fue el lenguaje el que le permitió designar y describir aquellos objetos con poderes mágicos. Dar nombre al objeto significó subsumirlo bajo un cierto concepto de clase y este acto estuvo íntimamente ligado a un proceso de clasificación inicial.

Lo espiritual y lo sagrado, valores intangibles por definición, relacionados con las fuerzas sobrenaturales o con la divinidad, son nociones ambivalentes que evolucionan según las culturas y han constituido por siglos la fuente de nuestros conocimientos y de nuestra memoria. Si en el mito pueden convivir elementos contradictorios, en el pasaje de la religiosidad mítica a la religión dogmática, se procura contener e institucionalizar los hechos considerados eternos. La religión, expresión simbólica de nuestros supremos ideales morales y espirituales, ha cumplido desde un principio una función teórica y otra práctica. Contesta a la vez las preguntas sobre el origen del mundo y de la sociedad humana. La religión ha producido creencias y ritos que se refieren a lo sagrado y a los medios de entrar en relación con los poderes sobrenaturales, así como tradiciones, objetos litúrgicos, iglesias y catedrales de incomparable belleza ... Una parte muy sustancial de los monumentos y objetos culturales que se encuentran en el mundo está conformada por lugares de culto y obras de arte de la misma procedencia.

#### 4. Los valores estéticos

Los valores estéticos constituyen la respuesta al conocimiento del entorno y de los atributos particulares, naturales y culturales, que allí se encuentran. Esta respuesta puede estar referida a elementos visuales como no-visuales y puede abarcar respuestas emocionales, sentido de lugar, sonido, olfato y cualquier otro factor que posea un fuerte impacto en el pensamiento humano, en sus sentimientos y actitudes. (AHC 1994b)<sup>3</sup>

La creatividad es patrimonio de ricos y pobres, de la mayoría y la minoría, de los alfabetizados y los analfabetos<sup>4</sup> y las artes son la forma de creatividad más fácilmente reconocible. Ofrecen a cada individuo la posibilidad de comunicar su realidad y su propia visión del mundo.

Uno de los fenómenos intangibles mejor conocidos es la belleza. Sostiene Kant al referirse a la experiencia de lo bello, que la distancia entre el objeto y su contemplación, entre la cosa y la mirada que la capta es inevitable y que en nuestros juicios estéticos no nos hallamos interesados por el objeto en cuanto tal, sino por la pura contemplación del mismo. Esta distancia se encuentra nuevamente en el concepto benjaminiano del aura. Benjamin insiste en que el objeto en sí mismo contiene esa distancia y no que se manifiesta en la relación de la mirada al objeto, punto que lo aleja del concepto kantiano. Goethe, por su parte, cristaliza los momentos más altos de los fenómenos de la naturaleza reconociendo en ellos la perfección armónica de su belleza, la dignidad de lo significativo y la altura de la pasión. Es una interpretación de la realidad a través de la intangibilidad que rodea las formas sensibles.

El arte no es una imitación, sino un descubrimiento y una intensificación de la realidad. No admite simplificaciones conceptuales ni generalizaciones deductivas. Cuando el hombre está absorto en la contemplación de una gran obra de arte, no siente una separación entre el mundo subjetivo y el objetivo, entre lo tangible y lo intangible. Detecta un nuevo espacio que está más allá

3 International Council of Monuments and Sites. "Zimbabwe 2000". "The Tangible and the Intangible: the obligation and the desire to remember". ICOMOS NEWS. 1st. Edition 2000.

4 Kapila Vatsyayan. Comentarios sobre "Cultural Expressions of the Arts: energizing forces for development in Asia and the Pacific" formulados en la Consulta Regional de la Comisión para Asia y el Pacífico.

de la realidad de las cosas físicas o de una esfera totalmente individual: es el espacio de las formas plásticas que poseen una verdadera universalidad. El artista elige un determinado aspecto de la realidad en un proceso de selección y de objetivación; una vez que la realidad le ha sido revelada de esta forma peculiar, continúa viéndola como tal. Las ideas se simbolizan en las cosas y sobre la base de un ser concreto, se construye un concepto abstracto.

