Multiculturalism and Museums

Discourse about Others in the Age of Globalization

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

IF IT IS true that knowledge is power, and that therefore, as Umberto Eco argued, the library is the central institution of Western culture, this also applies to the museum, for the museum is the library on display, turned inside out. The key to the museum is 'its role in making visible the foundational and originary narrative structures of western knowledge about the nature of the world' (Marcus, 1991: 11).

Exhibitions are 'privileged arenas for presenting images of self and "other"' (Karp, 1991a: 15) and ethnological museums, more than any others, are concerned with narratives about 'others'. That might be why ethnographic museums have never been in the limelight of prestige. Prestige went to national history museums and art galleries and then shifted to the modern art museum, as the central sites of the museums' 'rituals of citizenship' (Duncan, 1991; Kaplan, 1994). Ethnographic museums have never been museums of influence, models to other museums (Hudson, 1991). Often they have been scenes of neglect and rather shabby, underfunded institutions, standing in relation to other museums like the Third World to the First (Karp, 1991a). Occupying a derivative status as a scientific, moral and political annex of the majority museums, excluded from the leading museums' rituals of citizenship, ethnological museums serve as a counterpoint to them, politically marginal while symbolically central.

In the words of American president William McKinley, 'Exhibitions are the timekeepers of progress'. The colonial exhibitions of the late 19th century, which were the origins of many ethnographic museums, offered panoramas of power in which imperial hierarchies were on display. The ethnological museum, the public storehouse of the legacy of empire, is as Julie Marcus (1991) observes a monument of imperial tropes: the acquisition

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of objects – trophies of empire, taken by armies, as if decapitating the natives by taking their sacred objects; the collector as hero – salvaging the object from the decay of oriental melt-down; the charisma of the object – and the claim to 'undisputed origin' as the mark of authenticity; the intersection of taxonomy and chronology – situating the object while structuring the institutional world of museums itself.

In recent times the entire field has radically changed for all museums. In the age of accelerated globalization (Prösler, 1996), national museums are losing their function and becoming shrines of nostalgia. Citizenship is in the process of becoming global, civilizational, regional, local. Thus the German Historical Museum in Berlin, founded in 1987, takes as its approach a 'post-nationalist' view of German history as part of European history (Stölzl, 1988). Earlier the modern art museum initiated the principle of the transnational aesthetic. Postmodernity further undermines conventional exhibiting strategies – although it is argued that 'postmodernist art practice is even more dependent on the museum than was modernism. For postmodernism, even more so than modernism, is an art about art' (Negrin, 1993: 123).

Ethnographic museums are deeply affected by these wider trends, to the point that they now seem quaint in the wider context. They 'exhibit ideas about the "other" in the earlier, cruder forms left over from the time in which the ideas came into being, and not in the glossier disguised forms into which they have developed and in which they are found in many art and history museums' (Karp, 1991b: 379). They are directly affected by two further epochal shifts, postcoloniality and multiculturalism. The function of offering vivid evidence of the West's triumphal evolutionary attainment has shrunk since decolonization. Ethnographic museums can no longer afford to be colonial museums, display windows of empire, indirect testimonies of national grandeur. (Although several museums quietly linger on in this mode, such as the Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, probably more on the grounds of inertia than principle.) Postcoloniality unsettles ethnographic museums as it does ethnography and anthropology itself. The time of ethnographic museums might be past altogether: 'the collections and displays are overwhelmingly of the shield, spear, boomerang, and war-canoe type'; they emphasize 'traditional culture' and thus 'encourage a patronizing and escapist attitude toward the people involved' (Hudson, 1991: 460, 464).[1]

Multiculturalism has brought the natives home in the post-imperial countries, occasioning a need for the redefinition of citizenship. Multiculturalism unhinges the old citizenship rituals of the national museums and museums of modernism. It opens up a new field of cultural flux and opportunity – of 'insurgence of subjugated knowledges', of cross-cultural translation, hybridization. Museums, along with other media, are in the forefront of this new arena. In this time of transition, several exhibiting strategies have come into prominence in a curious mélange of newness and nostalgia.

The first part of this article lays out the conventional thesis that representations of others are either exoticizing (emphasizing difference) or assimilating (emphasizing similarities). Thus, displaying ethnographic objects as art follows an assimilative approach while *in situ* exhibitions (reconstructing

habitats) tend to be exoticizing and encyclopaedic exhibitions follow mixed strategies. Section two considers perspectives on culture that inform display strategies. Cultural relativism and evolutionism in anthropology reproduce different gazes of the Enlightenment: modernist and universalist, viewing roadmaps to modernity, or Romantic and differentialist. Actual politics of representation are further affected by the *rapport de forces* in different settings, such as light or strong multiculturalism, cultures with a stable centre or canon and those in flux. Section three is about changing notions of self and others. The dichotomy of self and other is destabilized by accelerated globalization. The conventional Enlightenment subjectivities (national, imperial, modern) are refracted in multiple identities (local, regional, transnational, global, sexual, urban and so forth) and 'the other' becomes 'others' (differentiated by 'race', class, gender, national origin, lifestyle and so forth). The earlier idea that representation of others must either be exoticizing or assimilating ignores other options – such as recognizing difference without exoticism, others as counterparts in dialogue, or oneself as an other. Section four concerns the alternative display agenda reflecting and producing these changes, each posing different questions. Pluralism – but is there still a centre? Dialogue – but who is in control? Self-representation – but who speaks for indigenous and other communities? Intercultural hybridity – but what are the terms of mixture? And reflexive representation – zeroing in on the dilemmas of representation itself. The closing section addresses the core dilemma of exhibiting power. Representation tends to keep out of view the power of representation. Thus, colonialism frames ethnographic exhibitions but is rarely addressed by it. The charisma of power is fetishized (or sometimes neutralized) rather than examined in exhibitions. This follows from exhibiting as a gesture of power and museums as sites of power. Reflexive representation can transform exhibitions into laboratories of collective understanding. From sites of power, links in the chain of reproduction of desire, museums can become laboratories of reflexivity and transformation.

