

Imagining Curatorial
Practice after 1972



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If, as the editors of this volume encourage us to do, we are to conceive of a curating after the global, much rests on the ambiguity of that ‘after’; an ambiguity that is only emphasized when they propose that we read this to mean “after the historical emergence *and* possible demise of a particular globalism”.¹ Hence, if this “particular globalism” remains tied to what we, for want of a better phrase, might call “global capitalism,” several possibilities suggest themselves: that we understand contemporary curating as emerging in the wake of this process of globalization; that we speculate on what it might become after its demise; or, finally and most tantalizingly, that we propose a curatorial practice concerned with the task of *bringing about* such a demise.

The first of these possibilities seems fairly uncontroversial. As Paul O’Neill has suggested elsewhere, curatorial practice today can be understood as a “recently formed field of activities that is fundamentally different from earlier historical forms of curatorship,” we could add that the moment of its formation coincides neatly with that of the global expansion of capitalism on whose networks and infrastructures it has come increasingly to depend.² This already suggests that the idea of a curatorial practice whose task it is to bring about the demise of this globalism must remain, for the time being at least, prescriptive rather than descriptive. Despite the committed political efforts of some curators and the often inflated rhetoric of curatorial self-definitions, there is little to indicate that such a task is currently underway. I would like to propose, however, that some of the insights that those “earlier historical forms of curatorship” produced in the wake of 1968—when the need to speculate on what curatorial practice should become after the demise of capitalism might have felt like a pressing concern—can still serve us today. The 1972 of my title, however, does not aim to assert a singular point of origin, but a bifurcation, one that can be traced through the legacies of

1 “Curating After the Global. Roadmaps for the Present,” CCS Bard, <https://www.bard.edu/ccs/curating-after-the-global-roadmaps-for-the-present/> (accessed March 1, 2018).

2 Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012) p. 6.

two contemporaneous events: documenta 5 in Kassel and the ICOM Roundtable of Santiago de Chile. The intent is not to advocate the nostalgic recovery of an unrealized past political project under radically transformed historical circumstances, but to upset a dominant genealogy of contemporary curatorial practice and discourse that by highlighting the former event and obscuring the latter has served to foreclose its political potential.

The year 1972 was, indeed, the year of documenta 5, an event whose own mythology seems to have grown in step with the role it served to cement.³ Even if documenta 5 was a more collaborative affair than its public presentation might have allowed for, it was Harald Szeemann's careful choreographing of the exhibition as a personal *oeuvre*, his staging of curating as an "individual methodology," that is routinely taken as inaugural for a new model of the curator as both *auteur* and *entrepreneur* that has come to define the new practice.⁴ The extent to which Szeemann's authorial persona

served to blur the boundaries between artists and curators continues to be the subject of much debate, but it is hard not to read the flurry of indignation that this provoked among artists at the time as a disavowed attachment to a division of artistic labor that already at that point had become residual.⁵ What is striking is not that the exhibition should have become an artistic medium at a time when anything and everything could claim the name of art; what is striking is the kind of artist that Szeemann saw fit to revive.⁶ The figure of the curator as romantic artist possessed of individual *Geist* rather than scholarly or technical knowledge was in many ways a throwback to the nineteenth century, but would come to inform the curriculum of curatorial courses, shaping subsequent generations of contemporary art curators.

Writing in 1990, just as the first accredited courses in contemporary art curating were getting underway in Europe, French sociologists Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollack described how the role of the traditional museum curator involved a paradoxical professional remit, brought into sharp relief with the purchasing of contemporary art, when the expectation to acquire works "as yet uncertified by art history," relying on highly subjective inclinations was supposed to coincide with wider "collective values."⁷ The only way to minimize the risks inherent in this impossible task was an "erasure of the person in the post" by establishing clearly defined procedures, protocols and deontological codes.⁸ With the emergence of the new curator Heinich and Pollack detect a process of "de-professionalization."