## 5. Conclusión

El patrimonio cultural y natural es un recurso material y espiritual que provee una crónica del desarrollo histórico. Juega un importante papel en la vida moderna y debería ser accesible al gran público tanto física, intelectual como emotivamente. Los programas para la protección y la conservación de los atributos físicos, los aspectos intangibles y las expresiones culturales contemporáneas en su más amplia acepción, deberían facilitar la comprensión y apreciación del significado del patrimonio por parte de las comunidades huéspedes como por los visitantes de una manera accesible y equitativa.<sup>5</sup>

*El Código de Ética y Co-existencia para la Conservación de Lugares Significativos* declara que la co-existencia de diversas culturas requiere el conocimiento de los valores de cada grupo y subraya los principios que amplían esta ética a la práctica de la conservación. Además, la *Carta de Burra del ICOMOS* (1979, enmendada en 1981 y 1988) - adoptada principalmente por agencias del patrimonio e instituciones gubernamentales - ha sido la clave de la doctrina para la conservación del patrimonio de Australia. Revisada regularmente, la Carta identificó los adelantos llevados a cabo en relación con la comprensión y la valoración del significado social de los lugares patrimoniales y la necesidad de involucrar a la comunidad en los procesos correspondientes.

En 1999 se agregó una revisión final a la *Carta de Burra* que incluye a los valores intangibles entre sus principios de conservación y sus directivas. Esta revisión de la Carta reconoce que los valores intangibles constituyen un aspecto integral del significado del patrimonio. También reconoce que no son estáticos, sino que son parte de una conexión cultural viva entre el pasado y el futuro y que se modifican a lo largo del tiempo.

Durante las últimas décadas se han realizado en todo el mundo numerosos foros sobre la problemática del patrimonio y su relación con los valores intangibles, buscando desarrollar una mayor comprensión de los temas que los rodean. Sin embargo, no han sido suficientes. Será necesario continuar ampliando las definiciones existentes y los métodos científicos utilizados para que puedan reflejar su diversidad de significados y las necesidades de conservación de nuestra herencia cultural, ya sea tangible como intangible.

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5 ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charta. "Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance". Principle 1.

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# Museology and Intangible Heritage: The Virtual Experience

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Imagination is one of the forms of human courage.  
(Gaston Bachelard)

## Introduction

Contemporary culture is a fertile field for the upbringing of paradoxes and contradictions. A discourse on plurality opposes the cult of singularity and of individualism; interactions in real time coexist with the mystic of the memory, frequently related to the valuation of a 'past' conceived as origin, or instance of return; technological excesses coexist with new theories of the nature. Social theories wear out, replaced by contradictory speeches of actors that can be, simultaneously, in different spheres: in the sphere of philosophy, of politics, of art or of science. For there are no longer absolute niches of information, and the many representations interweave, in such a complexity that it becomes very difficult to define paradigms. The things no longer are: the world is in process, and all that we can do is attempting to apprehend the fragments that we perceive and, through them, try to find the measure of our significance.

And we will make it using all the possible tools, as best as we can. In the fragmented cultural atmosphere of contemporary times, we must be able to act as weavers - working out the threads of knowledge, of experience and of inspiration, to define and re-define the limits of things where we wish to leave our mark. In such experience fragments that apparently have no nexus will be united, and transformed into new objects, full of sense.

Contemporary knowledge should thus assume the form of a tunic, which dresses each individual in a very singular way, revealing his/her statute and presence, starting from a patterned design: for it is always possible to inscribe, in the margins, our personal mark.

One of the paradoxes of the contemporary times is the way through which culture is elaborated and administered. Perceived today, more than ever, as value of change, it becomes openly redesigned under the form of merchandise, shamelessly serving the interests of capitalism. Cultural dynamics become impregnated with a recurrent speech about difference, alterity, multiculturalism and participation; but in the practice what exists is 'a market of singularities', so well perceived by Lyotard<sup>1</sup>.