Exhibiting Strategies

> The Museum of the Indian in Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, is run by the Silesian Mission. Upon entering the museum, one sees a Neanderthal-looking figure made out of some sort of plastic depicting a 'Typical Amazonian Indian' fishing in a pond made of broken pieces of tile set in concrete. The caption reads, 'Typical Uaupés River Landscape'. (Durham and Alves, 1993: 133)

In a recent work on *Exhibiting Cultures* – a 'trailblazing collection' according to Rydell (1992: 243) – Ivan Karp, one of the editors, observes that 'Discourse about the "other" requires similarity as well as difference' and 'exhibiting strategies in which differences predominate I call *exoticizing*, and one that highlights similarities I call *assimilating*' (1991: 375).

The most prominent contemporary exhibiting strategy is to display ethnographic objects as art: 'Treatment of artifacts as fine art is currently one of the most effective ways to communicate cross-culturally a sense of quality,

meaning, and importance' (Clifford, 1991: 225). The art-culture approach tends to follow an assimilationist exhibiting strategy, seeking to emphasize similarities between the aesthetic of the viewers and of the makers of the objects. This is generally done on the basis of purely formal criteria and structural considerations – not to mention the commodification of ethnographic objects. The stage was set by the Museum of Modern Art exhibition '"Primitivism" in Twentieth Century Art'. 'I want to understand the Primitive sculptures', writes William Rubin in the catalogue, 'in terms of the western context in which modern artists "discovered" them' (1984, 1: 1; cf. Nicodemus, 1993). A classic instance of an assimilationist approach, Rubin desired to:

> place 'primitive' aesthetics on a par with modernist aesthetics. In the end, however, he only assimilates the aesthetics of other cultural traditions to a particular moment within his own tradition . . . he ends up constructing cultural 'others' whose beliefs, values, institutions, and histories are significant only as a resource used in the making of modern art. (Karp, 1991: 377)

The art-culture system prevails wherever we see ethnographic objects set apart in glass vitrines under boutique lighting. The 'Magiciens de la terre' exhibition in Paris 1989 was another step from the ethnographic into the modern art museum. At the same time, the category art was avoided for the category magic, which brings us back to the witchcraft routine, the oldest cliché of ethnography: the other as magical mystery other. In the process, exoticism was reinvented in the curatorial preference for self-taught artists or 'people who have no training' (Picton, 1993).

Another prominent exhibiting strategy is the *in situ* exhibition. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991) distinguishes between *in situ* and *in context* strategies. *In situ* exhibitions practice the art of mimesis, recreating native habitats and re-enacting rituals. Such environmental and recreative displays may include live persons, preferably representatives of the cultures on display. The hyperrealism of *in situ* exhibitions highlights difference and tends to be exoticizing. It builds on the tradition of colonial exhibitions with native villages rebuilt on the fairground along with live specimens of natives doing what natives do, under the ethnographic gaze. There are several problems with this approach. '"Wholes" are not given but constituted' and often hotly contested (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 389). There is a further question of 'social pornography' – as in slumming and tourism generally. In the process, 'A neighborhood, village or region becomes . . . a living museum in situ' (1991: 413). This can lead to the conversion of living spaces into 'historical' sites and museums, as in the following newspaper announcement:

> UNESCO is about to launch next year an international appeal for the restoration of the old imperial city of Fès, in Morocco. A blueprint, elaborated by international experts . . . provides that the historic buildings should be restored and their inhabitants rehoused elsewhere, in order to create centres dedicated to Islamic arts and thought. (*Le Monde*, 1977 quoted in Gilsenan, 1982: 211)

In this case it is an elite 'view of how Islam is to be practiced, studied, taught, and authorized' that prevails. In other situations, the dilemma can be summed up as 'Import the tourist? Or export the village and festival?' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 419) *In situ* exhibitions are substitute tourism, feeding the hunger for difference, recreating the travel experience at one remove. Visitors can imagine themselves in a street in Cairo, Yemen, Mexico, India. The *festival* ('Festival of India', etc.) is a related exhibiting formula. This is hegemony in action, treating 'the life world of others as our playground' (1991: 419). In Australia in the early 1980s grandiose plans for life-size Aboriginal villages recreated on museum grounds were quite popular. To show what an ethnic group *really* does, a recent proposal to display the lifeworld of Italian immigrants was to set up a Tibaldi salami factory on the museum grounds (Marcus, 1991: 10).

In context strategies pose different problems, in particular the problem of the interpretive frame of reference. In context approaches 'exert strong cognitive control over the objects, asserting the power of classification and arrangement to order large numbers of artifacts'. 'Viewers need principles for looking' but of course 'There are as many strategies for an object as there interpretive strategies' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 390). The context of Western ethnography, the gaze of modernity, is now itself under scrutiny and no longer serves as an unproblematical guide.

A different strategy is illustrated by encyclopaedic exhibitions, such as 'Japan und Europa 1543–1929' in Berlin 1993, 'Europa und die Orient' in Berlin, 'Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain' (see Dodds, 1992), 'The Art of Pre-Columbian America', 'Art of the Aztecs', etc. In one sense these are harbingers of global consciousness, milestones on the road of globalization. In displaying civilizational aesthetics and trajectories they evoke cross-civilizational sensibilities. As their titles indicate these exhibitions display what Clifford (1991: 240) calls 'the sweep, the nonoppositional completeness characteristic of majority History'. They seek to be authoritative, encompassing, definitive. They nourish the panoramic urge of the panoptic gaze. Through blockbuster exhibitions, Julie Marcus (1991: 12) suggests, 'museums confront and resolve the lost unities (and certainties) of modernism, by offering an expanded consuming public the opportunity to experience the awe generated by the control of time, space and object which is inherent within them'.

Allowing for occasional oppositional views is part of their non-oppositional, pluralist, encyclopaedic intent. They take us out of ethnographic curiosity into the state of awe for Great Civilizations; they follow the tracks of, in Redfield's (1956) terms, great traditions rather than little traditions. They tend to be reverential, showing relics of humanity's great forward march. The global consciousness articulated in these exhibitions is partial, restricted to Great Civilizations, typically situated in the past and viewed from the point of view of the centre of power. The imperial era was obsessed with great civilizations – Rome, Greece, China, Egypt, India, Persia – and there was no contradiction between this reverence and Victorian evolutionism, Eurocentrism and racism: they display the same hierarchical view of civilization.