As art curators began to refuse—as artists had already done—the idea that their work was bound by professional rules or wider collective values, they moved away from the ideal type of the curator as functionary/professional, and toward the curator as *auteur*. A move that was accompanied by a shift in emphasis from preservation, purchasing and research, and toward public presentation and display, which had traditionally been considered the less risk-prone, and, consequently, the less institutionally relevant aspects of the job. Heinich and Pollack found in the new curator a "singular figure" who was "as irreducible to the notion of the post (it is not the institution that defines the 'author'—and as it happens the latter is so defined in opposition to the former) as it is to that of function (to the extent that the mere accomplishment of a task does not make an author, rather it is the singularity of an author's production that does so)."⁹

The new curator in this guise could then be understood as a politically progressive force, *vis-à-vis* the intrinsically conservative

3 The sheer amount of publications devoted to the individual figure of Harald Szeemann is staggering, especially given the still largely uncharted field of exhibition histories. Monographic publications include: Nathalie Heinich, Harald Szeemann, *Un cas singulier* (Paris: L'Échoppe, 1995); Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann. Ausstellungsmacher* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2006); Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeier (eds.) *Harald Szeemann—With, by, through, because, towards, despite: Catalogue of all Exhibitions 1957-2005* (Vienna: Springer, 2007); Florence Derieux (ed.) *Harald Szeemann: Individual methodology* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008); Pietro Rigolo, *Immergersi Nel Luogo Prescelto. Harald Szeemann a Locarno, 1978-2000* (Milano: Doppiozero, 2013). This does not include the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, curated by Germano Celant at the Fondazione Prada in Venice in 2013, or the touring exhibition and attendant publication *Harald Szeemann Museum of Obsessions*, which opened at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in February 2018.

4 On documenta 5 as a more collective project than it is generally acknowledged, see Eva Fotiadi, "The canon of the author. On individual and shared authorship in exhibition curating", *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 11, 2014.

5 To wit, Szeemann's highly idiosyncratic curatorial strategy resulted in a number of artists—notably Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Fred Sandback and Robert Smithson—refusing to participate in documenta, and others like Sol LeWitt, Hans Haacke or Daniel Buren expressing their disagreement with Szeemann's approach.

6 On Szeemann's construction of his artistic persona as a set of recurrent curatorial tropes (including artists), see Beatrice von Bismarck, "When Attitudes Become a Profession, Harald Szeemann's Self-referential Practice and the Art of Exhibition," in *Harald Szeemann Museum of Obsessions*, eds. Glenn Phillips and Philipp Kaiser (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2018) pp. 249-264.

7 Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollack, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur. Inventing a singular position," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London: Blackwell, 1996) pp. 231-250, p. 233.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

role of the traditional curator—the unfortunately named *conservateur* in French. This is a narrative that has been reproduced countless times: contemporary art curating as the fulfilment of a critical demand posed to the museum, as initiated by artists themselves through waves of institutional critique.¹⁰ But this was to happen, peculiarly enough, by a substantial *narrowing* of the curators' field of operations, which now restricted itself to the exhibition. A move that allowed for the normalization of the figure of the itinerant, externalized art curator, who no longer had to speak in the name of the institution or to nationally held 'collective values,' but in the precise manner of a modern(ist) artist, deployed their individual voice to address the world at large.

Indeed, for Heinich and Pollack it is the exhibition that provides curators with "an autonomous area... [where] the curator can permit him or herself things that would be impossible in a museum," where subjective input might not only be allowed, but actively promoted.¹¹ Nearly two decades later, Jens Hoffmann would echo this narrative: "curators began to *emancipate themselves* from being purely the custodians of the museum collections or the administrative organizers of exhibitions. Curators began to articulate a particular form of *subjective creativity* and to acquire unprecedented power, and over the last decades, we have seen a large diversity of curatorial approaches that have made this *emancipation* possible."¹²

What I take to be decisive about these statements is the idea of curators gaining their autonomy *by escaping* the institution, a scaled-down version of Greenbergian autonomy. Paradoxically, this idea continued to be productive as the exhibition was (rightly) decentered from the curators' work *in the name of* the institution, during that brief episode that has come to be known as New Institutionalism.¹³ If the emphasis was placed on research and dissemination, the exhibition could be framed as just another point of inflection within an ongoing research program, even if a particularly costly one.¹⁴ The specificity of 'curatorial research,' however, remained a conundrum.¹⁵ Curatorial research in this new guise did not bear much relation to the way it had been conceived previously as revolving largely around particular artworks, or indeed exhibitions. Instead, it seemed to hint at the exhibition not as a narrowing of focus, but as an *occasion* around or about which all kinds of research might be pursued. The universalism of Western philosophy was reclaimed here, with the materiality of the exhibition putatively serving to ward off the threat of abstraction. This had already been anticipated by Szeemann's

model of the peripatetic curator as providing spiritual or intellectual 'guest work' to the art institution.¹⁶ As courses that specialized in art curating became normalized from the late 1980s/early 1990s, core components of previous courses in Museum Studies—including those that dealt with museum administration, education, communication or conservation—were gradually (or drastically) shed, and a broad component of 'theory,' not a theory of anything in particular, certainly not a theory of curating, came to take their place.

