Foreword. Decolonising museology: an ongoing debate

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Decolonising museology: an ongoing debate

Decolonising a scientific domain involves turning ourselves, the scientists, into the objects of our own critical analysis. For many decades now, ICOFOM has explored different topics as museological subjects of analysis that deserve to be put under the gaze of scholars and critical thinkers within the discipline. In this sense, the study of museology as a branch of knowledge related to museums may involve a decolonial interest in exposing our own colonial roots and their long-term effects on the museum theory and practice we conceive and reproduce. Nonetheless, the scarce literature confronting coloniality in theoretical approaches to museology has led ICOFOM in the past three years to focus on “decolonisation” as a way of reflecting on museum theory in new and compelling ways. Coming from the postcolonial critique of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies and the decolonial theorising of Latin America, the articles in this issue draw on different points of view from various contexts around the globe to reconsider museology and its myths of origin, while suggesting a possible new reflexive turn toward decoloniality within the discipline, one that is already leaving its mark on museums in the 21st century.

This new issue of the ICOFOM Study Series brings together the full articles presented at the ICOFOM Annual Symposium of 2021 under the theme “The Decolonisation of Museology: Museums, Mixing, and Myths of Origin”, organised in virtual format by the Université du Québec à Montréal, in Canada, along with ICOM Canada and other academic partners. This symposium was conceived by ICOFOM and its partners, aiming to invite speakers to address decolonisation from various and incongruent points of view, exposing different interpretations and critical understandings in current research, as well as showing some points of friction, dispute, and negotiation within museology today. Our aim was to inspire new critical perceptions of museology and museum theory, reflecting on how our decolonial readings can inform new practices and methodologies for museums and cultural heritage.

I’m grateful to all the members of our Editorial Board and the peer reviewers who have been working hard in the past months so that the ICOFOM Study Series could continue as an active publication. This issue was the result of the editorial work of several professionals, among which the guest editors Yves Bergeron, from Université du Québec à Montreal, and Michèle Rivet, from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, our partners throughout this journey,
the editorial secretaries Anna Leshchenko, Marion Bertin, Lynn Maranda, Elizabeth Weiser and Scarlet Galindo Monteagudo, and the proof-readers Katherine Sleight and Mélanie Foehn, all of whom have done an outstanding job. To all the authors of the articles here presented, thank you for sharing your enriching research experiences and for paving the way for new perspectives on the decolonisation of museology that will enliven an ongoing debate.

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