Multiculturalisms

We can distinguish between static and closed, or fluid and open views of culture and hence of multiculturalism. Static perspectives on culture come in various guises, for instance notions of national identity. Static views of multiculturalism are based on essentialist and territorial understandings of culture, as in the colonial concept of 'plural society' and the contemporary views of multiculturalism which treat the coexistence of cultures as a form of 'pillarization', a series of cohabiting ghettoes, in fact, a form of neo-apartheid.

Different perspectives on multiculturalism overlap with leading perspectives in anthropology. Roseberry (1992) points to three episodes in the development of American anthropology: the period when *cultural relativism* dominated from the 1890s to 1940 – a time when the USA faced a great influx of new immigrants and many anthropologists themselves were immigrants, often Jewish, like Franz Boas. The period from 1940 to 1980, when *systems-anthropology* predominated, concerned with large-scale evolutionary dynamics and structures of global inequality – the time of the US rise to globalism when the overriding problematic was that of public power. And the period from the 1980s, marked by the *crisis of categories* and assumptions – again a period when multiculturalism ranks high on the US agenda and resembling the pluralism of the early 20th century.

Cultural relativism in anthropology took shape at a time when nation/race/Volk/Gemeinschaft were near synonyms. Herder's romantic view of language/nation/culture was passed on to cultural relativism. It results in a similar outlook of cultural determinism and 'national character'. Culture, reified and homogenized, is manipulated in the same way as 'history'. Roseberry refers to cultural relativism's 'image of neatly bounded, discrete cultures with clearly defined traditions, imparting a singular set of values', and goes on to say:

> On its own, the assumption of cultural boundedness and essentialism may seem harmless enough, but it also serves as an ingredient to a dangerous variety of claims to cultural authenticity and the uniqueness of particular cultural visions. . . . The distance between academic claims of epistemological privilege along racial, cultural, or gendered lines and ideologies of 'ethnic cleansing' is not that great . . . (Roseberry, 1992: 849)

Disseminated through the media, static notions of culture may operate as an acceptable form of 'intellectual racism' and thus serve as the infrastructure of the racism of the street, of the skinheads.

Fluid views of culture, identity and multiculturalism treat culture as a constructed identity which is perennially in motion, continually under reconstruction. The underlying epistemology is not essentialist but constructivist: cultural identities are not given but produced. Multiculturalism is viewed not simply as the cohabitation of neatly bounded cultural communities but as a field of interspersion and crossover culture and the formation of new, mixed identities (Hall, 1992; Hannerz, 1992; Nederveen Pieterse, 1995a).

Evolutionism, another stream in anthropology, along with diffusionism and functionalism, has also put its mark on ethnological exhibiting strategies – witness the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford as the greatest example of the evolutionist inspired kind of display.[2]

A different kind of distinction runs between strong or deep multiculturalism as in multinational states such as India, the United States, the Commonwealth of Independent States; and the light multiculturalism of societies that have recently become immigrant countries (as in much of Europe), or where nationalities other than the dominant majority are weak and few in number (as in Canada outside Québec). The difference lies in the general *rapport de forces*. Strong multiculturalism offers the stage for developed power struggles in the arena of cultural politics. Here 'The struggle is not only over what is to be represented, but over who will control the means of representing' (Karp, 1991a: 15). Power struggles may be taken to the point that the canon is dethroned and recoded by emerging social forces. A further difference runs between societies with a stable cultural centre and those which are culturally in flux. In the former multiculturalism refers to majority/minority relations, or peripheral differences arranged around a stable hegemony, while the latter has been termed 'polycentric multiculturalism' (Shohat and Stam, 1994) or, better still, interculturalism.

Marked shifts in the balance of forces among groups tend to make for realignments in cultural politics – witness the struggles over the university curriculum in the USA. Other instances are the shift from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe (Munjeri, 1991) and the transition to post-apartheid South Africa. In South Africa this has generated a National Symbols debate on the question of what to do about the monuments of the period of white supremacy and Apartheid – museums representing history as white settler history, monuments and statues commemorating colonial wars, such as the Voortrekkers Monument, or claims to cultural domination, such as the Taal Monument (Tomaselli, 1994; Wright and Mazel, 1991).

Upon closer consideration, the two exhibiting strategies outlined by Ivan Karp, the assimilating and exoticizing strategies, are *both* hegemonic strategies, both defined from the point of the view of the centre: both are instances of 'discourse about the other'. The exoticizing strategy insists on difference while the assimilating strategy eliminates difference or reworks it in a wider modernizing perspective. The exoticizing approach, premised on essentializing difference, parallels cultural relativism and static notions of multiculturalism with their insistence on the purity of cultural 'wholes' or configurations. The assimilating strategy subsumes difference and reinscribes it as a substructure of modernity.

These discourses about others, then, represent twin faces of the Enlightenment: the Romantic gaze and the modern gaze. The Romantic gaze highlights the diversity of cultures and infuses it with meaning – as in reverence for the *bon sauvage*, the noble savage, discourses of authenticity and 'roots'. The modernist gaze views different cultures as multiple paths leading towards the citadel of modernity. These twin gazes produce the familiar

tension between *Lebenswelt* and system, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, thematized in phenomenology (Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) and poststructuralism. It produces the dialectics of Enlightenment addressed in critical theory.

Ethnological museums have been strongly influenced by the perception and interpretation of cultures as distinct configurations which could be represented through 'typical' specimens. Cultural relativism and the notion of cultures as separate wholes echoes into the present and is being revived in the age of multiculturalism. Thus, in a conference of European ethnological museums in Paris 1993 a call was made for European solidarity in pushing back xenophobia and in 'conserving the cultural identity of minorities'. It was also argued that 'The cultural wealth of the peoples of the world must be conserved, to avoid a worldwide standardization. . . .'[3] This is a familiar refrain in contemporary criticisms of globalization. Is there no middle ground then between cultural apartheid and global standardization?

