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James Clifford



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## M. Frédéric KECK

- 1 C'est un grand plaisir et un grand honneur d'accueillir pour cette conférence inaugurale de notre colloque *Le musée du quai Branly dix ans après. Un musée à imaginer*, le professeur James Clifford qui est un des observateurs les plus importants des musées d'anthropologie, des circulations d'œuvres, des revendications autochtones depuis une trentaine d'années. James Clifford a fait sa thèse à Harvard sur Maurice Leenhardt,

missionnaire et anthropologue français en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Ensuite, il a été l'auteur d'une trilogie sur les problèmes de la culture dans le monde, d'abord de *Predicament of culture*, ensuite *Roots* et le troisième tome de la trilogie *Returns*. Si je peux brièvement évoquer un souvenir personnel. J'ai rencontré James Clifford à l'université de Berkeley en 2000. J'étudiais au département d'anthropologie. Il y avait alors une controverse passionnée autour de la restitution du cerveau de Ishi, l'Indien de Californie qui avait été accueilli et étudié par Kroeber et dont le cerveau, pour des raisons un peu mystérieuses, était resté dans les réserves de la Smithsonian. Une cérémonie de réconciliation avait été organisée par Nancy Shaperuse au premier étage du département d'anthropologie avec les tribus indiennes de Californie. Les professeurs d'anthropologie de Berkeley n'étaient pas d'accord sur beaucoup de choses, mais il y avait une chose sur laquelle ils étaient d'accord, c'est qu'il ne fallait pas aller au musée d'anthropologie qui était au rez-de-chaussée, parce que tous ces objets étaient un peu honteux. Ce qui fait que dans ma propre formation d'anthropologie je n'ai pas observé les collections de ce musée. Un des enjeux du musée du quai Branly, c'est effectivement de remédier à cette situation en France et ailleurs. James Clifford a alors été professeur à l'université de Santa Cruz, qui est un des hauts lieux de la pensée critique aux États-Unis, pas très loin de Berkeley, en Californie du Nord. Il a suivi très attentivement et de façon très subtile cette controverse qui est publiée dans son dernier ouvrage *Returns*, ainsi que la délégation de Sugpiaq de l'île Kodiak d'Alaska au musée de Boulogne-sur-Mer dont il va nous parler et de beaucoup d'autres questions qui intéressent les musées d'anthropologie.

- 2 Nous sommes tous très heureux de l'écouter pour continuer à réfléchir sur les questions du musée du quai Branly.

**M. James CLIFFORD**

- 3 At the conclusion of a most stimulating conference? I am charged with discussing "prospects for museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."
- 4 I will try to pull together a few important threads and provide some overview. Not a road map or a vision for the future. But a discussion of current practices—many of them emergent.
- 5 When the musée du quai Branly was established, there were many who feared that replacing the musée de l'Homme meant abandoning the Anthropological or Ethnological project in favor of a museum for primitive art. Quai Branly's first ten years have shown that, while these concerns—which I shared—were not entirely misplaced, something more complex than abandonment, or replacement has occurred.
- 6 The museum imagined by Jacques Chirac and Jacques Kerchache and still in process is just one prominent example of the twentieth-century ethnological museum's many successor institutions. Throughout Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, collections of non-Western materials, assembled during the colonial period, are searching for new forms and public roles. driven by new pressures and opportunities. Today I'll discuss quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in this wider context, drawing on research visits and conversations I have been pursuing over the last decade in what we can call, with appropriate hesitation, "post-ethnological museums."
- 7 "Ethnological", as I use the term, denotes a cluster of institutions sometimes called "anthropological" or "ethnographic" --museums of Volkerkunde, of Man, of the Colonies... what Benoît de l'Estoile has simply named "musées des autres."