The enduring currency enjoyed by the notion of 'the curatorial' attests to this. Broadly, 'the curatorial' is posited as an open-ended, theoretical drive, against the end-product oriented practice of 'curating' exhibitions.¹⁷ The "philosophy of the curatorial" as advanced by Jean-Paul Martinon has probably gone furthest than most in asserting this split. 'The curatorial,' we are told is:

... a jailbreak form pre-existing frames, a gift enabling one to see the world differently, a strategy for inventing new points of departure, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for

10 See, for example, Jens Hoffmann, "The Curatorialization of Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, edited by John C. Welchman, (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2006)

11 Heinich and Pollack, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

12 Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 324, emphasis added.

13 For a good retrospective assessment of New Institutionalism see *On Curating (New Institutionalism)*, Issue 21, December, 2013, available online at http://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateverwaltung/issue-21/PDF_to_Download/ONCURATING_Issue21_A4.pdf (accessed March 1, 2018). See also James Voorhies (ed.) *Whatever Happened to New Institutionalism?* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).

14 In this way, for example, Maria Lind would write in 2000 that "an exhibition is just one way among many of working with and letting art exist," while, somewhat prematurely, Alex Farquharson announced in 2006 "the end of the exhibition's hegemony within the multifunctional institution"; see Maria Lind, "Learning from art and artists," in *Curating in the 21st Century*, edited by Gavin Wade (Walsall: New Art Gallery Walsall, 2000) p. 88; and Alex Farquharson, "Bureaux de change," *Frieze*, No. 101, September, 2006.

15 An earlier volume in this series has addressed this conundrum better than I am able to do here, see: Paul O'Neill, Mick Wilson and Lucy Steeds (eds.) *The Curatorial Conundrum. What to Study? What to Research? What to Practice?* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

16 I allude here to Szeemann's Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit.

17 The doctoral program on Curatorial/Knowledge, which began at Goldsmiths College in London in 2006, has perhaps done most to preserve the term's currency. For an early definition, where 'the curatorial' is defined against 'curating' in analogy to Chantal Mouffe's (after Carl Schmitt) distinction between 'the political' and 'politics', see Maria Lind, "The Curatorial," *Artforum*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (October 2009) p. 65 and p. 103.

humanity, a process of renewing one's own subjectivity, a tactical move for reinventing life, a sensual practice of creating signification, a political tool outside of politics, a procedure to maintain a community together, a conspiracy against policies, the act of keeping a question alive, the energy of retaining a sense of fun, the device that helps to revisit history, the measures to create affects, the work of revealing ghosts, a plan to remain out-of-joint with time, an evolving method of keeping bodies and objects together, a sharing of understanding, an invitation for reflexivity, a choreographic mode of operation, a way of fighting against corporate culture, etc.¹⁸

These are hyperbolic claims that hint at a political import, but were always meant to remain untested in practice. 'The curatorial,' after all, is not curating. As a theoretical practice, the curatorial can fulfil these claims only speculatively, losing its potency as it gains any ground. And again, it is by departing from the institution, by relinquishing the *burden* of institutional work, that 'the curatorial' is meant to gain its speculative freedom. 'The curatorial,' we are told:

is a send-off that can never belong to the institution... a challenge of the limits of both the institution and that of curating... it pushes curating *out* of its comfort zones... the aim of the curatorial... is paradoxically to avoid at all costs proposals and projects, plans and designs, targets and objectives, strategies and tactics, programmes and platforms, that is, anything that aims to circumscribe the future, to render it ever more future-present.¹⁹

The problem with a philosophy of 'the curatorial' is not that curators have become too 'theoretical,' as those who would berate them for not sticking to the 'craft' of exhibition-making would suggest.²⁰ The problem is rather that 'the curatorial' seems to bring with it little that is both specific and valuable to such a speculative exercise. In short, a philosophy of 'the curatorial' is at risk of turning into philosophy minus the confrontation with philosophy's problematic history, that is to say, of turning into pseudo-philosophy. Moreover, by refusing to engage with the problems it finds most at hand, those "proposals and projects, plans and designs, targets and objectives, strategies

and tactics, programmes and platforms" it so eagerly wants to assign to 'the institution' and leave behind, it is most at risk of becoming theoretically abstract, of falling into a theoreticism that functions in advance of a problem, leaving any politics in abeyance while putting "discourse first."²¹ Indeed, talk of a "post-curatorial turn" betrays an already palpable dissatisfaction with this hypertrophy of discourse, but like so much in these debates, it is at risk of confusing terminological innovation for conceptual gains.²²

The year 1972 was not just the year of *documenta 5*, it was also the year of the Roundtable held under the auspices of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Santiago de Chile, which was still at that point under the Unidad Popular government of Salvador Allende. Like *documenta 5*, it has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly attention, frequently posited as a point of origin not for the 'new curator,' but for what has come to be known as the "New Museology."²³ That these events have rarely been discussed as part of the same history is in itself symptomatic.