As we know, culture is the art of guiding transference, and in its trajectory it manipulates the desire of development. In such context, some representations are reanalyzed, among them those concerning heritage. Associated to the material essence of all that was perceived, during centuries, as the foundations of the memory of planet Earth, as well as of the cultural memory of societies (that which characterizes such memory in permanence), the concept of heritage is today re-evaluated, under the light of new philosophical tendencies and paradigms. And, if the object is taken as material testimony of the memory of the planet and of human society, so is the monument. The city itself becomes heritage, and each urban design assigns, through time, a very specific discourse of human presence over the territory.

Modernity has expanded, in the memory of the modern Occident, the material relationship between society and heritage towards the concept of Nation. For it is in the territory that the tangible testimonies are found that allow society to configure what has been recognized, by each nation, as 'national heritage': objects capable of legitimate their identity and existence. Those objects can constitute very specific signic groups, such as the national currency, the flag, her-

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1 Lyotard, J. F. *Post Modern Moralities*. p. 14 - 31



aldic symbols - either conceived to represent and to signify the nation; or pre-existent symbols, co-opted, by the dominant ideologies, as 'patrimony' of a country. These last ones are appropriated by the legislation as items belonging to the national heritage: Government's houses, historical and archaeological sites, national forests.

The dominant systems of thought in the West have made prevail, from the Renaissance to Modernity, a perception of Heritage linked to the material world and to the concepts of Object, Monument, City and Nation - which have led to a perception of Museum as institutionalized form. But the development of Semiology and the communication theories have led to an understanding of Museum, Monument, City and Nation as semiotic instruments. The multiple meanings of the patrimonial discourse have become understood, as interpreted from material testimonies: objects belonging to the bourgeois, the Roman aqueduct, the fountain in the square, the palace, the church, the 'arc of thriomphe', the factory, the engine, the design of the streets - everything has the value of an argument and, as a system, may represent descriptive itineraries of memory of the human presence in the landscape.

This has allowed relationships among society, memory and territory to be perceived beyond the material dimension, transcending the frontiers of the tangible - especially after the 60's, when the revaluation of holistic thought and the Gaia Science have made possible new perceptions of Museum and of Heritage.

And, since 'the museum is the destination of all that flows'<sup>2</sup>, if everything is heritage, everything may also be musealized. Museums should no longer be in charge of objects, but of the total heritage - groups of natural evidences and of products of human activity, which define or symbolize the identity of certain groups, characterized in value by the degrees through which they are appropriated by the social body. Recognized through references whose representativeness only then becomes acknowledged, the concept of heritage no longer represented material evidence, but rather it grew to embrace the group of intangible testimonies of the human presence in the territory: language, music, dance, the ways through which societies deal with their daily affairs - everything that could represent evidence of cultural exchanges in the space, and be considered as making part of that which indigenous people call 'the spirit of the place'.

The epistemic ruptures of the contemporary; and the new relationships of the individual with his/her own psyche, and also with time, space and matter have made possible an understanding of the intangible dimensions of heritage and of the museum. Heritage and Museum are, today, concepts of polisemic nature, which can either refer to the manifestations of the human psyche as to the biosphere. The use that is made of them can be legitimated at different levels, from philosophy to the public policies.

In the contemporary world, the strategies of capture and of exploitation of the past have let to an unlimited 'heritagemania'. Heritage has become rentable, as attested by the formidable figures of cultural tourism. In such process, new paradoxes arise: assigned by ideological action to the domain of communities, heritage now becomes a local problem - because not all groups know or wish to take charge of what may turn into an immense responsibility. There is also another problem: when taking into account the complexity and speed of cultural interchange in contemporary world, we notice that it becomes more and more difficult to identify what should or not to be considered as 'heritage'.

Canclini reminds us the existent discontinuity between theorists of culture and the practices of the market and of mass communication, which influence the field of heritage, as well as museums<sup>3</sup>. The same applies to the discontinuity between creation and conservation - a still relevant instance of the heritage domain.

