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ARCHITECTURE, COLLECTION AND  
PUBLIC IN CONTEMPORARY  
MUSEUM

032

pós-

ABSTRACT

The article's main objective is to study the changes in the museum space in contemporaneity, due to the general use of technological, scenographic and interactive resources, such as videos and multimedia activities, attempting to improve the communication channel between institution and its public. Then, three examples of museums have been selected to enrich the reflection: The Museum of the Portuguese Language (São Paulo, 2006), The Football Museum (São Paulo, 2008) and The Museum of Cinema (Turin, 2000). The three museums chosen represent the use of new technologies for the exhibition of the intangible heritage in recent decades. Looking at these museums, it is possible to see new possibilities opened for the heritage preservation. New relations between public, museum collections and architectural space are possible. For this purpose, this article will try to answer the following questions: what are the new possibilities offered by the relation between architecture and new technologies? Could we think about a new place for artistic experimentation? What is the architecture's role due to the collection's dematerialization and the massive use of technological resources? Therefore, three main points will be developed: architecture, collection and public, trying to understand the contemporary museum's new problematics.

KEYWORDS

Museum (architecture). Communication technology. Exhibition design. Museography.

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# ARQUITETURA, ACERVO E PÚBLICO NO MUSEU CONTEMPORÂNEO

pós- | 033

## RESUMO

A análise do processo de transformação do espaço do museu a partir da ampla utilização de recursos tecnológicos, cenográficos e interativos, garantindo a aproximação do grande público a partir de artifícios como projeções, vídeos e terminais multimídia, consiste no objetivo principal deste artigo. Dentro desse contexto, três exemplos significativos são trazidos para subsidiar as reflexões propostas: o Museu da Língua Portuguesa (São Paulo, 2006), o Museu do Futebol (São Paulo, 2008) e o Museu do Cinema (Turim, 2000). Os casos escolhidos foram considerados como representativos da utilização de tecnologia expográfica para o tratamento de temas imateriais. A grande difusão dos recursos cenográficos e interativos abre novas possibilidades no âmbito da preservação patrimonial, levando a um processo de desmaterialização do acervo e estabelecendo novas relações entre público e espaço arquitetônico. Nesse sentido, busca-se responder às seguintes perguntas: que possibilidades surgem a partir da relação entre público, espaço e novas tecnologias? É possível pensar na formação de um campo de experimentação artística autônomo? Qual o papel da arquitetura nesse contexto? Deste modo, o artigo se estruturará a partir dos enfoques: arquitetura, acervo e público, visando à compreensão das novas questões que se colocam para os museus na contemporaneidade.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Museu (arquitetura). Tecnologia da comunicação. Exposições museológicas. Museografia.

## ARCHITECTURE, COLLECTION, AND PUBLIC IN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM

Seducing and entertaining the public at museums by the means of scenographic and interactive resources has been a commonly used strategy in contemporaneity. The use of projections, audio and video files, touchscreens, light and sound spectacles, ambience and scenery design are pivotal elements which constitute a range of options for articulation and design of exhibition spaces. Those resources form a new lexicon of solutions for the transmission of museological discourse and open new possibilities in heritage preservation.

The shift in paradigms associated to incorporating technological and interactive resources in the exhibition space is associated to the dematerialization of museum collections – according to the concept of technical reproducibility set out by Walter Benjamin ([1936] 2013, p. 91) – and the concept of “imaginary museum” developed by André Malraux ([1947] 2000). The crisis of the object as a source of value, although paradoxical, did not lead to the vanishing or the loss of importance of the museological institutions. On the contrary, after two world wars that marked the century, the concern with heritage preservation, supervision and diffusion of cultural goods has considerably increased. That increase was accelerated by the development of the means of mass communication, which continuously broadens the possibilities of cultural diffusion in large scale and is promoted by the growing mass tourism (HARVEY, 2013).

The incorporation of the museum into mass culture, taking on characteristics of a cultural product in the consumer society (BAUDRILLARD, 2011), appropriates a context in which cultural production shares a logic that is specific to the production of goods, encouraging and aiming at constant innovation through aesthetic experimentation. The assimilation of mediatic and spectacular characteristics into the heritage leads to the establishment of new relations between “*the museum as a site of spectacular mise-en-scène and operatic exuberance*” (HUYSEN, 1995, p. 14, our translation).