Selves and Others

Fundamental to the question of representation is the dichotomy between self and other. This underlies both exoticizing and assimilating strategies. The dichotomy of self and other overlaps with the worn-out dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, centre/periphery, Occident/Orient, North/South. The dichotomy of self/other has been enshrined in structuralist anthropology, mined in hermeneutics, problematized in poststructuralism and unpacked in deconstruction as another binarism. In a conversation with Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze remarks: 'You were the first to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others.' Deleuze concludes in appreciating the 'fact that only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf' (in Sheridan, 1980: 114). As Maurice Berger (1987: 10) observes, 'every representation – every painting, photograph, film, video or advertisement – is a function of "someone's investment in sending a message"'.

This critical awareness parallels several trends in anthropology: the crisis of ethnographic representation (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Sangren, 1988) and experimentation with new methods of representation in anthropology. Anthropology in the postcolonial era shows affinities with postmodernism and the techniques of collage, montage and dialogue. Self-representation, such as Yanomamo filming themselves, is part of the reorientation away from the *National Geographic* tradition.

The relationship between self and others which entered into the foundations of museum display has been undergoing profound transformations. The museum is a product of the Enlightenment. The identities that framed the age of the museum, from about 1840 to 1930 (Phillips, 1995), were national, imperial and modern. National identity was constructed in history museums and national art galleries (and military and war museums); imperial identities were produced in colonial and ethnographic museums and displays; while modern identities have been staged in world exhibitions

(Rydell, 1993), science and modern art museums. These Enlightenment subjectivities were in turn enframed by race, class and gender.

Globalization in the 20th century gradually opened up these identity frames. Major phases of accelerated globalization have been the turn of the century (new imperialism, transport revolution, new technologies, industrial war, international treaties) and the postwar period (US hegemony, Bretton Woods, communications revolution, informatization). The high modern or postmodern turn decentred the universalist Enlightenment subject and introduced the multiplicity of identity. In widening the range of organizational frameworks accelerated globalization widens the range of identity repertoires.

> Multiple identities and the decentring of the social subject are grounded in the ability of individuals to avail themselves of several organizational options at the same time. Thus globalization is the framework for the amplification and diversification of 'sources of the self'. (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995a: 52)

Gradually different identities come to the foreground. Community identities are constructed in local community museums. Migration histories are presented in displays of diasporic journeys. Intercultural art exhibitions produce multicultural identities. Transnational identities are articulated in 'festivals' and encyclopaedic civilizational displays. Exhibitions such as 'Africa: The Art of a Continent' or 'Asian Modernism' produce macro-regional, continental identities. The first was staged in London (see Archer-Straw et al., 1995) and the other in Tokyo (Furuchi and Nakamoto, 1995). Beyond the old town and municipal museums, urban identities are reconstructed in displays of urban space and architecture. Gender awareness contributes different inflections in modern art as well, witness Manhattan's Guerrilla Girls. Sexual preferences inform exhibitions devoted to, for instance, gay history. Age awareness becomes a factor in display strategies geared toward children (play and touch museums, theme parks). These different identities do not replace the old ones but coexist and interact with them in novel combinations.

Just as the self is not what it used to be, 'the other' is no longer a stable or even meaningful category. The time of structuralist pontificating on 'the question of the other', for instance by Tzvetan Todorov (1988), is past. 'The other' now seems a hopelessly static notion (e.g. Spivak, 1993). The current terminology is *others*, reflecting the awareness that of course there are many different kinds of others. 'Others' in the plural because of the Big Three – race, class, gender – and because of national origin, religion, lifestyle, sexual preference, age. That self and others necessarily stand to one another in a polarized relationship is also in question. Martin Buber in *I and Thou* and Emmanuel Levinas in several works develop alterity as a relational concept, a framework for dialogue. Freud spoke of the unconscious as the ego's other. And according to Foucault, 'modern thought is advancing to that region where man's Other must become the Same as himself' (in Sheridan, 1980: 80). In feminism the theme of otherness makes place for *difference*, a

more neutral and subtle category in which the question of alterity reconnects with fundamental philosophical queries of what constitutes identity. Notions of otherness originated there in the first place (Gasché, 1994). Surely there are many different kinds of difference and cultural differences are but one dimension amid the wider spectrum of differences (ontological, metaphysical, transcendental).

Museums are institutions of modernity. Their concern with conservation reflects the modern *esprit* of control and appropriation through classification and taxonomy; as such, museum displays are triumphal processions of modernity. The history of museums parallels the career of modernity; this also means that museums take part in reflexive modernity and thus become sites of reflexivity, both with respect to multicultural takes on modernity (or, modernities) and to modernity's evolution.

Alternative Agendas

If there is a general principle for exhibiting strategies in the age of globalization it is abandoning the premise of discourse about the other. First, because the very dichotomy of self/other is being refigured in the process of globalization which involves the interpenetration of cultures world-wide, the merging of histories over time, and the growing awareness and recognition of this happening. And, second, because of the epistemological and political arrogance of representing others.

The division of labour among History, Art, Ethnography museums reflects the 19th-century order and is increasingly being abandoned: ethnographic objects are now also on display in art museums; colonialism can also be addressed in history museums. Generally, the principle of a separation between 'their' history and 'our' history is no longer tenable. Therefore whether there are grounds for a separate agenda for ethnographic museums is increasingly in doubt.

Table 1 Selves and others and exhibitions before/after accelerated globalization

Selves	Others	Exhibitions, Museums
Before		
National	[Foreign]	History, Art
Imperial/colonial	Savage/Colonized	Ethnography
Modern	[Traditional]	Art, Science
After		
Local		Community
Regional		Folklore
Macro-regional	Continental	Civilizational
Transnational		Diaspora
Hybrid	Hybrid	Cross-cultural
Global	Global	Common concerns

It might be argued, on the other hand, that because of their institutional history ethnographic museums have a particular responsibility in addressing the so-called North/South gap. While the notion Third World is no longer adequate, implying a territorialization of poverty which is not tenable since rich/poor divisions crosscut geographical markers, still for the majority of humanity poverty and deprivation are a glaring reality. Displays inspired by solidarity, however, are double-edged for in the process they construct a moral high ground: while showing that it is 'them' not 'us' who suffer, the viewing gaze remains outside the frame (Edwards, 1991; Back and Quaade, 1993). How then can a reorientation be implemented? The general reorientation of cohabitation in the context of globalization may be summed up, to borrow a phrase of James Clifford (1991: 224), as a shift from a 'colonial' to a 'cooperative' museology.