ICOM was hardly a beacon of radical thought: founded as an association of 'museum leaders' from North America and Europe, it quickly became an affiliated body of UNESCO, sharing its Eurocentric 'universalist' mandate. In practice, this meant that the model of museum developed in Europe since the nineteenth century was taken as unproblematic, with efforts made to expand or impose

18 Jean-Paul Martinon, "Introduction," in *The Curatorial. A philosophy of curating*, edited by Jean-Paul Martinon, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p. 4.

19 Jean-Paul Martinon, "Theses in the Philosophy of Curating", in *The Curatorial*, p. 28.

20 This accusation, that would take any activity other than exhibition-making—the so-called "paracuratorial"—as improper or accessory to curating, takes the exhibition as the 'proper' medium of curatorial work, in a barely conceived return to Greenbergian medium-specificity. For both sides of this debate, see for example, *The Exhibitionist*, No. 4 (2011) and Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind "To Show or not to Show", *Mousse*, No. 31, November 2011, available online at <http://moussemagazine.it/jens-hoffmann-maria-lind-2011/> (accessed March 1, 2018).

21 I take the expression from Ilta Meta Bauer, see "Foreword," in *Verkstet 1 New Institutionalism*, ed. Jonas Ekeberg (Oslo: OCA, 2003) pp. 5-8, p. 5.

22 On this, see the special issue of *Springerlin. The Post-curatorial turn*, No. 1 (2017).

23 The term 'new museology,' which I am using throughout, was coined in France in the early 1970s to refer to the school of museology championed by Georges-Henri Rivière and his followers, but has become a standard term in English to refer to a much wider conglomeration of trends. UNESCO General Assembly resolution to promote the development of museums in member states through regional roundtables and training centers. See "Record of the General Conference, Sixteenth Session, Paris, 12 October to 14 November 1970," Volume I, "Resolutions, 3.42," p. 55, available online at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001140/114046E.pdf> (accessed March 1, 2018).

its standards worldwide. In the wake of 1968, however, ICOM would be made the subject of intensive calls for more internal democracy that would eventually be heeded, highlighting the tension between the old order and a new generation of museum workers for whom these universalist pretensions were part of the problem.²⁴

The Allende government extended an invitation to organize an ICOM meeting in Santiago, which, aimed at Latin American museologists, was taken as an opportunity to transform the usual format of these discussions.²⁵ The education theorist Paulo Freire, then living as an exile in Chile, was chosen to act as a general convener, and although his presence in the Roundtable was vetoed by the military dictatorship in Brazil, his influence was still felt in the general ethos of the proceedings.²⁶ Previous ‘regional’ ICOM meetings had concerned themselves with museological questions, invariably bringing museum experts from Europe and North America to speak to contexts they knew precious little about. Indeed, since 1969, Georges-Henri Rivère and Yvonne Oddon had been tasked with devising a standard curriculum for museum professionals with the idea that ICOM would eventually be able to support a network of training centers distributed worldwide.²⁷ The Roundtable in Chile departed radically from this model. While the meeting kept the innocuous title “The Importance and Development of Museums in the Contemporary World,” the organizing committee for Santiago, led by Grete Mostny, drew the discussion toward much more urgent and contentious problems for Latin American society.²⁸ Willfully transdisciplinary, the aim was to bring urgent social problems to bear on any possible discussion of the museum. In the process, a notion of museology centered primarily around objects in a collection, whether this involved knowing about them or acquiring the requisite technical skills to conserve, classify and display them correctly, was boldly refused.

