

Special Interest Group: "Museum Education and Decolonization"

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The "coloniality" of power is a concept invented by Aníbal Quijano and refers to the colonial imaginaries that still persist today around power, knowledge, gender, and race (Quijano 1992).

In this sense, museums have traditionally played a role in educating their visitors, promoting certain types of knowledge and know-how. However, many museums in countries that were colonized began to look critically at their discourses and collections by turning to these imaginaries.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, this is a contingent issue, as the region is confronted with a series of social movements that seek to transform power structures that, for the most part, have colonial roots. Since 2019, we have witnessed more intense protests in countries such as Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, among others. Many of them are led by indignant people, indigenous groups, women, students, Afro-descendants, LGBTQ+ communities.

In this context, museums have the potential to be forums for discussion and contact zones (Clifford 1999) where diverse voices can meet to dialogue and seek explanations for events taking place in the present. In this field, in addition to work with their traditional collections: archaeological, ethnographic, historical, artistic, among others; many museums have seen the opportunity to collect objects and elements of the heritage of the present, which in the future will be able to give an account of the processes we are experiencing.

In several cases, initiatives that critically address these issues have been promoted by the educational sectors. Through direct work with the different communities, museum educators are confronted daily with the discussions generated during visits, workshops and other educational services.

In this sense, from a more critical and participatory museology, activities are generated that seek to analyze and deconstruct together the narratives that the museum has generated since the colonization of knowledge and being.

Some of the questions that will guide the group's work are the following: How do we understand colonization in the museum? How is it possible to undertake educational activities that center decolonization in the museum? What methodologies allow us to recognize such educational initiatives? What are the most common conflicts, difficulties and resistances? What are the unique characteristics of these activities?

In conclusion, this special interest group aims to study, analyze and systematize educational practices that deal with decolonization and its dialogue

- sometimes tense - with other tasks and areas of the museum. All this in a transformative perspective, which seeks to deconstruct and highlight different ways of being and forging knowledge, with the aim of ensuring a good and respectful life of people and communities.

Abstract:

In this Special Interest Group we want to investigate educational initiatives in museums that critically address the issue of colonization.

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Some questions we want to address are: How do we understand colonization in the museum? How is it possible to undertake educational activities that center decolonization in the museum? What research methodologies allow us to recognize such educational initiatives? What are the most common conflicts, difficulties and resistances? What are the unique characteristics of these activities?

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Young black boy holding a fruit basket and young girl caressing a dog. Antoine Coypel. Louvre Museum, France.

Photo taken from the book "La crítica de la colonialidad en ocho ensayos" by Rita Segato. Don Pedro II, emperor of Brazil, one and a half years old, on his nanny's lap. Oil of Jean-Baptiste Debret. Imperial Palace Museum of Petropolis, Brazil.



Olympia. And detail. Édouard Manet. Louvre Museum, France.