Recognition, appropriation and use of heritage have become a problem with serious implications of political and social meaning. Blessed by enormous figures, which enable restoration and adaptation to visitors' use, heritage sites are carelessly consumed by the media and by immense contingents of curious, more concerned in adding 'points' to their trip charts than to make intelligent use of the memories therein included. In many communities (especially in urban areas), intangible traits arise and are consumed without even being acknowledged or documented. This is heaven and hell for specialists - especially those who still believe in heritage as limited to a group of tangible references, or traditional practices or those that still insist on

2 Lyotard, J. F. In op. cit., p. 15

3 See Canclini, N. G. - *Culturas Híbridas*, p. 31 - 42

making the difference (nonexistent today, in theory) between 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage. The intent of elevating the question of heritage into theoretical debate will imply, therefore, in the necessity of identifying the foundations of thought, according to which certain speeches are elaborated on the topic. It is fundamental that all relationships be analyzed between the perceptions of heritage and the ideas of Human, Nature, Space, Time and Event, in contemporary systems of thought.

An integrated perception of the relationships between nature and culture, made possible when we investigate the interfaces between the exact sciences and philosophy, can retrieve new relationships with the origin - and restore the domain of the originary, as foreseen by Foucault<sup>4</sup>. This will make us understand what the Human signifies, when related to other worlds which, science and technique tell us, threaten our survival in the planet. The anthropocentric arrogance, based on the newtonian-cartesian paradigm, disappears when science proves that the relationships that we have with our own body, with other forms of life and with the planet are in the limits of exhaustion.

Conscious of the fragility of two fundamental instances of world heritage - our bodies and the planet where we live - we investigate time and the space, in search of answers. As in the fable of Lyotard<sup>5</sup>, although we don't know what should (or can) survive, if the Human and its brain, or the Brain and its human, we understand that it is necessary that something survives, so that our experience has not been vain. The study of the new paradigms of the physical and biological sciences will teach us new relationships with space, time, and matter. And will also make us understand that those are the questions that found, today, the theories on humankind and the nature - which, in turn, found the policies and practices referring to heritage. It is, thus, necessary to investigate those matters, trying to identify the convergences and divergences between such theories and the new policies on heritage, not only at world scale, but also at regional, national or local scale.

## 1. The Museum and the New Theories of Heritage

Under direct influence of contemporary thought, museum theorists have developed what may be considered a new theory of the museum - which, for its turn, has contributed to and been influenced by the development of what could be recognized as a new theory of heritage.

In today's multi-diversified atmosphere, where reality and identities are perceived in plurality and process, Society, Culture and the Nation are understood no longer as realities materialized into spaces, people and objects, but mainly as discourse - and therefore, continually recreated, according to the ways by which each individual, group of collectivity perceives identity. The very concept of 'individual' has changed, presently referring to the perception of a multiple being, in permanent interaction with all aspects of Reality: inner reality, outer reality (the 'total' environment). Founded in the concept of separation between world order and human conscience, Modernity has been subverted by the new technologies, which generate new practices and fill the world with new images and meanings.

According to this new order, the Museum is today perceived through its phenomenic nature, and in plurality - no longer as institution, but as perceptual space, which gains substance through the very special relationships developed between individuals and the new perceptions of space, time, memory and values of human culture. Free and plural, passionate and contradictory, infinite in its potency, it may appear under very different forms - through which Humankind celebrates its existence and its relationship with the Universe. The Museum may thus represent all cultural models and systems of thought, acquiring different shapes, according to the values and representations of different societies in space and in time.

The phenomenic character of the Museum makes possible that each individual or society perceives the Museum through their own world vision and life experience - derived from the many relationships that each actor or group of actors establishes with the complexities of reality. The first museum would be, thus, the human body - home of all perception, feeling and behavior - extended to the social body by means of the social contract. The world, more than an object, is

4 Foucault, M. *The Words and the Things*, p. 350

5 Lyotard, J. F. in op. cit p. 82

the natural environment and field of all thoughts and perceptions; it is what assigns meaning to the experience.