Schematically four issues were identified to guide discussions at the Roundtable: the role of cultural development in rural contexts; the relationship between museums and urbanization; scientific and technological developments; and the importance of lifelong education. The keynote speakers included agronomist Enrique Enseñat from Panamá; Mario Teruggi of the Mineralogy and Petrology Division of the Museo de la Plata in Argentina; urbanist and architect Jorge Enrique Hardoy from Argentina; and César Picón from the Peruvian Ministry of Education. As Hughes de Varine, then director of ICOM, recalls: the only non-Latin American participants were

Raymonde Frin, the UNESCO delegate, and De Varine himself. They were allowed to sit in on discussions, but not to take part, and as conversations were conducted in Spanish or ‘Portunhol,’ which neither of them understood, their participation was limited further.²⁹ The spur for writing what came to be known as the “Declaration of Santiago de Chile” was the sense of consternation with which museum workers realized that the issues tackled in the discussions had been systematically overlooked in their museums, which remained tied to a colonial order. At stake was the promise of ‘development,’ with many of the speakers suggesting that economic or technological development alone, without a concomitant revolution in social structures, would only refine the means through which the poor, especially the rural and indigenous poor, would continue to be exploited. As Teruggi recalls, the point of departure was “the realisation that museums were doing very little, and sometimes virtually nothing, on behalf of the underprivileged Latin Americans and it brought immediate reflection on the ultimate purpose of museums... our statement and

24 The ICOM 1971 General Assembly in Grenoble saw members challenge a system in which only fifteen members per national committee were allowed to vote, demanding equal status of all individual members, a reform that was adopted in Copenhagen in 1974. Interventions by speakers like Mario Vázquez from México, and Stanislas Adotevi from Cotonou, are credited with igniting others to push for change. See Hugues de Varine, “Autour de la table ronde de Santiago,” *Culture & Musées*, Nos. 17-18, (2000), pp. 180-183; and Sid Ahmed Baghli, Patrick Boylan and Yani Herreman, *History of ICOM (1946-1996)* (Paris: International Council of Museums, 1998).

25 The invitation followed on from the 16th UNESCO General Assembly resolution to promote the development of museums in member states through regional roundtables and training centers. See “Record of the General Conference,” *op. cit.*

26 On the influence of Paulo Freire on the Roundtable, see Vânia Maria Siqueira Alves and Maria Amélia Gomes de Souza Reis, “Tecendo relações entre as reflexões de Paulo Freire e a Mesa-Redonda de Santiago do Chile, 1972,” *Revista Museologia e Patrimônio, MAST*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2013, pp. 113-134.

27 The first draft of the curriculum was ready by 1971 and discussed at the ICOM general assembly in Grenoble. See P.J. Boylan, “Museum training: a central concern of ICOM for forty years,” *Museum*, No. 156 (Vol. XXXIX, No. 4) 1987, pp. 225-230.

28 Mostny, an Austrian refugee who had studied archaeology in Vienna, was then curator of the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago, eventually becoming its long-serving director. On the schedule of the Roundtable, see “Round Table on the Role of Museums in Today’s Latin America”, Santiago de Chile, 30th May 1972, translated and reprinted as “Basic Principles of the Integral Museum,” in *Museum International*, Special Issue *Key Ideas in Museums and Heritage (1949-2004)*, Vol. 66, Issues 1-4 (January 2014) pp. 175-182.

29 ‘Portunhol’ refers to the mixture of Portuguese and Spanish that speakers of either language use to communicate with each other. See Hugues de Varine, “La museología encuentra el mundo moderno, o ¿quién somos nosotros cuarenta años después?,” *Educamuseo*, available online at <https://www.educamuseo.com/es-hugues-de-varine> (accessed March 1, 2018). Varine, who was an important force for renewal within ICOM would be dismissed from his post in 1974 by a still largely conservative organization.

conclusions were a kind of swansong of an obsolete profession, with no notion or power of adapting itself to present circumstances.”³⁰

The declaration they jointly produced served to establish the principles of what they called an “integral museum.”³¹ The museum, they wrote, should be “an institution in the service of society,” one that helped shape “the consciousness of the communities it serves,” and contribute to “stimulate those communities to action by projecting forward its historical activities so that they culminate in the presentation of contemporary problems... linking together past and present, identifying itself with indispensable structural changes and calling forth others appropriate to its particular national context.”³¹ The integral museum, that is, demanded that the problems of “underprivileged Latin Americans” be brought into the museum as its most direct concerns, demanding action, in and by itself, as a force for their overcoming. If a museum’s objects were not to be relinquished, they would have to be “supplemented, extrapolated; and interrelated in a multitude of ways for it to fit naturally into the panorama of social, economic and cultural development.”³² This demanded a temporal reorientation: “Up to now a museum has only been conceived in terms of the past... a vector which starts in the present and whose far end is in the past. With the Round Table’s agreement that the museum should take on a role in development, it was simply intended to inverse the direction of this temporal vector.”³³ The point, then, was no longer to display the past, but to provide direction for the future.