- 8 I settled on the term “ethnological” for its fusion of *ethnos* and *logos*. The name evokes a crucial vocation for the changing institutions I’ll be discussing today—the work of serious cross cultural research and interpretation, inextricably ethnographic and historical. My remarks reinforce the message of Nicholas Thomas’s important new book: *The Return of Curiosity*. Like Thomas, I think that ethnology museums, or their successor institutions, have a critical role to play in the present moment—a contradictory time of unprecedented mobility and openness but also of renewed ethnocentrism and aggressive ignorance.
- 9 I am not proposing a single model or an exemplary form. In the networked “world of museums” today many experiments are underway.
- 10 Ethnological museums in the former West are challenged to do something different with the vast collections that complex and sometimes violent histories have deposited in their storage areas. While sustaining an essential work of conservation and stewardship, how can they respond to the postcolonial realization that the cultural traditions and travel stories gathered in these collections are unfinished?
- 11 Steven Engelsman (and he is not the only one) speaks of a “post-ethnological museum.” I’m ready to adopt the prefix, as long as “post” doesn’t mean, simply, “after.” “Post” refers to something new that we can’t name yet. “Post” means following-from, with a difference—still very much entangled in what is being displaced. So we’re not talking about an epochal shift, a whole new kind of museum...
- 12 Working in a time of transition, without a trustworthy sense of direction, is what I hope to invoke by the phrase “post-ethnological.” A time of possibility and constraint, invention and contradiction.
- 13 Several years ago I gave an address to a conference at the Pit Rivers Museum at Oxford, the culmination of a three year European research project on “The Future of Ethnographic Museums.” (Some of you were there, I believe) I was worried about what seemed to me a pervasive move toward “art,” away from “culture.” For many ethnological museums were re-branding themselves “Museums of World Arts and Cultures.” Further research—most recently at the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden—I now think the trend is more complex and less one-sided.
- 14 In a changing “art-culture system” (as I have called it) “art” is certainly the more fundable (and commodifiable) partner. But ethnology museums, while adopting aesthetic strategies and making space for contemporary art and artists, are not just turning themselves into art galleries of the non-West. They are experimenting with strategies that are more hybrid, complex, and potentially more significant.
- 15 These transformed institutions are, I believe, uniquely well placed to offer non-reductive visions of human possibility. Drawing critically on ethnological traditions, they no longer promise an authoritative tour of the world’s cultures—ways of life circumscribed in time and space, or arranged in evolutionary sequences. Post-ethnological museums explore plural histories that connect, converse, and interrupt each other.
- 16 This is my optimistic vision, on days when the glass seems half-full. But it is far from guaranteed. Post-ethnological museums face serious constraints. They struggle to resist powerful pressures for purification, for uncomplicated messages, for a return to simpler times. They need to “stay with the trouble,” as my colleague Donna Haraway urges. (6min)

- 17 There is, of course, plenty of trouble : Colonial legacies, demands from new stakeholders, from neo-liberal governance and regimes of accountability, from political and market forces... to mention just a few.
- 18 I was reminded of one source of trouble in a recent e-mail exchange with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett., which I quote with her permission. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has, I'm sure you know, contributed crucially to the critique and renewal of ethnology museums. More recently, however, her emphasis has been historical, as designer, and now Chief Curator for the permanent exhibition at the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in Warsaw.
- 19 She reports: "The anxiety when creating POLIN Museum was about it becoming "ethnographic" in whole or in part. Of course, that is a stereotypical way of understanding the term, but I recall meeting in 2006 with a particularly difficult donor, who asked about my field. When I said anthropology, he complained, "Oh, so the exhibition will be teepees and feathers," in other words, shtetl, Hasidim, kapotes, shtraymls, and peyes ... "
- 20 It is, of course, a caricature of anthropology that is, unfortunately, widespread. Indeed the authority and public reputation of the discipline—some might say its marketability—is much diminished these days. The deeper reasons for this state of affairs are not my topic today. But the tendency to abandon anthropology, ethnology, or Volkerkunde as museums re-brand themselves is worth dwelling on for a moment.
- 21 The UBC Museum of Anthropology is now called: "MOA: A place for world arts and cultures." I won't repeat the account of the re-naming process I gave at Oxford. I will just say that an important factor was the reluctance of wealthy Asian populations in Vancouver to fund a new extension devoted to Asian art. The great civilizations of Asia did not belong they thought, in an Anthropology museum! Now the word Anthropology is hidden underneath the acronym MOA.
- 22 "World Arts and Cultures." I don't want to exaggerate the significance of the re-branding exercise. The museum continues its pioneering work with North West Coast societies, collaborations that have made it famous, even as it opens out to Asian, Latin American, and Afro-Caribbean projects.
- 23 But name changes are not superficial. Not when understood as part of a pervasive shift: musée de l'Homme becomes quai Branly; Berlin's Ethnologisches Museum is absorbed by the Humboldt Forum; In Vienna the Museum of Ethnology turns into a World Museum (Weltmuseum), Bern's Museum fur Volkerkunde is renamed Museum der Kulturen,; in Frankfurt, Ethnology changes to World Cultures, In Cologne's rebuilt Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Anthropology is now Cultures of the World, And a troika of museums in Holland (Volkenkunde, Tropicen, and Afrika) is re-baptized a "Museum of World Cultures."
- 24 One hears the word "world," in many of these new names in a context of "globalization." (The French "monde"/"mondialization" makes a smoother association.) In any event, it's not hard to recognize the neo-liberal force fields within, and against, which museums now operate. Brand recognition and marketing are increasingly the name of the game, as Peter Stallebrass has persuasively shown for contemporary art museums. Survival depends on projecting an intelligible and attractive profile, so as to maintain and increase the number of visitors. Museum managers, government bureaucrats, and donors are paying attention. Names, logos,