The acceleration of the musealization process itself, associated with concepts like “*museum mania*” or “*museum boom*” (HUYSEN, 1995), makes room for the incorporation of different questions in the conception and structuring of expository space, covering new themes as objects of the museological perspective – and including, for example, the question of the intangible cultural heritage. Some relevant documents, such as the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003b) and the *Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003a) signal an expansion in the concept of “cultural heritage”<sup>1</sup>, also implying a widening in the concept of “museological object”.

This situation shows a significant change from the point of view of the principles that guide the formation of museological institutions, enabling digital databases, frequently associated to interactive expographic technology, to take on the role of museum object. This transformation process is particularly

<sup>1</sup> It is possible to notice the widening of the concept of cultural heritage when analyzing comparatively the resolutions of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), specially the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) in relation to the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003b).

relevant to museums that are dedicated to the preservation of intangible heritage, allowing collectionistic, investigative, and expository action of intangible elements – such as sounds, videos, song excerpts, testimonies, oral narratives, etc.

Beyond the aspects of communication, it is notable that the wide use of scenographic and interactive resources shows even deeper transformations in museology in recent decades. This study intends to evaluate the spatial implications of the new relations that are established between architecture, collection and public, provided by the use of scenographic and interactive resources in contemporary museums. For this purpose, the starting point is a survey carried out with the purpose of locating the main cases of recent installations at museums in Brazil and worldwide that used expographic technology when treating intangible heritage. Among the results that were obtained, one could mention: the House of Music (Vienna, 2000), the Museum of Cinema (Turin, 2000), the House of Terror (Budapest, 2002), the London Transport Museum (London, 2005), the Museum of Portuguese Language (São Paulo, 2006), the Football Museum (São Paulo, 2008) and the Fado Museum (Lisbon, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See: OBSERVATÓRIO..., 2014.

Using this survey as a starting point, three cases have been selected as references to guide the analysis proposed: The Museum of Cinema (Turin, 2000), The Football Museum (São Paulo, 2008) and the Museum of Portuguese Language (São Paulo, 2006), considered to be representative samples when compared to the evaluated whole because they synthesize characteristics that occur in the other cases preliminarily observed. This article aims to be an essay about cases and solutions that contribute to the current debate, considering the importance of comparative analysis in order to allow a critical approach to the transformations in progress in recent decades.

Therefore, the examples show the diversification of the architectural program in the museological space, constituting actual entertainment centers and assuming characteristics of a cultural product related to the mass societies – being absolutely popular and widely visited in recent years. The Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum are among the five most visited in São Paulo in 2014<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, in 2008, the Museum of Cinema was listed among the fifteen most visited in Italy (VAVASSORI, 2009, p. 10).

Since the communication with the public is at the heart of the contemporary museological action, it completely changes the conception of exhibition design, acquiring its own aesthetic and artistic features, modifying the perception and the relation with the architectural space and also with the object collection – which is not essential to the formation of an institution of that nature, as it is shown by the analyzed Brazilian cases.

Both the Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum use expographic experimentation as main elements of the institutional formation, dissociating from systematized policies of acquisition of object collections. For that matter, the technological resources are responsible for the transmission of the institutional discourse, dismissing the presence of material collection and forming cases of museums without collection, formed by digital and multimedia

databases. Thus, new forms are created to deal with the issue of heritage preservation, from digital files – as presented by the *Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003a). According to the following excerpt:

*Digital materials include texts, databases, still and moving images, audio, graphics, software, and web pages, among a wide and growing range of formats. They are frequently ephemeral, and require purposeful production, maintenance and management to be retained.* (UNESCO, 2003a, p.80, our translation).

The scenario shows a significant change from the point of view of the principles that guide the formation of museological institutions, according to the excerpt published by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) magazine:

*For the past twenty years, museums, which were originally institutions devoted to research, documentation and the conservation of collections, have become cultural centers with activities that stretch well beyond their original mission. Museums nowadays offer more services to the community, to the public they wish to attract and to visitors. [...] Alongside the increase in the number of museum visitors, the public has also become much more diverse and demanding, expecting to see unusual objects presented in an attractive and innovative manner.* (HERREMAN, 2003, p. 1).