The Santiago Roundtable took place in May 1972. By September 1973 a *coup d’état* had brought Allende’s ‘Chilean path to socialism’ to a violent end, and, with it, what was the most immediately available context for the ‘integral museum’ to take shape. However, the basic principles laid out in the Santiago Declaration would continue to provide direction for a collective and increasingly international effort to radically transform the museum. The decade that followed saw an unprecedented movement in this direction, one that would come to be known, variously, as New Museology, Ecomuseology, Altermuseology, Sociomuseology, or, more emphatically, Museology of Liberation.³⁴ The ecomuseum model, which had been established in France since 1971 at the behest of Rivière and De Varine, took on an increasingly community-led character from 1974 onward. By 1978 the ecomuseum of Haute Beauce, which more emphatically integrated the surrounding community in its management, was founded in Quebec, the first of many others in the region.³⁵ Explicitly situating themselves in the wake of Santiago,

these reformist currents called for a museum that was integral to the society in which it was ingrained. This meant that the museum had to worry much less about the collection, the building, and the public understood as a mere spectator. Instead, they foregrounded the links between territory, heritage, and a community that was to involve itself in the ongoing production of the museum itself.³⁶

Still, it was in Mexico that the more sustained effort to give shape to something akin to the ‘integral museum’ took place. From the early 1970s, the Casa del Museo (Museum House) was opened as a neighborhood branch of the National Museum of Anthropology, and the pioneering program of the Museos Escolares (School Museums) comprised at its peak over 600 small museums embedded in schools and were collectively produced by teachers, students and neighbors. It was also then that the first examples of community museums were trialed in Mexico.³⁷ All of these were funded and managed by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), which turned out to be a mixed blessing.³⁸ By some accounts, their excessive dependence on the INAH, which maintained a top-down management structure and was subject to the vagaries of political office, meant that these early experiments failed to gain solid foundations, withering away as soon as the INAH left the area.

30 Mario Teruggi, “The Roundtable of Santiago (Chile),” *Museums International*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, 1973, pp. 129-134.

31 “Basic Principles of the Integral Museum,” *Museums International*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, 1973, p. 198.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Teruggi, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Ecomuseology is often associated with Pierre Mayrand, as is “altermuseology,” which refers to his “Manifeste l’Altermuseologie,” launched in solidarity with the 2007 Social Forum. Sociomuseology, in turn, was coined by Fernando Santos Neves at the Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias in Lisbon, while “Museology of Liberation” is a coinage by Odalice Priosti that emphasizes the ongoing link both to Freire’s “pedagogy of liberation” and to the liberation movements out of which it emerged.

36 See Paul Davis, *Ecomuseums. A Sense of Place* (London: Continuum, 2011). On the history of the Quebec movement see also Pierre Mayrand, “Haute-Beauce. Psychosociologie d’un écomusée,” *Cuadernos de Sociomuseología*, No. 22 (Lisboa: Universidad Lusófona, 2004); and René Rivard, “Ecomuseums in Quebec,” *Museum International*, Vol. 37, Issue 4, 1985, pp. 202-205.

37 This triangular relationship, which has become a staple of new museology, was first sketched out by Hughes de Varine, developed by Pierre Mayrand and ratified in the 1984 Declaration of Oaxtepec.

38 The term ‘community museum’ had been in use since the pioneering Anacostia Community Museum, led by John Kinard, and was established by the Smithsonian Institute 1967 in the eponymous neighborhood of Washington. The Mexican model, while drawing from the same tradition, went further in understanding the participation of the community not just as active spectators, but as directly engaged in the management of the institution.

A more viable model of community museum would not come to fruition until a decade later. The opening in 1986 of the Shan-Dany community museum in Santa Ana del Valle (Oaxaca) is often credited as inaugurating this shifting dynamic. Importantly, the Shan-Dany had not come about as the result of a centralized decision by the INAH, but out of the community's desire to retain the archaeological finds discovered when works to improve the town's central square were underway.³⁹ Rather than designing a museum that could then be devolved, the process in Shan-Dany involved both allowing the community to make its own decisions regarding the museum, *and* respecting the existing mechanisms of decision-making and hierarchical organization of the Zapotec community in Santa Ana. This necessarily involved a long-winded process of consensus building, using pre-existing assemblies and instigating new ones.⁴⁰ The starting point was not the undisputable value of the heritage to be preserved, but the need to retain *collective* ownership over its possible value, meaning, and destination. In this sense, the museum could become the *occasion* for wider conversations about a community's sense of cohesion and enfranchisement. Building on the lessons from Shan-Dany, a more sustainable—if by no means frictionless—network of community-led, small-scale and localized museums would be developed in the region of Oaxaca, with the support of INAH's anthropologists Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales.⁴¹ Drawing practical wisdom from Oaxaca, but with significant local variations, the international network of community museums has grown since the 1980s throughout Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Panama, Portugal, Spain, and elsewhere.⁴²