More than a representation, the Museum will be, therefore, a creator of meanings: form in permanent construction, it transcends the materiality of the objects to create representations that synthesize practices, values and sensations of individuals, as biological and social beings - especially those which remain in our affective memory, shaping what we understand as heritage. Understood as semiotic instruments, Museum and Heritage expand in all directions: from the inner world of perception and feelings to the outer world; from tangible to the intangible; from local to global. Acknowledging Museum and Heritage in plurality makes also possible to admit the existence of a virtual museum and of virtual heritage, originated in the multiple interfaces between creativity and information. It is also understood that not only the museum, but heritage as well have an intangible face - that which exists in act, in real time.

Still unknown in the domain of the human sciences, heritage is a powerful representation, constituted and instituted from identitary perceptions. Linked or not to the geographical territory, it is present in the sense of ownership that crosses the human body and soul, and appears (openly or subtly) in all games of memory, in all forms of Museum. Mistakenly related to the notion of the past, it is now perceived as 'construction of the future' and as such, used as instrument of resistance within social and political discourse. Museum and heritage have, thus, a special space in the 'idearium' of contemporary societies.

Museology must, therefore, investigate the many forms of relationship between museum and heritage, in time and in space - and that includes the analysis of the different discourses and practices organized around them. Examples for analysis may be taken from the many tangible references of human action. But that will necessarily bring the need to understand the many subtle ways by which society and nature interact, in the sphere of intangibility.

When researching the relationships between Museology and the constitution of the heritage of the future we must identify the different plans of content that can effectively link each one of the meanings of Museum, Museology and Heritage to the contemporary's cultural context - starting from representations existent in the imaginary of the societies. The investigation of new dimensions in the relationship Museum & Heritage should delineate subjects that will form the epistemic base for development of theoretical models of Museology - thus contributing to its inclusion within the Theory of Knowledge, as a specific field or discipline.

Analysis of such relationship within the system of contemporary thought may also contribute to add, to existent researches, a new scope: the knowledge of such relationship in its subtler dimension - the intangible. Nothing more adequate to the cultural atmosphere of contemporary times, permeated by a crisscross of tendencies, manifestations and games of representations, and whose main characteristic is discontinuity of phenomena, not only in extension (globalization) but also in intensity (pluralization of representations and of symbolic structures).

## **2. Museology and the Secrets of the Imaginary**

The relationship between the Museum and the intangible heritage begins in the sphere of the imaginary. And here we should remind Bachelard, to whom imagination, more than the art of forming images, is the faculty of deforming the images supplied by perception. The imaginary would consist, therefore, rather than the capacity to think, in the imagining capacity of perception of Reality: to imagine is a process, not associated to images as such, which constitute a movement of stabilization of the imaginative capacity (or potency). To Bachelard, to perceive and to imagine are as antithetic as presence and absence. To imagine would mean to be absent (of Reality), to throw oneself into the future, to move, through impulse, towards a lawless universe. It is an eluding process, through which we can perceive the subtle shades of movement. The continuous itinerary from reality to the imaginary allows us to perceive the immanence of the imaginary in the Real, and to understand the experiences of transmutation of images into poetic objects - drivers of the imagining psyche. In this sense, the act of imagining represents an opening towards the unknown, which allows the mind to move beyond materiality and everyday life.

Imagination will be made seductive in the measure that, as advises Nietzsche, we restore all things to their own movement, abandoning what we see in favor of what we imagine. The imagination as trip: that is the movement, already recognized by the poets, in which we are inte-

rested - and that will allow us to understand imagination 'as a psychological yonder'<sup>6</sup> a type of precursory psyche, that projects into the essence of being.