In this way, the article aims to reflect on the changes brought about by the use of new expographic media and scenographic resources with the objective of stimulating the participation of the public by means of proposition of interactive and playful activities.

Hence, some inquiries are considered as follows: what would be the role of architecture in a context in which there is a dematerialization of the museological collection alongside the wide use of technological resources? What possibilities arise from the relation between architecture and new expographic technologies? Is it possible to think about the formation of an autonomous artistic experimentation field for that matter?

Therefore, three fields of investigation will guide the reflections that are proposed in this article: how the relations between museum and public are shaped; how the dematerialization of the museum collection is dealt with; and the role that architecture takes in this context. Consequently, the text will be structured according to the following approaches: architecture, collection and public, aiming to understand the new issues that are raised concerning museums in contemporaneity.

## AESTHETICISM, PERCEPTION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The aesthetization of discourse and the use of high tech resources aim to facilitate the mediation, the communication and the dialog between the museum and the public, making institutions increasingly more attractive and expanding their reach. They are therefore included in the proposal of making the museum a playful space directed not only to culture, but also to leisure, fun

and entertainment. For this purpose, it is notable that the wide use of resources like monitors, projectors, interactive screens and a series of items have become essential and almost mandatory in new museums, as well as in pre-existing ones.

It can be observed that a group of authors associate the massive presence of technological devices in the expository space to: superficial and occasionally outdated content; an excessive playfulness; characteristics that occur throughout the formation of entertainment, simulation and fictional spaces (BAUDRILLARD, 1991); the necessity of constant content updating; and feeding an “unbridled consumerism” due to the demand for technological resources (OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.12, our translation). At times, the proliferation of expographic resources – screens, videos, panels, scenery, lights, projections, etc – may convey an impression of superficiality in terms of content. It is an approach that favors comfort and pleasure to the detriment of deeper critical evaluation, for example, being associated to a discourse mentioning theme parks and other entertainment spaces, in which the sensations and reactions of the visitors are planned beforehand. Such questions relate to common processes in the production of contemporary architecture, recalling the concept of “junkspaces” (KOOLHAAS, [2000] 2013, p.105).

In contrast, another line of thought can be highlighted, which considers positive aspects related to the use of new technologies in the expository space, associating it to *“technological advancement, hypermodernity and futurism, along the lines of individual freedom of choice, personal development, self-determination – and even along the lines of folksy popularization, grassroots democracy, and political independence.”* (JENSEN, 2003, p.1, our translation). Manuel Castells (2011a, p.11) highlights the new possibilities raised by the incorporation of hypertextuality into museology, by enabling the creation of individual systems of communication, which can be seen from the viewpoint of navigability in “interactive” devices, as well as from the viewpoint of spatial fruition and the constitution of personalized paths throughout the visit.

The multimedia format widely used in contemporary exhibitions creates new relations between object, expographic language and space, constituting the exhibition from a *“laminated of reasonably independent media”* (DAVALLON, 2010, our translation). Thus, the communication codes used by the museum strongly approach the virtual organization mode, allowing the visitor to access content in multiple overlaid information layers.

In addition to the digital technologies widely used as a mediating element of the visit, it is also notable the use of mobile media, application and devices used inside and outside the museums – mobile tags, QR codes, iPhone, iPad and Android applications and institutional websites. For that matter, the possibilities of relation between the public and the museum are strongly expanded, allowing access to museological content in any place and, in this way, extrapolating the physical limits of the museum itself.