slogans, iconic objects and blockbuster exhibitions risk becoming more important than scholarly integrity and curatorial risk-taking. The threat of de-funding, downsizing and consolidation is ever present.

- 25 Of course, the landscape, or “museumscape” as Sharon MacDonald calls it, is not unified. We need to consider a wide range of different local situations, political contexts, and funding sources. In the United States, not surprisingly, the withdrawal of public funding and the pressure to find private sources is extreme. Sink or swim. In France, the participation of the State seems more assured, at least for now....
- 26 A rather sad example is offered by the seven “culture galleries” at the American Museum of Natural History in New York--its great anthropology tradition associated with Franz Boas and Margaret Mead. The seven “culture galleries”--“Asia,” “Africa,” “Oceania,” “South America”--were installed in the 1970s, and not a single one has been renovated. They are dusty and out of date, an embarrassment in a flagship museum such as this. Meanwhile the Dinosaur Halls, the famous dioramas of the Hall of African Mammals, the Planetarium, are in great shape, attracting major funding. In the United States, locating ethnology collections in natural history museums has not turned out well. Culture tends to disappear in the gap between science and art.
- 27 Pressures from the market, from funding sources, from diverse regimes of recognition and visibility are not, however the whole story. Many of the changes currently underway re-connect historical pasts with future possibilities in ways that potentially exceed or subvert the current neo-liberal hegemony. (Hegemony, as I understand it, in the Gramscian tradition, is never permanent, always contested.)
- 28 If post-ethnological museums are now forced to justify their existence, that may be a challenge worth engaging. The old anthropology museums--rooted in “salvage” collecting, devoted to conservation in the name of a universal human patrimony--had to change. The naturalized oppositions that guaranteed their existence are everywhere in question: art vs. artifact, authenticity vs. commodity, preservation vs. invention, evolutionism vs. creolization...
- 29 I will speak briefly about three linked areas of change that I consider to be critical aspects of post-ethnological practice.
- 30 The first is *decolonization* (an unfinished historical process).
- 31 The second, *performativity* (relational experiences of communication and reception)
- 32 The third. *translation* (Or perhaps: *Là ou dialoguent les cultures*)
1. Decolonization.
- 33 Post-ethnological museums, in Europe and North America aspire, in their different national contexts, to transcend their colonial pasts. But they have limited room to maneuver, constrained as they are by material and ideological pressures.
- 34 I’ve already mentioned funding, neo-liberal government, and marketing. To these structural features of contemporary capitalism we can add the growing climate of hostility to multiculturalism and so-called “political correctness.” As renewed forms of nationalism, ethnocentrism, and racism gain ground--and not only on the extreme Right--cultural diversity is under suspicion. Yet what can ethnology museums be about, if not cultural diversity?