The imagining function reveals itself in all human senses, as translated into permanent movement. To imagine is to use all the senses. Therefore, the element that better resembles the imagining function is the air - the element that allows movement to overcome substance. More than the vision, a purely cinematic movement, hopelessly linked to the matter (I only see what is placed before me), the imagining game allows us to move beyond materiality, practicing a 'psychology of the infinite air' through which all dimensions fade and we dip into 'that non-dimensional matter that gives us the impression of an absolute intimate sublimation'.<sup>7</sup>

To imagine is thus like a blow, which happens in total lightness, impregnated by subtle matters and movements that intercross all our senses. The imaginative capacity allows us the philosophical intuition of change and of movement, putting memory into permanent action, as an instrument of elaboration of experiences. It is the opposite of the habit, which blocks creative imagination, attributing value to permanence.

Constricted into static supports of representation, the imagination becomes image, turns into an object, and may be represented under tangible forms, possible of apprehending through literature and art - where a thousand representations feed the illusion that it is possible to apprehend, in permanence, that what is pure movement. And, driven by the desire of absolute permanence, they end in the museums, where, forever enclosed in the body of objects, they offer an illusion of immortality.

The relationship among museum and imaginary begins, therefore, in the games of memory that contribute to shape, in process, the ever-fluid scenery of our inner museum. And it is reactualized through the multiple processes of collective memory which, when attributing sense and specific value to the many imaginary representations of human societies, seek to apprehend them in permanence - as if it was possible to halt the instant, to possess the movement, to retain in time that what is, in itself, fleeting.

This is the domain where we may recognize the existence of an 'imaginary museum', as mentioned by Malraux<sup>8</sup>, a feeling that catalyzes the museum idea present in the collective memory, starting from the recognition of such representations. The imaginary museum precedes the museum-institution - it is, before all, a 'museum desire', awaiting to be materialized through tangible representations, which we commonly label as 'objects'.

... But what is permanently there, behind materiality, is the endless human capacity to imagine, the continuous flow that allows us to apprehend Reality into poetics, and to draw countless itineraries between the mind and the senses, as true 'flight dreams'<sup>9</sup> - that begin in the mind and travel all the roads of memory, in search of the wonderful and of the unknown. And since, in order to dream, it is necessary not to see, not to speak, the imagining capacity feeds of dream-like construction, of this itinerary that develops in fleeting lightness and that crosses all the spaces of the mind, when the control of the body eludes our will.

The true foundation of the Museum, is, therefore, intangibility - which is in the base of all representations.

The attempt to represent such intangibility in lightness and transience reminds us the myth of Mercury, the god whose feet don't land on earth, yet possess wings that project him into space. That's the fundamental Museum: fluid, aerial, always in movement, projecting itself in the space through dream and sensible feelings. Mercury, the god of movement, represents in his mobility the richness of lightness and of dynamic imagination - the principles of eternal youth. In this sense, more than making stop time in the illusory materiality of the object, the Museum transcends time, in the infinite duration of the movement.

The idea of transcending time leads us to understand the more contemporary expression of the Museum: that which takes place in virtuality. It is in the virtual space that time transforms its own meanings, assuming the form of an eternal permanence - real time. It is no longer necessary to count with the materiality of the object to retain in time our imagining capacity - it reveals in a new relational instance: that of the human with the machine.

6 Bachelard, Gaston. *Air and Dreams. Essay on the imagination of movement*. SP: Martins Fontes, 1990. p. 6

7 *Ibid.*, p. 10

8 Malraux, André. *Le Musée Imaginaire. Collection Folio/Essais*. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.

9 Bachelard, in *op. cit.* p. 15

### 3. Virtual Reality and Intangible Heritage

Michel Serres reminds us that we live, today, in the kingdom of information - in a great web of messages, where all of us act as messengers. In this fluid and volatile world, all substances quickly change, moving through subtle shades and appearances that soon may disappear. And, although some traditional works remain, although we still work the land and the matter, today we are, above all, messengers: we inhabit communication spaces, virtual spaces, difficult to represent in traditional systems and codes. The world appears to us no longer as an inert organism, of which we have relative domain, but as a live organism, endowed with transforming metabolism and a subtle nervous system, through which information vibrates.