Crucial to its success was the fact that this new community museum did not rely on the expertise of a team of curators, instead devolving its management to non-professional, grassroots organizations. As Camarena and Morales write:

In these grassroots organizations, community members determine what to present in the museum, how it should be run, and which priorities it should address. Thus, the community museum does not respond to decisions of central authorities, either in its contents or in its operation. It is bound to instances of local government which more directly represent the community, but it does not depend on state or federal institutions. The group that runs the museum is a community-based entity, whether it is connected to local

government or constituted as a non-governmental organization. Throughout time, it fosters the development of skills, experiences and social resources that strengthen its ability to be self-regulated and autonomous. It does not promote vertical, dependent relations to authorities but rather horizontal relations between community members and with other communities as well.⁴³

While the line of flight first traced in Santiago had been a necessary precondition for these museological experiments, by 2010 community museums had been sufficiently de-professionalized for Camarena to declare that these new community museums “did not come out of the 1972 declaration, they were not the product of institutional needs. The new project of community museums came out of the communities' own need to preserve their heritage.”⁴⁴ Far from being the new star of the show, the curator in this schema figures only as a vanishing mediator.

39 On the Casa del Museo see Alejandro Sabido Sánchez-Juárez, “Tres momentos en la actividad museológica de Mario Vázquez,” *Gaceta de Museos*, No. 6, December 2014–March 2015, pp. 41–51; on the School Museums, see Carlos Vázquez Olivera, “La participación infantil como motor del origen y desarrollo de los museos escolares,” *Cuicuilco*, Vol. 15, No. 44, September–December 2008, pp. 111–134. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, director of the INAH between 1971 and 1976, played a key role in the establishment of these new kinds of museums. See Maya Lorena Pérez Ruiz, *En su voz. Aportaciones de Guillermo Bonfil a la museología Mexicana. Cuadernos de Antropología* (Mexico: INAH, 2004).

40 On the Oaxaca experience see Patricia P. Erikson, “‘So my Children can Stay in the Pueblo’: Indigenous Community Museums and self-determination in Oaxaca, Mexico,” *Museum Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2006, pp. 37–46; Kevin Healy “Mobilizing Community Museum Networks in Mexico and Beyond,” *Grassroots Development, Journal of the Inter-American Foundation*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2003, pp. 15–24; Ellen Hoobler, “‘To Take Their Heritage in Their Hands’: Indigenous Self-Representation and Decolonization in the Community Museums of Oaxaca, Mexico,” *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 30, Nos. 3–4, Special Issue: “Decolonizing Archaeology,” Summer–Autumn, 2006, pp. 441–460.

41 Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales, “Community Museums and Global Connections: The Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca,” in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, edited by Ivan Karp et al (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) pp. 322–344.

43 For a sober account of the Shan-Dany, including the frictions that it provoked among different sections of the surrounding community, see Jeffrey H. Cohen, “The Shan-Dany Museum: Community, Economics, and Cultural Traditions in a Rural Mexican Village,” *Human Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Fall 2001, pp. 272–280.

43 Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales, *Manual para la creación y desarrollo de museos comunitarios* (New York, NY: Fundación Interamericana de Cultura y Desarrollo, 2009).

44 Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales, “The community museum: a space for the exercise of communal power”, *Sociomuseología IV, Cuadernos de Sociomuseología*, Vol. 38, 2010, pp. 135–152, p. 141.

The point of thinking about these two traditions together is not to suggest a simple translocation of one model onto the other, or even a virtuous synthesis of the two. Indeed, a significant element of the legacy of Santiago has been the emphasis on that “indissoluble link” between community, heritage and territory that would render such a translocation impossible and quite possibly undesirable. Despite their opposing political vocations, the community museum is always at risk of moving toward its “perverted forerunner,” the *Heimatmuseum* developed in Germany from the mid-1930s onward.⁴⁵ Any appeal to an existing ‘community,’ understood as homogeneous and ossified, as already sharing bonds, values and aspirations, should rightly provoke anxiety.⁴⁶ This is the case regardless of scale; to imagine that such an appeal could be unproblematic when applied to the Zapotec community of Santa Ana del Valle would be to fall into a reductionist fetishization.⁴⁷