An obvious question is, 'How can museums make space for the voices of indigenous experts, members of communities represented in exhibitions, and artists?' (Lavine, 1991b: 151). The postmodern answer is to 'turn the conflict of interpretations into an exhibition tool' (1991b: 155). Thus, the imperial voice – the voice of classic ethnography – can be contrasted to the indigenous voice of resistance, recuperation. The question is, usually, under what terms are these voices combined?

Pluralism as a political and aesthetic strategy for incorporating alternative representations is contested: 'Pluralism as an ideology makes a peripheral place for new possibilities without allowing them to challenge the central idioms of "Euro-centered art"' (Ybarro-Frausto quoted in Lavine, 1991: 83). Thus, 'other' cultural and aesthetic expressions in the West have often been categorized as 'ethic art' (Araeen, 1989). Pluralism as such does not address the underlying question of cultural centre and periphery.

A *dialogical* approach can take the form of joint exhibitions organized by museums North and South or mainstream and periphery institutions. A transnational cooperative museology can address matters of global common concern such as human ancestry and ecological development. Joint exhibitions are an increasingly common practice, although usually the format is decided by sponsors, foundations or museums, in Europe, North America or Japan.

It may be argued that a general guiding principle should be *self-representation*, i.e. representations produced, staged, developed by 'others' in question. In photography a relevant example is a title such as *Picturing Us: African-American Identity in Photography* (Willis-Braithwaite, 1993). Self-representation requires resources which may be available to post-colonial societies or in conditions of strong multiculturalism. Besides, under certain conditions, such as repression and danger, self-representation may be the only option. John Berger introduces a collection of drawings by Palestinian children from the Occupied Territories thus: 'Where the TV cameras were banned and journalists forbidden, schoolchildren painted for the world in watercolors' (in Boullata, 1990: 10).[4]

Tribal and African-American museums in North America reflect

community perspectives and local or alternative history and genealogy rather than majority history.[5] The Field Museum in Chicago and the Schomburg Center in Harlem, New York belong in this category. This option is open only to multicultural societies with substantive minorities with local historical memory of sufficient depth, a situation which is not the case in most of north-west Europe.

At some point, however, the logic of self-representation wears thin. For if there is no other, who is self? The twin terms of the dichotomy are interdependent and if one goes so does the other. There is a comparable dilemma in the indigenization of knowledge – the repudiation of Eurocentric knowledge and the affirmation of indigenous knowledge. What is indigenous and who decides? What are its boundaries, its circumference? Who belongs and who does not, what is essential and what is not? Who speaks for the 'others'? Once we repudiate the representation of others across cultural boundaries, this naturally leads to questioning them across boundaries of gender, class, age, status, region, language *within* cultures and groups. The problem of representation extends infinitesimally: in the process of representation as a manifestation of power, *all* others represented are 'others'.

Museums which exhibit community histories – such as the histories of immigrant groups in the United States or Britain – are not beyond contestation. Even though they may reflect community values more adequately than any outsider view, no community is homogeneous. Different generation cohorts, for instance, hold different perspectives. Self-representations staged by museums in postcolonial countries, by Arab Cultural Centres in Manhattan or London, or the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris tend to be constrained by elite constructions of Arabic culture. Cultural self-representation as a principle, then, does not settle the question of representation and power but shifts it from the intercultural to the intracultural sphere. More precisely, cultural insiders can contest the ways in which culture is constructed and represented interculturally.

Thus, the African-American critic Greg Tate (1992: 245, 251) criticizes an exhibition on 'Black Art, Ancestral Legacy' (Dallas Museum of Art, 1991) for its cultural nationalism and ghettoization of black art, 'as if Western art history never happened', collapsing 'all Black art into an ethnically pure African reclamation project'. To avoid ghettoization and modes of self-representation that freeze identities rather than opening up to identities in the making, a radically different option is *hybridity* as an approach. This means breaking with inward-looking cultural nationalism and opening the windows. In cultural studies, hybridity is the pivotal point where analysis and positioning in the anticolonial and national liberation mode end and analysis in the postcolonial and pre-imperial mode begins. Hybridity foregrounds the openness and fluidity of identities, the cut'n'mix zone of selves and others. In cultural studies this outlook has taken shape in Stuart Hall's 'new ethnicity' (rather than freezing existing ethnic identities), Homi Bhabha's cultural translation and Houston Baker Jr's style of criticism (cf. Bhabha, 1993, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse and Parekh, 1995). In British arts

it has inspired the 'long march from "Ethnic Arts" to "New Internationalism"' (Papastergiadis, 1994: 42; see also Gupta, 1993).

Cross-cultural mixing is not merely a subject matter of exhibitions but also an exhibiting strategy. As a strategy, instead of highlighting the alleged separateness and distinct character of cultures, it is concerned with showing the mélange of cultures over time, the emergence of crossover cultural forms. A point of reference is the Silk Roads project of UNESCO. Several terrains of cultural mixing, historical and contemporary, come to mind: migration, trade, technology, knowledge, language, medicines, foods, arts and crafts; and in contemporary culture, consumption, popular music, world music, fashion (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994). It undermines the Romantic view, by pointing to the differences within, and unsettles the modernist thesis, by relativizing the rupture of modernity. On the other hand, hybridity should not be allowed to become a new mask. 'Deterritorialisation, hybridisation and multiculturality should not turn into new totalisations hiding new structures of power' (Mosquera, 1993: 91). Hence hybridity also refers us to an examination of the *terms* under which mixing occurs as the recoding of relations of power.