- 35 Given limited time, I'll pursue just one area in which de-centered Western museums have been engaging with unprecedented audiences and stakeholders: the struggles and new relationships associated with newly global scales of "indigeneity."
- 36 The wider world of museums now includes tribal museums and culture centers—and a growing number of indigenous curators. Perhaps we are finally coming to the end of "salvage" collecting and its worldview—a historical ontology and mode of authority premised on disappearance rather than change. (Well, we're not quite there yet. I found Jimmy Nelson's extravagant photo-book, "Before They Pass Away," prominently displayed at the museums I visited in Leiden and Cologne. The disappearing primitive remains very popular. (At La Hune, St. Germain des Prés, the collector's edition of "Before they pass away" sells for 6,500 Euros!)
- 37 The fact of indigenous non-disappearance, call it *présence indigène*, is inescapable in settler-colonial nations like Canada, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa where today no museum can represent aboriginal or First Nations arts and cultures without serious collaboration and shared authority.
- 38 Even in Europe, where source communities are distant, new partnerships have been emerging. Even repatriation, long viewed as a threat to the museum's fundamental mission, now appears to many curators in less all-or-nothing terms, and sometimes an opportunity for sharing heritage, accessing new kinds of knowledge.
- In a pioneering experiment, Yup'ik Eskimo elders and activists traveled in 1997 to the Berlin Ethnologische Museum for an intensive consultation—as described in Anne Fienup-Riordan's well known account of what she calls "fieldwork turned on its head."
  - The Vienna Weltkulturen Museum, which holds a rich collection of Amazonian artifacts, is building relationships with Brazilian institutions and has begun long-term collaborations with relevant Indian groups.
  - The Pit Rivers Museum has actively encouraged visits from Crow Indians in Canada whose fragile painted shirts, still of great ceremonial power, are preserved there.
  - At the Leiden Volkenkunde Museum, cooperative relationships have been developed in East Greenland and Surinam.
  - At quai Branly-Jacques Chirac a Wayane ("Wayana") delegation, from French Guiana, is currently visiting for a month as part of a long term collaboration. They are working with a thousand heritage artifacts from the museum's storage.
  - Finally, I would like to emphasize the exemplary partnership that links the Chateau musée in Boulogne-sur-Mer with the Native-administered Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak Alaska. The relationship re-conceives the Pinart Collection of nineteenth-century Kodiak materials as an unfinished, "shared heritage." In the process both partners have abandoned absolute concepts of ownership and repatriation. They have discovered how collections made under "salvage" assumptions have the power to inspire new arts and rituals, to be part of living culture. Currently at the Château Musée, contemporary art from Kodiak is on display, and the museum has instituted an acquisitions program.
- 39 **IMAGES 1-5** from *Alaska Passé/Présent*
- 40 It is becoming increasingly common for curators in Europe to think of their work as not simply conserving and interpreting artifacts from the past, but also as stimulating cultural renewal. Elsewhere, for example at Minpaku, the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan, this is established policy.

- 41 These are just a few examples of the decolonizing work going on in post-ethnological museums. A lot of changes are underway.
- 42 Of course, communication is not always easy in the emerging contact zones. Suspicion and unequal power subvert reciprocity. Of course, demands for physical repatriation, whether made by tribes or nation-states, can be intransigent, non-negotiable.
- 43 We are not in an age of post-colonial innocence. But little by little, through the development of specific relationships, historical legacies of mistrust (both within and outside museums) are being overcome. Post-ethnological museums become places for the co-creation of new knowledge, sites of—if the phrase be permitted—“collaborative conservation.”
- 44 Now a few words on the second area of change that I’ve called “performativity.”
- 45 Museums are supposed to be quiet places—of pedagogical authority, of aesthetic contemplation. Perhaps, Curators know better, at least when they stop to pay attention to what’s actually involved in audience reception. Exhibition designers know that, however clear the labels and transparent an exhibit’s sequence, people will make their own meanings and pathways.
- 46 Audience performances in museums are not subject to discipline. Here is a small example I recently discovered.
- 47 **IMAGES 6-7** The Rapa Nui Moai in the far end of the Margaret Mead Hall in the American Museum of Natural History is an essential destination for many teen-agers. They walk purposefully through the gallery without a glance at the other Oceanic displays. Their prize: a group portrait or selfie with “Dum Dum” one of the stars from the 2006 horror movie “Night in the Museum.” Now a very popular cult-movie.
- 48 My own thinking about audience responses in museum settings has been deepened by a study of visitors to the Plateau des Collections at quai Branly-Jacques Chirac:
- 49 **IMAGE 8** (book cover)
- 50 *Voyage au musée du quai Branly*. Octave Debary and Mélanie Roustand’s in-depth interviews, discussions and participant observation have forced me to grapple with the Plateau’s popularity—an awkward fact for early critics like me. Ethnographic studies are rare in the critical museum literature, where audience reception remains something of a “black box.” So I congratulate the quai Branly research program for supporting this project. Debary and Roustand’s *Voyage* is available in the bookstore, and I don’t have time to get into its details. But one finding stands out: the visitors interviewed appreciated the Plateau’s lack of clear messages and didactic information. They enjoyed getting lost, feeling free to create their own interpretations and experiences.
- 51 I recall Stéphane Martin’s comment in an interview prior to the museum’s opening: “we are making theatre, not writing theory.”
- 52 It has taken me ten years to understand Martin’s provocation (probably because it was directed at critics such as myself, the “priests of contextualization”). Now I connect his sense of the theatrical with recent writings by Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett about the exhibition strategies of the POLIN Museum. There, an inherently controversial story is not so much narrated as “presented,” through scenes, and sites of encounter with diverse historical voices. The exhibition planners show remarkable confidence in their visitors, who must construct meaningful understandings from a potentially