In turn, architecture can also stimulate the visitor’s free choice. Open circulation schemes, adopted by discontinuous, open or non-linear curatorial systems,

allow visitors to move freely in the museum space. In this way, the perspective on the case studies raised for this analysis allow us to compare a diverse range of adopted solutions. Both the Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum present a directed circulation scheme. Some spaces in its interior, however, enable the execution of various concurring activities and allow free choice of path by the visitors. The “Crosswords” room, for example, articulates proposals like “The Great Gallery”, the “Timeline” and the “Map of the Speakings”. As for the “Body Game” room, it associates activities like the “Goal Keeping”, virtual fields and video projection. In contrast, the Museum of Cinema adopts an open circulation scheme, with emphasis on the “Temple Room”, a space that articulates the access to all the expository areas of the museum – the chapels with scenery from the cinema genres, the spiral staircase and the panoramic elevator. In all cases, it is possible to verify the alternation of spaces that condition the path of the visitor, in opposition to spaces that stimulate the visitors’ capacity to determine their own path.

### THE CHALLENGES IN THE PROCESS OF DEMATERIALIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

The use of scenographic and interactive resources can be entirely responsible for the transmission of the museological discourse, not necessarily associated with the existence of an object collection, as it happens at the Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum. Therefore, it is an approach that challenges the idea of “reliquary museum” or “warehouse museum”, understood as the one that gathers objects endowed with values such as uniqueness and authenticity. The very advent of the means of mass communication, like photography and cinema, allows new forms of appropriation of the artistic object and dismisses its sacredness while making it reproducible (BENJAMIN, 2013, our translation).

In this way, it is possible to recall André Malraux’s concept of “imaginary museum” ([1947] 2000), which would allow the gathering of infinite and different works of art in the same virtual space, enabling the free association between them and breaking space-time boundaries. Such concept becomes more and more present in the contemporary museum, which frequently evokes works that are not physically present, by the means of photographs or videos, expanding the layers of information that the visitor has access to.

However, I propose the execution of the following questionings: is it really possible to abandon the existence of a material collection in a museum? What are the consequences of this option in relation to heritage preservation? In order to problematize the issue of the transformation of themes in collections, starting from the suppression of materiality as a support to the museal institution, the excerpt is as follows:

*Although we can and we should transcend the limits of physicality and materiality, we are also body and matter and we are immersed in a world of physical things. Eliminating the collection in the museum frame is*

*compromising one of the most effective possibilities of awareness and understanding of this visceral dimension of our lives.* (MENESES, 2000, p.5, our translation)

In this way, it is possible to verify that the issue of the collection is not just about a demand for a cult of objects, but it is about the preservation of the collections as documents and information sources. It becomes evident that it is dangerous to consider issues like materiality and physicality in second plan, especially in institutions that are founded on heritage preservation.

For that matter, it is necessary to observe that the processes of formation of the institutions in the three cases show significant differences. The Museum of Cinema<sup>3</sup> (2000) originated from an object collection, composed of films, devices, art objects, photographs, magazines, machines, manifestoes and advertising materials, in the 1940s, on the initiative of Maria Adriana Prolo; and was opened to public in 1958<sup>4</sup>. In 2000, the Swiss scenographer François Confino executed the project of scenographical remounting of the Museum of Cinema, transferred to the Mole Antonelliana building, from the project by architects Gianfranco Gritella and Antes Bortolotti.

In Turn, the Museum of Portuguese Language<sup>5</sup> (2006) was born from a proposal of a museum without collection, in which research efforts involved activities such as collection of testimonies, interviews, videos, films, etc. Ralph Appelbaum Associated Architects developed the expography project to be implemented at the museum in the Luz Station building, from the project by architects Pedro and Paulo Mendes da Rocha. Such experience was considered to be pioneering at the time of the execution, endorsing the debate currently in progress about the potential of the use of technological resources as the formation base of museal institutions (verbal information)<sup>6</sup>.

In the case of the Football Museum<sup>7</sup> (2008), designed by the architect Mauro Munhoz, with expographic design by Daniela Thomas and Felipe Tassara, those issues were taken into consideration in the initial debate on the creation of the institution. At first, the acquisition of collections related to football memory was considered, although the final option was to adopt an approach similar to the experience at the Museum of Portuguese Language, dissociated from material collections (verbal information)<sup>8</sup>. However, there are reminiscences from the process of debate about the incorporation of material collections at the museum, which can be seen in some specific items placed in the exhibition, Pelé's jersey being the main one<sup>9</sup>. The exhibition of this item, decontextualized from a museum collection, shows certain *"blurring of the lines of the institutional collection, making it difficult to delineate collection policies"* (BRUNO, 2010, p.52, our translation).