But thinking about these legacies together might serve to denaturalize some of the ways in which both curating and ‘the curatorial’ have been understood and written about, hopefully serving to spur a much-needed exercise in institutional imagination. The curator-as-genius continues to rely on a model that is based on the universality of aesthetic judgment that surreptitiously served to distinguish those who could make a claim on the universal from those who could not.⁴⁸ The Santiago Declaration was an attempt to mobilize the museum away from its pretensions of both universality and political neutrality. The lineage that I have outlined here has remained faithful to this principle, understanding itself as an act of “affirmative resistance” in the face of global capital rather than as its mere social ameliorative.⁴⁹ The forgetting of this history might allow us to discover a “radical museology” for our times, without the burden of having to measure its radicality against anything that preceded it.⁵⁰ But, more importantly, this forgetting allows for a complacency that is not warranted at a time when the emancipatory hopes once placed in art appear to be trapped in a perpetual collision course with its own infrastructures.

Moreover, the principled indifference that, since its establishment as an academic discipline during the 1990s, curatorial studies has demonstrated toward the rich debates of the new museology has served to reproduce an artificially narrow history of curating, pivoting around a number of figures who, by and large, are predictably white, male and based in Northern Europe and the United States. Nearly half a century ago ICOM’s plan for a set curriculum for

museum professionals to be established around the world was rightly seen as inattentive to local needs and knowledges, but it had at least the advantage of providing local access to a standardized level of education. Today, we are in the unenviable situation of grounding access to the profession not just on a particular kind of Western-centric knowledge, but on the financially mediated ability to receive a post-graduate education in the handful of colleges with enough cachet to grant it. Predictably, again, these are overwhelmingly located in Northern Europe and the United States, their international cohorts increasingly tied to a transnational elite.⁵¹

Common to both the traditions described here was the desire to reinvent the role, to think again about what kind of knowledges were useful and necessary to become a curator. That shift away from preservation, purchasing, and research, and toward public presentation and display that Heinich and Pollack detected in the 1990s was but a late echo of the earlier call for a museology understood not as a technical discipline, but as primarily concerned with the social milieu within which it unfolded. For the new art curator this “de-professionalization” meant abandoning the idea that ‘collective values’ could be anticipated through the performance of highly standardized protocols, allowing for a relative freedom from institutional mores. The exhibition, the public program or the simple pursuit of (curatorial) speculation could then be conceived as relatively autonomous

45 Cuahtémoc Camarena, quoted in Tomás Sepúlveda Schwember, “Museología y comunalidad. Una aproximación al estudio de los museos comunitarios de Oaxaca” (PhD dissertation, Universitat de Barcelona, 2011) p. 89. My translation.

46 See Alfredo Crus-Ramírez, “The Heimatmuseum: a perverted forerunner,” *Museum International*, Vol. 37, Issue 4, 1985, pp. 242-244.

47 Indeed, the name ‘community museum’ has been widely used elsewhere for institutional models that share little of the methodologies developed out of Oaxaca, often serving to construct a reductive and nostalgic image of the ‘community’ or the ‘people.’

48 For an account of some of these problems in the case of Shan-Dany, see Cohen, *op. cit.*, and Miguel Burón Díaz, “Los museos comunitarios mexicanos en el proceso de renovación museológica,” *Revista de Indias*, Vol. LXXII, No. 254, 2012, pp. 177-212.

49 It is always worth remembering that the same philosopher who gave us the universality of aesthetic judgment has been credited with inventing the concept of race. On this, see Robert Bernasconi, “Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race,” in *Race*, edited by Robert Bernasconi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011).

50 I take the expression from Brazilian museologists Odalice Priosti and Yara Mattos, “Caminhos e percursos da museologia comunitária,” *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia*, Vol. XII, No. 28, 2007, pp. 71-92.

51 See Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology* (Cologne: König Books, 2013).

52 See William I. Robinson, “Global Capitalism Theory and the Emergence of Transnational Elites,” *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2011, pp. 349-363.

arenas within which to develop a singular, artistic practice. For the new museologist it was the transformation of those 'collective values' that was at stake. This meant giving up on the authority of expertise, opening up the institution as a space of uncertainty and negotiation. The institution could then become a tool for communal emancipation, fostering a collective autonomy that was not understood as freedom from institutional norms, but as the freedom to collectively *institute* such norms. This was to be achieved not through the virtuous deployment of an individual methodology, but through the frustratingly protracted rehearsal of a collective subjectivity. As we try to imagine a curating after the global, this still strikes me as our most urgent task.