This new relationship with reality subverts the traditional relationship with space, as old as human civilization - and reminds us that the civilizatory process has developed in specific spaces. In the civilizatory dance of humankind on planet Earth, economy, power and sovereignty could be always drawn in the Atlas, in successive plans of occupation and displacement.

... How to understand the Museum in this de-territorialized ambience, where a new, a-centered universal sprays every place, and all things, with events? Where should the Museum be situated, in a sphere where all that exists are complex connections, and where everything is relative? And where a new harmonic law, expressed into universal singularities, invades traditional universal values such as time, space and language?

In this new universe, which Serres denominates 'universe of Pantropy', everything is simultaneously in the center and in the margins. Here awakes Utopia; we live and think in the hope that this world, natural through 'physis' (nature) and cultural through 'logos' (our thoughts), makes our images become exact and precise, so that we may, at last, listen to each other and be able to lead an ethical existence, in permanent peace ...

Today, the imbalance of Reality is assured by means of messages and messengers. It is as if the world could not exist "without this tessiture of continually intermixed relationships"<sup>10</sup>, where things prolong themselves into the universe. A second utopia appears and it is the belief in the harmony between this emergent culture and nature in process. We believe that artificial intelligence is recent, while we have always been artificial in a considerable part of our capacities. Emissaries, receivers, we are constantly building simulacra so that they think for us, to us and through us. But what still keeps human bonding is the natural contract, through which all artificial intelligence refers to the natural links between humankind and nature.

A new relationship arises, between the humane, the machine and the fragment of time, space and matter where relations dwell. In this new environment, there is potency for encompassing the sum of all the means in all networks - the immense and total memory of things: all images, all scenarios, all experiences.

The object, we believe, may reach the limits of the world. But this is the same world where we have always been, and what we believe to be new objects are nothing more than images - a virtual elusion.

Virtuality is, thus, the right environment to protect and develop intangible heritage and reality.

The development of new media and the global networks make us face virtual imagetic as a new phenomenon, which suppresses Reality. In this thoroughly visual universe, the magic force of images gives us the illusion that Reality is only what we see before us. Imagetic thus engenders a new reality, recognizable through its infinite and vertiginous capacity of creation, dynamization, change and reproduction of images of all types - to the point where we believe that reality disappropriates itself - and even forget that the true capacity of imagination comes from the human mind.

The imagetic world develops beyond symbolic orders - which sweetly become 'great museum pieces', under the effect of different operations of classification and documentation. It is a self-reproducing world, which allows all sorts of operations of generation and reproduction of images. And, although images cannot always substitute objects or life expressions existent in a territory, the force of the imagetics leans in its capacity to retain and, at the same time, modify the registers of the reality. And that happens not only with the testimonies of external reality, but also with a multiplicity (never before possible) of representations of our inner world - our symbolic universe.

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10 Serres, in op. Cit., p. 131

Imagetics gives us, though, the illusion of being masters of our own memories: they become wanted, expected, manipulated memories - as if it was possible to dive into our own dreams and touch our inner museum. This illusional perspective, we have said before, leads us to the fantasy that reality is an integral part of our minds.

This is the risk of immersion into virtual reality: we start believing that the only possible reality is that which drives from our minds to the computer, and vice-versa. It is not by chance that so many specialists believe, today, that the only possible museum is the virtual museum - and that Museology is nothing but a branch of Information Science ...

That is the environment where we will meet the newest face of the Museum: the virtual face, just capable of existing in the screen of the computer, in the intersection of communication nets. Announced by the experiences of modern art and of photography, cinema, TV and video, the virtual museum could already be glimpsed through the images crystallized in printing, in foil and in film - endlessly copied, enlarged, reshaped, fragmented, decomposed and reunited.

And, if printing and photography have enabled material reproduction of images, the film and the video represent a step ahead in this process - what matters now is no longer the support, but that fantastic world that is projected through light, color and movement in every desired support: walls, roofs, ground, the man's own body. And, although nor even here the material support can be abstracted, film and video demonstrate that yes, it is possible to represent (and to interpret) the world without material 'objects'.