Both at the Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum, the research efforts involved activities such as collection of testimonies, interviews, videos, films, etc. Such strategy heads in the exact opposite direction of acquisition and maintenance policies. In turn, the Museum of Cinema was born

<sup>3</sup> See: <www.museocinema.it>. Access on Oct 20, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see VERGERIO, 2002 and CAMPAGNONI; PACINI, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See: <www.museudalinguaportuguesa.org.br>. Access on Oct 20, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Lecture by the architect Pedro Mendes da Rocha at a workshop in the International Architecture and Museographic Techniques (ICAMT), in São Paulo, in November 2016.

<sup>7</sup> See: <www.museudofutebol.org.br>. Access on Oct 20, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Lecture by expographic designer Felipe Tassara at a workshop by the International Architecture and Museographic Techniques (ICAMT), in São Paulo, in November 2016. According to him, the initial talks on the formation of the Football Museum were directed towards composing a museum collection from material collections. However, a series of technical unfeasibilities made the museum choose the technological expography as a fundamental pillar in the institutional structuring, bearing in mind the previous experience with the Museum of Portuguese Language.

<sup>9</sup> It is a jersey that Pelé wore for the finals of the World Cup 1970, ceded under a free-lease agreement to the Football Museum, displayed in its permanent exhibition.



out of an object collection related to the memory of cinema, the scenographic mounting being a later intervention<sup>10</sup>.

Following the discussion on museums without collection, some main questions are raised as follows: what is the meaning of a museum that feeds exclusively on a digital database? Does the digital collection designate, indeed, a field of museological action?

In terms of heritage preservation – specially referring to digital heritage – the rapid obsolescence of equipment, electronic programs and digital media generate evident danger to its preservation (UNESCO, 2003a, p.86), associated to high operational costs related to that kind of equipment. This issue is raised both in the terms of research for the formation of database and in terms of the updating and constant revision of the content presented by the expography, shaping a challenge to the management of the three analyzed museums.

However, the disassociation of museums from material collections can also be interpreted beyond the risks of outdated and obsolescence. In this way, it is notable that *“the fire suffered by the Museum of Portuguese Language did not provoke loss in terms of collection”* (PRADO, 2015, p.1), causing a seemingly contradictory situation in a museal space in which the loss of the building due to a catastrophe does not imply necessarily a loss of collection, since it was communicated by the media at the occasion, as follows:

*Unlike other traditional cultural centers, the space does not have a collection listed as heritage. It is known mainly by the memory of its exhibitions and digital material [...] Most part of the maps and research material have a digital copy that can be recovered by the means of backup copies.* (PRADO, 2015, p.1, our translation)

The referred fire also brought about the problematics of the building considered to be a museological object. As the media communicated in 2006, *“the biggest loss is architectural”* (PRADO, 2015, p.1, our translation). Then, if on one hand the digital collection of the Museum is recoverable, on the other hand, Luz Station is seen as *“a great creation for its historical and artistic value, invested of manifold stratifications of knowledge and collective memory”* (KÜHL, 2008, p.183, our translation), unable to be recovered in its entirety, even when the proposals in progress for its reconstruction are considered<sup>11</sup>.

## THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ITS ARTISTIC POTENTIAL

In this way, the architecture and the presence of the building itself have the pivotal role of guaranteeing the specificity of the museums – and they justify the need of visiting these spaces in person. Thus, the importance of the building increases in proportion, while it becomes a unique opportunity for the visitor to experience the Portuguese language at Luz Station, football at Pacaembu and cinema at the Mole Antonelliana.

<sup>10</sup>The object collection, composed of films, devices, art objects, photographs, magazines, machines, manifestoes and advertising materials, was born in the 1940s, on the initiative of Maria Adriana Prolo. The first building of the museum was the Chiabalese Palace, in Turin, in 1958. In 2000, the swiss scenographer François Confino executed the project of scenographical remounting of the Museum of Cinema, transferring it to the Mole Antonelliana building. For more information, see VERGERIO, 2002 and CAMPAGNONI; PACINI, 2008.