- bewildering mix of media and materials, textual and visual--some old, some reconstructed.
- 53 And all of it scrupulously researched. Do I need to specify that an avoidance of didacticism—whether scientific or political—doesn't necessarily mean formlessness or a lack of detailed information?
- 54 I confess that I am still not seduced by the atmospheric ambience of the Plateau des Collections, its *invitation au voyage*. The overall suppression of history is particularly troubling. Debary and Roustand's title, is inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Au Coeur des ténèbres* (*Heart of Darkness*), which provides their epigraph. Visitors to the Plateau des Collections, they report, experience a journey to origin-times in primitive places. In this they are like Conrad's protagonist, but without his growing awareness of an accompanying self-deception and an enabling imperial violence.
- 55 But despite my continuing reservations I am intrigued by the Plateau's museography, it's way of "making theatre." Could this be turned to different ends when deployed in other post ethnological contexts?
- 56 In discussions last April at the Leiden Volkenkunde Museum, Wayne Modest asked a provocative question: "Is there an ethical exoticism?" What can be redeemed from a deeply compromised tradition?
- 57 The question can be asked, now, after several decades of intense critique, both political and epistemological, in museum and anthropological contexts. After critique, can we now return to various exoticisms, without romanticism or the authority of science or connoisseurship, and with a clear awareness of partiality?
- 58 An ethical exoticism. Wonder and fascination, desire for the other, these tend to fetishize, to immobilize and stereotype complex people and societies. But they also open up channels of interest and receptivity. I'm recalling Victor Segalen's concept of exoticism, in which *both* self and other are destabilized, where nothing and no-one is fixed?
- 59 We can revisit Picasso's famous discovery of a Grebo mask at the old Trocadero Museum, a work he declared more beautiful than a statue of Venus in the Louvre. Of course to discover cubism in an African carving was an aesthetic leap, a crude simplification. Picasso had no interest in how the mask was used in Africa or in how it had traveled to France. Surely reductive leaps like Picasso's deserve to be banned from ethnological museums. Or do they? Picasso and his generation recognized "l'art nègre" in ethnocentric ways, but the wider effect of this recognition was also to challenge ethnocentrism—dislodging the aesthetic primacy of European art.
- 60 Exoticism, driven by wonder, fascination, and desire, can be a potent critical force. But as an opening, not a final destination—a first step, the start of translation. A long process that gets you somewhere, and then falls apart.
- 61 Exoticism is fascinating, shocking, and attractive. Post-ethnographic museums urgently need to attract visitors. They need to be fascinating. But they can't be just cabinets of curiosity for postmodern times. Fascination needs to be the beginning of something more - a diversification of knowledge and an opening of questions -especially questions without obvious answers. The goal is thus an informed complexity, or if you'll permit the oxymoron, a *lucid confusion*.
- 62 I'll just mention two ways in which post-ethnological museums may be able to create experiences of lucid confusion. First, concerning the non-opposition of "art" and

“artifact.” Second, the problem of historicizing, the broken sequence of past and present.