A further option is what we might term, in analogy with reflexive anthropology, *reflexive representation* – reflexive in the sense of self-questioning, problematizing the politics of representation itself. In the context of exhibiting strategies, this refers to exhibitions not about others but about the relationship between selves and others, about the process and the logics of *othering*. In an ethnological context this involves self-examination of the ethnographic gaze. It involves questioning the colonial matrix of anthropology and the relationship between ethnography and 'national history'. For instance, in white settler colonies such as Australia and South Africa ethnography has been traditionally subsumed under natural history and native peoples have been shown as part of Natural History museums, while 'white' ('our') history has been displayed in art and history museums (Marcus, 1991: 15). Thus the National Museum in Cape Town displays dioramas with life-size models of San people *in situ* next to exhibits of dinosaur skeleton models.

Presently, if this is considered an age of ethnicity, the distinction between nation or *ethnos* and 'others' or *ethnikos* (i.e. ethnicity) is also being unsettled (Nederveen Pieterse, 1995b). From a generalized 'ethnic' point of view, national history may be regarded as a monocultural regime, a form of ethnocracy and national museums as ceremonial sites of ethnocratic citizenship. In that sense, oppositional exhibiting strategies are forms of ethnocriticism.

One of the options for reflexive representation is practising anthropology-in-reverse: looking at the West with the same gaze and cognitive instruments as were directed at the other. Since the late 18th century the ethnographic gaze fashioned overseas also influenced the perception of rural and folk cultures within Europe: 'From the study of manners and customs in Tahiti or among the Iroquois it was only a step for French intellectuals to look at their own peasants, scarcely less distant from them (they thought) in beliefs and style of life' (Burke, 1978: 14). Ethnography practised in the West, also

in urban anthropology, has long been influenced by anthropology 'overseas'. A step further is looking at the West through the eyes of others, turning the tables of power. There are enough examples of such a perspective (e.g. Fohrbeck and Wiesand, 1983; Theye, 1985). This involves examining the power embodied in the ethnographic gaze, in the creation of the ethnographic object, the classification of the object as ethnographic document. It is an exercise in the decolonization of imagination, engaging the history of colonialism and the culture of empire, of which ethnography is a part.

'Race and Representation' at Hunter College Art Gallery in New York 1987 is an example of a reflexive exhibition. The 'White on Black' exhibition in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam 1990 is another. Based on an extensive collection of images of Africa and blacks in Western popular culture over the past 200 years, it was effective as an act of self-reflection (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992). Effective also in terms of deconditioning viewers' stereotypes (Abel and Duwell, 1990). On the other hand, due to limitations imposed by the collection, what was not represented was the oppositional voice – e.g. black on white or, more precisely, black on white on black.

Several exhibitions have dealt with the 'gaze of others' directed at Europeans. 'Colon' in Munich 1983 exhibited African images of Europeans (Jahn, 1983). 'Exotic Europeans' were on display in London in 1991 featuring Nigerian, Japanese, Chinese, Indian and Native American images of Europeans. Black analyses of the 'white eye' and critiques of white stereotyping of blacks are amply represented in literature but not as well represented in exhibitions. Several that have been organized – such as 'Ethnic Notions' in the Berkeley Art Center 1982 and 'Distorted Images' in 1984 in The Muse, a Brooklyn community museum – typically took place in African-American community settings. The setting is significant if we consider the importance of exhibitions as occasions of public display and presencing. These exhibitions did not take place in museums. Accordingly, there remain definite *boundaries* to collective remembering and reflexivity, and limits to what can be shared, where it can be shared, and to what degree it can be shared at all. An exhibition that did gain access to museum grounds was 'The Black Image in American Art' (McElroy, 1990) – note the framing title – in the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Juxtaposing contrasting exhibiting strategies is another mode of reflexive representation. Fred Wilson (1993), an artist of African-American descent, created an installation in the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore in which discarded slave shackles are displayed next to a silver tea set, or handcrafted armchairs side by side with a handmade whipping post. Thus museum resources are used as tools to reflect on the role of museums and their exhibiting strategies.

James Clifford (in Lavine, 1991b: 157) has noted 'how differences in power and perspective radically affect exhibiting voices': 'even museums with opposed cultural policies can be united in the style of their discourse, universalizing in the case of majority museums and oppositional in the case of alternative kinds of museums'. Perhaps this is why some exhibitions, while based on interesting ideas, have been inconsistent in conceptualization and

implementation. The 'Exotische Welten/Europäische Phantasien' exhibition in Stuttgart 1987 was premised on a challenging notion: that exotic worlds are European fantasies; but the actual exhibition and the extensive catalogues were quite uneven. The idea was not consistently followed through in its consequences and many items were displayed in conventional terms, such as 'treasures of the Orient'.

One of the issues that present themselves is the repatriation of trophies of colonialism – sacred objects of indigenous peoples, antiquities and art works taken without proper authorization. A cooperative museology must address these questions in the knowledge that accountability is no longer national but global. At times the interests of conservation may clash with indigenous interests; the construction of both positions may be problematic.[6] What is at issue is the wider question of indigenous intellectual property rights and traditional resource rights.

The alternative agendas discussed so far – pluralist, dialogical, hybrid, reflexive – refer primarily to Western, metropolitan countries. In postcolonial countries the situation tends to be different. In many cases nation-building is an ongoing process, national identity is privileged and marginalization – of minorities, tribals, ethnic groups out of favour – is often a harsh reality. Public culture is defined narrowly, often in statist terms – particularly in many African, Asian and Middle Eastern countries. National identities are more secure in Latin America but peripherality (economic, cultural) is a lingering preoccupation and the preoccupation with peripherality internationally may be compensated for by centralism in national contexts. Thus, the Latin American ideology of inter-ethnic mixing, *mestizaje*, implicitly refers to a cultural centre of gravity of whitening/Europeanization/modernization, despite recurrent rendezvous with *indigenismo, tiempos mixtos* or hybridity. This reminds us that exhibitions and museums are situated in landscapes of power of which the parameters are as wide as the public culture and ethos allow.

