

Call for Papers

Oslo, Intercultural Museum, 7-9 April 2011

Exhibiting Europe. The Development of European narratives in museums, collections, and exhibitions

October 15th 2010

Europe is more than the EU. However, without the evolution of the present-day EU there would not be the same extensive literature on subjects like Europeanization, conceptualizing cultural processes in the framework of the political and economic integration; on 'building Europe', comparing integration critically to nation-building processes of the nineteenth century; or even on European cosmopolitanism, contextualizing the same process in the light of European modernity. Especially the disciplines of **Social Anthropology, Cultural and Museum Studies and Contemporary History** have identified the ongoing and contested Europeanization as an important field of analysis.

This conference aims to bring these disciplines together, linking research on processes of integration, musealisation and Europeanization. Any museum representing the history and histories of European integration has the inherent potential to be an important forum for defining a common European heritage and *Europeanness* not as a national, but as a trans- and supranational culture and identity. The conference will therefore ask **if and how discourses on Europeanization are put on display. How do they manifest themselves in permanent and temporary exhibitions? How do they affect the planning of new museums or transform the policies of existing ones?** Hence, the economic, political and cultural integration processes largely driven by the European Union will be addressed from three complementary academic perspectives at the conference in Oslo in April 2011. Structured in three panels – 'Centre and Periphery', 'Biographies' and 'Objects and Collections' – this conference will bring together experts from all over Europe and explore the ongoing production of a European narrative and heritage in the museal field.

In an attempt to unveil the "exhibitionary complex" (Tony Bennett) inherent in Europeanization, we invite contributions from both scholars based on their theoretical

and empirical work and from practitioners with a theoretical interest. With this aim, proposals on the three topics described below will be considered:

Centre and Periphery. Current research in the social sciences and especially in anthropology turns its attentions to the peripheries of the European Union where migrants creatively make use of and quickly adapt to whatever national or EU border control imposes on them in order to find their way through or alongside complex administrative procedures. Recent literature has even attributed them a role as ‘driving forces’ of Europeanization, as they bring issues of citizenship and human rights to the fore (Römhild 2009), as they unintentionally embody a European cosmopolitanism (Beck 2004) or expose Europeanization as a specific configuration within globalization (Delanty 2005, 2006). In doing so, the peripheries turn out to become vital centres of Europeanization. This panel wants to relate this empirical and epistemological shift to the museum field: is there such a thing as a peripheral museal gaze on Europe – and how is it represented through displays in both museums and temporary exhibitions?

Biographies. Putting ‘Europe’ in a nutshell, it is tempting to choose a biographical approach. Thus, narratives of European integration history can draw upon the myth of the ‘founding fathers’, their life stories and political achievements. At the same time, individual citizens can be employed to explicate European as transnational identity by telling stories about their intercultural experiences as migrants and students. Moreover, the increasingly all-pervasive use of eyewitnesses in museums constitutes a form of biographical representation strategy for creating European narratives. Finally, the changing, possibly more ‘European’ biographies of academics and museum practitioners engaged in creating new and revising older museums and exhibitions may well impact on the narrative contents and representational modes in museums across Europe.

Objects and Collections. The question of which narrative of Europe can be told and which histories of the continent can be displayed in the future is dependent on the simple fact that specific objects have been collected. Thus, the musealisation of Europe depends on the collection of Europe. The field of collections and collection policies is a highly contested domain, however, as the great collection phase of museums is not only over, but also critically reflected as part of a hegemonic cultural

practice of the 19th and 20th century. Today, the authority of the single object is challenged by the ongoing digitisation and the idea of a museum without objects as well as the single institutions are challenged by the 'cancer' (Tomislav Sola) of an ever-growing collection. The panel welcomes proposals that deal with the idea of a European collection (also digital) or analyse those processes and institutions that re-define single objects and/ or collections in a setting of European values and meaning.

The proposals (around **300 words** in a word or rtf document) should be submitted to all three members of the organising committee, together with the prospective paper-giver's CV, by **October 15th 2010**. Feedback will be given by the end of November 2010 at the latest. The organisation will cover participants' travel and accommodation expenses for the whole duration of the conference. The working language is English.

We plan to publish the best fully revised papers from the conference in a special journal issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Culture Unbound* in the autumn of 2011.

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Exhibiting Europe is financed by the Norwegian Research Council within its cultural program 'Assigning Cultural Values'. It is hosted by the *Norwegian University of Science and Technology* in Trondheim, collaborating with the Centre for European and International Studies Research of the *University of Portsmouth* and the Institute for European Ethnology at *Humboldt University, Berlin*.

For detailed information see: <http://www.ntnu.no/spraak/english/research/exhibiting>