63 Art/Artifact, a constitutive opposition directing non-Western work either to the art or the ethnology museum, is now breaking down. In the British Museum’s Sainsbury Africa Gallery we encounter Benin Bronzes, woven textiles, the artist El Anatsui, and a Tree of Life sculpture made out of guns. At MOA, in Vancouver, work by the Haida Artist Michael Nichol Yahgulanas, inspired by Japanese *manga* comics, permanently accompanies the old totem poles of the Great Hall.

64 **IMAGE 9**

At the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal, Holland, the path into the Museum’s classic ethnographic collection leads through a dramatic display of works by artists of the New World diaspora I

65 **IMAGE. 10** Where, visitors may ask, is “Africa.” (Cuban artist: Santiago Rodriguez Olazabal

66 Past and present, once clearly separated in what Johannes Fabian famously termed anthropology’s “allochchronic” paradigm, are now confused. Visitors need to ask themselves: “where, and when, are we?”

67 **IMAGES 11, 12, 13** At the Leiden Volkenkunde Museum each gallery devotes an entire wall to projections that interrupt the time (and space) associated with the old artifacts on display. Contemporary Tokyo. North American Indians. Curious co-presences.

68 By juxtaposing old and new—arts, images, stories—post-ethnological museums may be able to provoke feelings of historicity, of being displaced in time. The next step is to work with these feelings of displacement converting them into informed curiosity about history: continuity, rupture, and transformation. Frozen stereotypes are subverted, set in motion.

69 This brings me to my last area of essential post-ethnological practice: translation (of course we’ve been there for some time already).

70 *Là ou dialoguent les cultures.* A worthy slogan. And a challenge.

71 As you know, for me, The Plateau des Collections fails to deliver cultural dialogue. Debary and Roustand’s study confirms that this display embodies a particularly effective neo-primitivism—ultimately about the Western self and its “primal” sources. An absorbing, popular, but ultimately phantasmatic world. There isn’t much there about real historical societies and their complex relationships.

72 But the Plateau is not the whole museum. Much else in the quai Branly’s first ten years has risen to the challenge of intercultural dialogue. I would like, particularly to recognize the work of Anne-Christine Taylor, along with many others, for sustaining such a varied, critical program of research. And the record of temporary and visiting exhibitions. is as diverse and genuinely provocative as that of any comparable museum that I know. (The current exhibition “Persona” is an amazing example of inventiveness. And Black Man/White Man is a model of postcolonial analysis) This impressive record of openness and experimentation owes much to Stéphane Martin’s leadership. I also note with appreciation the continuing support for *Gradhiva*, Jean Jamin and Michel Leiris’s unique experiment in reflexive, museological historicizing.

73 Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac is clearly a museum that is expanding, rather than abandoning, ethnological perspectives.

74 **IMAGE 14** (Catalogue cover)

75 So let me conclude on this positive note by discussing an exhibition that accomplishes much of what, in my view, post-ethnological museum should be doing : *KANAK: L'art est une parole.*, 2013-- Created by co-curators, Emmanuel Kasarherou and Roger Boulay, with assistance from Etienne Bertrand and René Binosi. I hesitate to speak about something that many of you know much better than I do.

76 You will take my all-too-brief comments for what they are, the view of someone who was not present at the exhibition, but who has studied the remarkable catalogue, and has viewed videos of the dramatic opening and of an illuminating discussion at the Maison de la Nouvelle Calédonie with Kasarherou, Boulay, and Bertrand detailing the long process that brought together an unprecedented collection of Kanak material culture, oral testimony, historical documents and photographs.

77 Three aspects of the project strike me as exemplary for post-ethnological museums. It's collaborative dimensions, it's articulation of different ontologies, and it's deep cultural translation of the category "art."

78 The inventory of Kanak culture dispersed in European museums was begun by Roger Boulay in the 1980s in response to prompting from Jean-Marie Tjibaou. The process was intensified by the exhibition team over several years before the opening in 2013. The result was an extraordinary gathering of materials not seen before, manifesting in Europe the Kanak presence that Tjibaou had brought into view at the famous festival, Melanesia 2000. After its time at quai Branly the exhibition traveled to Noumea, for a very different range of receptions. This travel and the collaboration with the Centre Tjibaou are practices we can call post-colonial--or at least decolonizing--opening that path (sentier). Twenty years ago, perhaps even ten years ago, all of this would have been impossible.