<sup>11</sup>For more information, see GOVERNO, 2016, p. 1.

Besides, the great influx of public<sup>12</sup> to these museums demonstrates that its physical existence generates interest for its visitation. Inserting museums into cultural tours<sup>13</sup> and diversifying architectural programs<sup>14</sup> also helped in their dissemination and public uptake, contributing to fostering fundraising for actions of building requalification or revitalizing neighboring spaces.

Another point to consider is that the physical existence of museum generates revenue that finances the development of the institution itself – be it through the sale of tickets or sponsoring by companies and partnerships with the government. That would not happen, however, in a proposal of virtual museum. The museum, in that manner, is consolidated as a social space, potentializing relations between the people and mobilizing interests of society in the formulation of its space. According to the following excerpt:

[...] *museum architecture contributes to moving from a single meaning to an open-ended narrative, adds to the intensity of experience and the sense of discovery on the part of the viewer, becomes the 'state-set' challenging established interpretations and inspiring new ones, and enhances the museum as a social space.* (TZORTZI, 2015, p. 11).

<sup>12</sup>The Museum of Portuguese Language and the Football Museum are among the five most visited in the state of São Paulo, in 2014. In turn, the Museum of Cinema appears as one of the fifteen most visited in Italy (VAVASSORI, 2009, p. 10). For more information, see OBSERVATÓRIO..., 2014.

<sup>13</sup>The Museum of Portuguese Language, together with the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo, the Museum of Sacred Art, the Júlio Prestes Cultural Center, the Júlio Prestes Station and the Memorial of the Resistance, form a cultural circuit in São Paulo downtown. Similarly, the Museum of Cinema is also part of an important cultural tour in Turin, together with the Museum of Radio and Television, the Egyptian Museum, the Madama Palace, The National Museum of the Reunification and the Royal Palace. In contrast, the Football Museum is presented as the only cultural center of relevance in its neighborhood.

Still, it is possible to highlight the relevance of architecture when it guarantees to the museum the exercise of its role as a “repository of temporality”. This task acquires great importance in the face of the contemporary social context of “time-space compression”, in which perception of time occurs in an accelerated way, dissociating itself from the notion of temporality and chronology. Despite the formation of the “timeless time”, spatiality itself is fragmented in contemporaneity while the creation of “a single hyperspace organized in electronic communication flows and rapid transport systems” (CASTELLS, 2011b, p. 18, our translation) strongly distances itself from the concept of the “space of places”, according to which identity and physical specificity are decisive to spatial experience. For that matter, it is worth highlighting not only the insertion of museums in buildings of historical and architectural interest, but also the curatorial and expographic emphasis given to this aspect on rooms that celebrate the building itself: “The restoration project”, at the Museum of Portuguese Language; “Tribute to Pacaembu”, at the Football Museum and “Mole Antonelliana”, at the Museum of Cinema.

In contrast, it is possible to think that the development of the scheme designs from clear and well-outlined principles also contributes to guaranteeing a spatial specificity. The Museum of Portuguese Language sought to constitute a single and slender space, clearly showing the volume of Luz Station. As for the Football Museum, it chose for the preservation of the structure of the Pacaembu Stadium, basing its intervention on the principle of subtraction, when removing pre-existing elements that impaired the fruition of the museal space, displaying the structure of the building. In contrast, the intervention at the Museum of Cinema had as objective to restore the Mole Antonelliana and allow new paths, in compliance with the principle of addition – the new steel structures being supported by the existing reinforced concrete bases.

However, it is possible to observe variations concerning the emphasis on the building according to the curatorial and expographic strategies that were used. The Museum of Portuguese Language strongly brought the issue of immersion

in the museum space – which can be seen due to the adoption of expographic solutions that form a space with its own characteristics, most of the time disconnected from the existing architecture. In turn, architecture itself served as a scenery for the conception of the Football Museum – which highlighted the structure in all the museological path. The Museum of Cinema, in contrast, adopted a mixed system of solutions: which clearly showed the architecture in some places, but composed autonomous scenery and ambience in other places.