Exhibiting Power

> Following turn of the century European aesthetic trends – Orientalism and Japonisme – Australian artists and institutions embraced *Asia* as style: homogeneous, traditional and static, exotic and serene. On the one hand, the people were viewed with derision, on the other, the culture was framed in desire. (McAlear, 1994: 6)

Brian Wallis recounts how cultural festivals staged in the US devoted to 'Turkey: The Continuing Magnificence' (1987–88), 'Indonesia' (1990–92) and 'Mexico: Splendor of Thirty Centuries' (1990) have been 'intricate, multi-layered engines of global diplomacy' that 'function as huge public relations gambits, designed to "sell" the nation's image in the United States' (Wallis, 1994: 267, 266). Directed at the United States, these 'festivals mark a specific moment in the realignment of international political and economic power relations' (1994: 227).[7] They involve the governments' hiring major US public relations firms, the sponsorship of multinational corporations and are 'symptomatic of the trend toward using the aura of culture to attract capital'

(1994: 227). 'Yet national cultural festivals mask the contemporary situations in the countries, especially the factionalism, by papering it over with catch-phrases like the Indonesian national motto, Unity in Diversity' (1994: 274).

The role of art and culture in international diplomacy is familiar enough. There have been recent disclosures of the role of the CIA in promoting abstract expressionism as a counter to Soviet realism during the Cold War. Australia in its recent interest to embrace 'Asian values' and to snuggle up to the economic dynamism in Asia, has been sponsoring artists and cultural events in Asian countries to change its image in Asia, away from koalas and the White Australia policy (McAlear, 1994: 5). This is the tip of the iceberg of wider and more or less subtle correlations of aesthetics and power (see e.g. Duncan, 1993; Nederveen Pieterse, 1993; Zolberg, 1995).

Indeed with a slight shift of angle power itself appears as a charm operation, a theatrical performance in the production of charisma.[8] Museums are regarded as educators of the gaze (Katz, 1991), reformatories of manners (Bennett, 1995). But when it comes to power museums and exhibitions tend to reproduce the charms of power. 'Treasures of', 'Gold of', 'Splendour of' exhibitions invite the public to luxuriate in the aura of power, moonstruck by the accumulated glitter of palaces turned inside out. Under the heading of education museums provide gratification.[9]

'In some dim but important way we expect museums to be decorous rather than challenging' (Fulford, 1991: 28), but this is only a faint expression of the role of museums. With schools and media, museums and libraries are links in the chain of cultural reproduction. Museums are sites of power, 'ceremonial monuments'. Tucked in amid national monuments, statues of statesmen, mausoleums of nation-builders, triumphal arches and obelisks commemorating national achievements, museums themselves are part of the landscape of power, assigned to documenting the giant steps taken by the nation's history. 'Museums do not simply resemble temples architecturally; they *work* like temples, shrines, and other such monuments.' They induce a 'willingness to shift into a state of receptivity' (Duncan, 1991: 90, 91).

The point of reflexive representation is to zero in on representation as power. But representations tend to keep out of view the power of representation. First, power itself has rarely been the object of display. It frames the context of display rather than being addressed by it. Power is more often fetishized in exhibitions than interrogated by them. In the present context the fetishism of power involves, first, the culture of empire as a culture of power. Arguably this is insufficiently covered in anthropology. As Roseberry (1992: 850) notes, power and colonialism are often referred to in recent post-structuralist anthropology and yet: 'One is often struck, however, by how little the authors actually have to *say* about colonialism and the state.' It is certainly insufficiently addressed in ethnographic museums. In line with the museum culture of conventionality it is the decorous, edifying side of empire that is on exhibit rather than its bloodstained record. Indeed colonialism *as a subject* is excluded from ethnological museums: it enframes the ethnological museum but is not addressed by it. In cultural festival type exhibitions

the postcolonial state is diplomatically kept out of view, is the sponsor and beneficiary of the exhibition, 'self-orientalizing' the nation in the process for the sake of tourism glamour.

An obstacle that runs deeper is the sentimentality about empire and the discreet affection for colonialism because, even though this is an unfashionable sentiment in the postcolonial age, it is viewed as part of modernization led from the West. Besides it is a matter of national pride. Why in Belgium has there not been a major exhibition devoted to Belgian colonialism, to the colonialism of King Leopold II and the 'Congo atrocities' juxtaposed to the national rhetoric of civilizing mercy? The same applies to England, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Spain and their colonial past. In the Netherlands an exhibition could be devoted to the colonization of the East Indies – not about *tempo doeloe*, not about the cultural treasures of Indonesia, not about the exotic cultures of the island peoples, not about Javanese gamelan or Balinese dancing, but about the bloody conquests of Bali and Lombok, about the Acheh wars, about the plantation system, about the frontier society of Deli in Sumatra, about colonial divide and rule, and about the military effort to forestall Indonesian independence.[10]

Colonialism is behind us, but repressed rather than assimilated. The critical assimilation of empire has not taken place in museums nor, by and large, in other public media such as film or theatre. To an extent it has taken place in literature (Said, 1993) and scholarship. In the public and popular sphere, up to the present, a docile view of colonialism prevails, particularly of one's *own* nation's colonialism. The empire nostalgia industry serves as an annex of the heritage industry and thrives on a saccharine view of empire, as in TV productions such as the English series *Jewel in the Crown*.

A partial exception to this pattern is the United States. The exhibition 'The West as America' (Truettner, 1991) in the National Museum of American Art challenged the decorous clichés of 'how the West was won', unpacked the ideological messages and techniques in the cherished art depicting the frontier, and in the process reaped a storm of protest from the media to Congress. What contributes to the capacity to stage reflexive exhibitions is the populist American tradition of aversion to Big Government. In the US it has been possible to produce critical films and access mass media about the Vietnam war and the US role in Central and Latin America. Equally important is that the US is a country of strong multiculturalism in which minorities have been playing a profound role from the outset: as an immigrant society from the start the United States, in a profound sense (but not a complete sense), is a culture with an open imaginary.