79 Collaboration between an indigenous and a metropolitan curator is crucial for the project. While Kasarherou and Boulay are both widely knowledgeable, they bring distinct perspectives to the exhibition that are not homogenized in a single mode of authority. Rather, their juxtaposition is an explicit structuring principle.

80 **IMAGE 15** (Catalogue page: (Visage 1/Reflét 1)

81 2. Alternating sections, one named "Visage" the other "Reflét," confront the visitor (and reader of the catalogue) with a non-oppositional, but deep, contrast of voices: Boulay employs the third person, Kasarherou the first person plural, "nous." Both provide richly descriptive and evocative accounts. "Visage" and "Reflét" represent, enact, contrasting--but inseparable--ontologies. "Visage" is a-temporal, an expression of Kanak continuity and a view from within. "Reflét" is historical, providing evidence of change, colonial impacts, and Kanaks seen from the outside. Most originally, in this presentation, Reflét is not essentially European, Visage purely indigenous. The two perspectives are co-present and entangled. Two voices, distinct articulations of a complex reality. The exhibition invites us to understand an ongoing Kanak identity as constructed from both mythic sources and historical relations..

82 3. The entire project is framed as an explicit cross-cultural translation: "L'art est une parole." "Art is speech"? We discover the richness of "parole" in Kanak conceptions. (I first encountered this in the ethnological writings of Maurice Leenhardt.) Here, Kasarherou gives a brilliantly condensed explanation drawn both from oral tradition and ethnology. Art is language, yes, and art is act--acts of alliance, of political

authority. Art as “parole” creates and recreates cosmological, social, and ecological, orders.

83 The exhibition included many very impressive objects that could be encountered as heritage or as art. There were also things that looked like primitive art.

84 **IMAGE 16** (figures)

85 Or that could be grasped in the modality of aesthetic formalism.

86 **IMAGE 17** (casse tête)

87 **IMAGE 18** Door frame (‘Appliques’) However formally striking, the ancestral power of such objects is palpable, and the exhibition and catalogue do much to make this apparent.

88 And what about the “Grande Case’ with its great woven roof, symbolizing the diverse social elements that the “parole” of the chief articulates.

89 **IMAGE 19** (Grande Case photo)

90 **IMAGE 20** (monnaie)

91 And the “têtes de monnaie”—strings of tiny shells that play such an important role as messages of alliance (or sometimes of war.) It’s difficult to imagine these on display in the Louvre’s Pavillon des Sessions. Yet as “paroles” they are “art.”

92 **IMAGES 21, 22** (Chiefs)

93 The role of chiefs in this exhibition is very striking. They are specific, named individuals not “types.” Their speech, an eloquence represented in vernacular texts is crucial for the translation exercise undertaken here—an exercise that risks confusion, no doubt. But a risk worth talking.

94 Passing to the “Reflét” perspective, we encounter the technologies of representation that produced the “Kanak” in colonial imagery and discourse.

95 **IMAGE 23** (Hughan studio in Noumea)

96 **IMAGE 24** (Les Cannibales) Roger Boulay has, of course, produced wonderful exhibitions and books on colonial “figures”—The violent Cannibal, the sexualized Wahine...

97 **IMAGE 25** (Pilou Pilou) More amusing imagery of stereotyping and appropriation...

98 **IMAGE 26** (1878 Rebellion, Rebel heads) And the exhibition doesn’t minimize the brutality of colonial conquest. Here rebel heads form the insurrection of 1878 are presented to the leader of the forces of repression.

99 **IMAGE 27** Hache Ostensoire with Christian cross) Among the artifacts of authentic tradition, hybrid creations such as this. And the story of its travels to Europe and back to New Caledonia is very much part of the complex historical reality that is inseparable from of the transformative continuity of Kanak culture.

100 **IMAGE 28** Bambou gravé. Different kinds of historical records, yes. But “myth” and “history” combined—an opposition deconstructed, not in theory but in practice.