The moving image illustrates, represents, interprets, recreates - presentifies the event. As the old muses, it brings things into presence and eludes forgetfulness. It also documents: in its virtuality, it is a total object.

Moving images have become a powerful element of any museum. They make us understand that it is not only possible to presentify the world in the museum, but presentify the museum into the world as well. Here, vehicles already interconnect and intermediate, the limits between techniques become subtle. And society acknowledges that is possible that each individual possesses a synthesized museum: not just the reproduction of collection objects - the Baroque image, the piece of furniture, the Dodo bird, the Gioconda - but also the imagetic representation of the museum itself. And each of us is now able to promenade through a museum's ambience, walk through exhibitions; to assist folkloric festivals; or watch the Indians dance. All representations of nature and culture can be turned into museum objects - and even the nature itself, if we consider imagetic reproductions of natural heritage.

Each person turns into a partner of the museum, and even an actor: his/her mind is spatially projected onto the scene. And it is finally possible to understand why natural sites are museums: with our eyes we can visit the Iguazú falls, the Grand Canyon, the African reserves - we are able to be only half a yard from the panthers, dine with the Lap and participate of the Quarup.

By means of multimedia, museums become mass vehicles - multifaceted spaces, where traditional objects are relativized by the plurality of visual and sensorial stimuli. They are, more than ever, 'simulation machines'<sup>11</sup>, which try - to a certain extent - to preserve, control and dominate reality. The same applies to the television, where today the museum is simultaneously taken as scenery, theme and actor: it makes use of the television as communication language, while the TV divulges, to the world, in past or in real time, museum action.

... But this is not yet the virtual museum: it is just the use of modern and contemporary media to improve museum communication. The use of multimedia or of the new technologies of information in existent museums does not modify the fact that they are articulated in defined spaces, and regulated either by the time of the object, or by social or natural time.

The virtual museum takes shape and gains existence only through the screen of the computer. Legitimate representation of contemporary times, it inherits the face of contemporary culture: impersonal, it may be the one-author museum, or the result of a collage; a-temporal, it exists in the present - in real time; immaterial, it depends of the previous existence of testimonies, being able to appear through the presentification of the imagining capacity of the humane. De-territorialized, it may exist only within one computer - and simultaneously everywhere, reaching the world through the Internet.

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11 Huyssen, Andreas. Escaping from Amnesia. The Museum as mass culture. Trad. Valéria Camargo. In: Revista do SPHAN, ano IV p. 35

It is the antithesis of mass culture, being accessed only through isolated acts, which depend upon individual perceptual time.

The virtual museum doesn't have a model - it is continually recreated, through its creators' will, either through movements of the mouse or through corporal movements made with virtual reality devices - which allow literal immersion of the human body into the image. To exist in image, to be a virtual body, simultaneously in a no-place, in a no-time - that is the absolute contemporary human desire: being in the absurd world of simulation represents immortality - we may fly, fall into the deep, make star wars, fall in love with Jessica Rabbit. This is a world were the human will never die.

... Intangible forces have finally taken the museum. Malraux was right, and we may finally have in our hands the total imaginary museum (the entire world's memory and heritage, now made intangible by means of the new technologies). And we may use them as we please, making all kinds of experiences to match our imagination.

That is the fascination of the virtual museum, where each Louvre can be multiplied into infinite pathways, and each of us can be simultaneously Mozart and the cowboy of the American west - with the body, the age and the voice that we choose. Where heritage may be continually regenerated, and the Victoria from Samotrace may, at last, have arms.

In the virtual museum - absolute Narcissus, each humane is simultaneously creator and creature of his/her own kaleidoscope of representations. The museum is no longer mirror, representation or interpretation: it is a purely creative environment, where, by the power of infinite repetition, the human mind may project itself onto the machine, eluding nature, the body, time and space to be simultaneously the Same; the Other, the Double, the Shade, Love, Life and Death.