'From Totem to Life Style' in Amsterdam 1987 was an exhibition based on the provocative idea of juxtaposing the 'totems' of non-Western cultures to totems of the West. The latter were concretized in the consumer lifestyles promoted in marketing (Fohrbeck and Kuijpers, 1987). In the process however the *actual* totems of the West – the Church, the Pope, the state, the nation, the monarchy, science, technology, the media – remained completely outside the picture. Thus a glaring asymmetry ensued in which sacred

objects of non-Western cultures were placed side by side with contemporary icons of consumerism in the West. A steep asymmetry in time (traditional/modern) and the status of symbolism was intrinsic in the exhibition concept, making a trite point that 'our' worship is the market.

The main obstacle in getting a focus on power may be people's desire to be hypnotized by power. Even while contesting its gestures, public media reproduce the cult of leadership, indulge the obsession with the official public realm of politics – even if it is no longer the centre of actual political decision-making. Part of this cult are the aesthetics of power and the methodologies of the manufacture of charisma. 'Fascism is theatre', according to Jean Genet. Why, for instance, has there not been a major exhibition devoted to the Nazi era – not to 'Entartete Kunst' (degenerate art) or music (which both have been the theme of recent exhibitions in Germany), but to probing the methodologies of 'Entartete Politik'? One of the reasons is the wish to avoid erecting shrines to Nazism. What exhibitions have been organized have produced 'feminized', domesticated renderings of the Nazi era such that viewers identify with the victims of Nazi politics (see Rogoff, 1994).

These considerations refer to an unresolved question: what is the model for the museum, the university or the theatre? It reminds us of the affinity between the museum and the theatre. It has been observed that 'the production of an exhibition is more akin to the production of a theater piece than any other form' (Gurian, 1991: 188), while others insist that the museum emulate the university rather than the theatre (Harris, 1990). Museums may be sites where the university and the theatre meet. Better still, they may be intermediaries and laboratories for experimenting with new cultural combinations and encounters.

This brings us to the status of museums as sites of power. A strategy that problematizes the relationship between the museum and the public is what Nick Merriman refers to as the 'active, transactional museum'. 'In recognition of the subjectivity and plurality of interpretation we should challenge', according to Merriman (1992: 138), 'the notion of the curator as the sole interpreter, handing down wisdom to a passive public. Instead, we should now aim for interpretation to be a transaction between the public and the curator, a shared task.' Various forms of public participation – sorting archaeological finds, examining reserve collections, involving communities in the production of their own past – are being developed to address the fluidity of interpretation.[11] This also extends to ethnological exhibitions, as in the Ethnography Gallery at Birmingham Museum.

> One section of the gallery displays objects from Papua New Guinea, which the visitor can then find out about through using an interactive video programme. In this, the objects are interpreted in four different ways, by a nineteenth-century collector, by a Christian missionary, by a museum curator, and by a present-day New Guinean. (Merriman, 1992: 138)

Discourse about others is a function of difference and uneven development. The power of representation is anchored in discursive practices and

taxonomic conventions which correlate with forms of 'hard' power, economic and political power included – political power because influence counts and economic power because representation is for sale. On the one hand, discourse about others is old-fashioned and, on the other, it will remain with us for as long as there is uneven development. A growing degree of reflexivity about this condition itself may be what has been gained in the shift from colonial to postcolonial times, and this implies a shift from discourse about others to discourse about *othering*. There are numerous ways in which difference is conceived and experienced, such as polarized and dialogical, static and fluid, deep and shallow.

Notes

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1. '. . . it is quite possible that the day of the ethnographical museum has already gone, and that, in the years ahead, the habits of man will be presented in a total environmental context . . .' (Hudson, 1991: 458).

2. For a setting and sequence of development of anthropological thought different from American anthropology see Kuklick (1992) on the social history of British anthropology and its phases of evolutionism, diffusionism and functionalism.

3. European Conference of Ethnological and Social History Museums: Museums and Societies in a Europe of Different Cultures, Paris, February 1993. The statement quoted first is attributed to the opening speech by the French president; the second is attributed to the president of the International Committee of Museums of Ethnography, in a conference report by Lothar Stein (1993).

4. Cf. the methods of self-representation of black South African workers used by Sandra Kriel in Williamson (1989: 70–1).

5. See Clifford (1991: 225–6) on the difference between majority museums and alternative/tribal museums.

6. See Posey (1994) for a framework and covenant for traditional resource rights and the ensuing discussion on intellectual, cultural and scientific property rights.

7.

> All of the countries that have had festivals in the United States have shared an economic profile. They all have huge international debts (mainly to the United States); cheap, docile labor markets (attractive to U.S. businesses); and valuable exports managed by U.S. multinational corporations (principally oil). All of them have recently privatized state industries (with encouragement from the United States and the International Monetary Fund. (Wallis, 1994: 277)

8. Anthony Appiah (1992: 145):

> the beginning of postmodern wisdom is to ask whether Weberian rationalization is in fact what has occurred historically. For Weber, charismatic authority – the authority of Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Che Guevara, Kwame Nkrumah – is antirational, yet modernity has been dominated by just such charisma.

9. In *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* Sharon Zukin describes how in Disney World 'the fantasies of the powerless are magically projected onto landscape developed by the powerful' (1991: 218). This could also apply to 'Splendour of' and festival exhibitions which cater to middle-class fantasies by staging fairy-tales of cultural utopias.

10. An example is an exhibition in the Ethnological Museum in Leiden, Netherlands titled 'Tegenbeelden van Tempo Doeloe' (Counterimages of Tempo Doeloe). Unlike the title's promise, the exhibition missed the point and in the manner of display made the counter-images peripheral to the standard nostalgic images of decorous Tempo Doeloe which were represented centre stage (see Vanvugt, 1993).

11. Interactive, experiential museum strategies are also part of the Museum of Tolerance of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles with exhibits on racism and prejudice in America and on the history of the Holocaust.

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Jan Nederveen Pieterse teaches at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Recent books include *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (1992), *Empire and Emancipation* (1989) and edited volumes on *Christianity and Hegemony* (1992), *Emancipations, Modern and Postmodern* (1992) and, with Bhikhu Parekh, *The Decolonization of Imagination* (1995).