If, on the one hand, the discourse inbuilt in museological spaces brings a series of questionings concerning the massifying character of this kind of intervention; on the other hand, it is possible to think that the relation between architecture, museography, scenography and expographic technology also ends up creating spaces of strong plastic and artistic expressivity. It is possible to mention, as an example, the proposition of audiovisual and multisensory experience to the scenographic strength of architecture. Creating actual and complete art spaces: the “Square of the Language”, at the Museum of Portuguese Language; the “Exaltation Room”, at the Football Museum and the “Temple Room”, at the Museum of Cinema<sup>15</sup>.

The proposed spaces create a single museological experience, inseparable from the architecture in which it is inserted, associating it to the idea of *site-specific art*<sup>16</sup> – an art movement born in the USA in the 1970s, according to which the work of art should be conceived according to the specificities of the location. Therefore, the museum starts to define itself as a space for utmost integration between art and architecture, creating experiences of great power from the fusion between architecture and museography, articulating its profound differences in temporality, since architecture presents a more lasting character – due to its own materiality – while museography is associated with virtual speeds, related to the new means of communication.

However, the fire that occurred at the Museum of Portuguese Language enables us to propose some questions. The destruction of the building, although not having generated a significant loss in the digital collection, challenges the relation between museography and the existing historical building, problematizing the concepts of authenticity and unicity of the museum space, which were guaranteed by the presence of the building itself. Even considering the proposal of reconstruction of the museum, from the adaptation of the project by Pedro and Paulo Mendes da Rocha, elaborated in 2006<sup>17</sup>, we may question if spaces like the “Square of the Language” would still maintain museography’s inseparable character in relation to the existing architecture. Would the spatial meaning be profoundly compromised due to the loss of the original architecture?

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUM IN CONTEMPORANEITY

The present article sought to reflect on the process of transformation through which have passed the museums in contemporary society, being largely modified by the wide use of new expographic and interactive technology and

<sup>14</sup>The original project of the Museum of Portuguese Language foresaw the installation of a coffee shop, an Internet area and a bookstore; the Football Museum has a sports shop and a bar, while the Museum of Cinema has a panoramic elevator, a coffee shop, a goods store and a cinema room associated to the permanent exhibition.

<sup>15</sup>The mentioned spaces – Square of the Language, Exaltation Room and Temple Room, take advantage of the most relevant spaces in the architecture of the buildings, exploring the potential of expographic technology when creating light and sound spectacles, involving the visitors in multisensory experience.

<sup>16</sup>For more information, see LAPA, 2011, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup>For more information, see GOVERNO, 2016, p. 1.

substantially changing the forms of relation between museum, public and architecture.

Considering the public as the primary focus of museological action in contemporaneity, a series of changes became evident in the communication channels, adopting technological and interactive expographic resources and incorporating digital language to the interactive, collaborative and participation processes. In this way, the museum-public hierarchization is undone, while the visitor is incorporated to the processes of artistic production and knowledge.

The wide diffusion of museological institutions in contemporaneity, associated with the search for new discourses that are attractive and close to the public, reveals a series of contemporary worries with the social role assumed by the museum. The emphasis on the playful and educational nature, with expographic proposals that stimulate the interest for the institution and that bring the museum closer to the public, integrates into both the attempt to democratize and diffuse knowledge, to search for national and international public visibility and to attract investors and sponsors.

Considering the process of dematerialization of the museum collection, frequently substituted by digital databases and expographic technological resources, we observe the difficulties that this situation causes with heritage preservation. Thus, we cannot help but emphasize the increase in the importance of architecture when it offers material support to the institution in that context, creating new perspectives in artistic expression.

However, it is not possible to disconsider that the wide diffusion of museums in contemporaneity only increases its institutional responsibility towards society. Therefore, it is a challenge not to give in to the seduction of the digital society of spectacle, aiming to satisfy its consumers with the dazzle of new technologies. It is necessary to foster critical reflection about the type of space that is being created, how to deal with heritage preservation and what possibilities are open with this new kind of approach; in artistic terms as well as in production and diffusion of knowledge.

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