101 Figures drawn from ancient myths, along with dresses, umbrellas, rifles...

102 There is much more to say. But perhaps this image will suffice to represent the project of *Kanak: L’art est une parole*. Its portrayal, and performance, of Kanak identity as an articulation of myth and history, a lived reality and aesthetic expression based on self knowledge (Visage) and the representations, interpellations, of others (Reflét).

- 103 The exhibition doesn't do everything. What exhibition could? For example, contemporary Kanak art is largely absent (While a few modern works are included, the generative "parole" of today's indigenous artists (such as we saw on display in Boulogne Sur Mer) is not part of this translation.) Tapa and fiber arts, women's wealth and power, seem something of an afterthought.
- 104 But as a multi-sited postcolonial collaboration, as a display of powerfully resonant objects, as a serious exercise in intercultural translation that stages ontological difference in its very structure, as a hybrid kind of history, the exhibition creates a complex performance of identity. A form of what I would call translational realism.
- 105 In these respects, *KANAK: L'art est une parole* offers a method and an ethics. An exemplary practice for the many post-ethnological museums whose uneven landscape I have tried to survey, all too briefly, today.

**M. Frédéric KECK**

- 106 Je voudrais revenir sur la situation actuelle et sur votre trajectoire personnelle. En écoutant plusieurs interventions, j'ai le sentiment que la critique des musées d'anthropologie était nécessaire dans les années 80 et 90, parce qu'ils étaient liés avec le nationalisme, le colonialisme, une certaine forme de modernité. C'est tout ce thème du post-moderne, du post-colonial et du post-ethnologique. L'on a maintenant peut-être besoin des musées comme outils critiques face à des formes de nationalisme ou d'identification pathologique qui sont très différents. Tout à l'heure, Nicholas Thomas nous a montré les votes nationalistes en Europe. Ce que je trouve intéressant dans votre trajectoire, c'est que vous avez fait partie de ceux qui ont critiqué la notion de culture. Vos travaux ont joué un rôle important dans les *culture studies* qui ont notamment été portées sur des textes et qui ont été un grand moment de la pensée critique aux États-Unis. Vous avez pourtant toujours manifesté un intérêt passionné, un attachement aux musées, notamment en Nouvelle-Calédonie, puisque c'est là où vous avez le plus travaillé. Je me demande dans quelle mesure votre regard, qui est une distance critique à l'égard des musées, puisque vous n'êtes jamais allé jusqu'à devenir commissaire d'exposition, a pu transformer non seulement l'anthropologie, mais aussi les musées. Vous avez rendu hommage au travail d'Anne-Christine en disant que c'était un travail critique, peut-être en un sens important, mais dans quelle mesure est-ce aussi une pensée critique pouvant s'exercer dans les musées ?

**M. James CLIFFORD**

- 107 La critique que nous avons faite – je faisais partie d'un mouvement – a toujours été une critique réformiste. Nous pensions que l'on voulait détruire les musées. Non. C'était une critique pour les rendre plus intéressants, dialogiques, dialectiques, réalistes. Pourquoi la critique ? Pour renouveler. Nous sommes au moment du renouvellement. Steven Engelsman a commencé ce colloque avec cette notion de renouvellement. Il n'est pas question de revenir à une anthropologie ou à une muséologie du passé. Le retour n'est pas possible. Il faut digérer la critique et aller de l'avant. Je trouve beaucoup de matière de pensée. Pour moi, les musées sont bons à penser. Vous avez raison, être commissaire, jamais. C'est trop difficile.

**M. Stéphane MARTIN**

- 108 Je voudrais remercier tous ceux qui ont rendu possible ce colloque. D'abord, tous les intervenants, le comité scientifique qui a discuté ce programme durant longtemps, Anna Laban qui a rendu tout cela matériellement possible. La discussion continue au

salon de lecture du musée du quai Branly. Il s'agira d'une discussion entre Emmanuel Désveaux et Philippe Descola autour de Lévi-Strauss et Montaigne, demain sur les Wayanas à 11 heures, et à 17 heures une discussion entre Philippe Descola et Horst Bredekamp autour de son livre *Théorie de l'acte d'image*.

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## AUTEURS

### **JAMES CLIFFORD**

Professeur émérite, History of Consciousness Department, University of California