Cultural heritage as a reparation mechanism: Germany and Brazil

Le patrimoine culturel comme mécanisme de réparation : Allemagne et Brésil

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Abstract

In this paper we examine and discuss how internal demands for recognition of plural identities and reparation of colonial dispossessions through cultural heritages are being carried out in Germany and in Brazil, two countries with different trajectories within Modernity’s shared relational experience. For it, we spotlight recent developments concerning the mobilization of the colonial past by means of proposing cultural policies as symbolic gestures for addressing social injustice derived from colonialism in the first case, and the emergence of a series of exhibitions in the second. Whereas in Germany restitution claims of stolen cultural heritage seem to guide the agenda of historical corrections and symbolic compensations, in Brazil, it is the struggle for
in institutional visibility of marginalized groups and the recognition of a failed attempt of cultural homogenization that takes place.

Keywords: Colonialism, reparation, cultural policy, exhibitions, Germany, Brazil.

**Resumen**

En este artículo examinamos y discutimos cómo las demandas internas de reconocimiento de identidades plurales y reparación de despojos coloniales a través de herencias culturales se están llevando a cabo en Alemania y Brasil, dos países con trayectorias diferentes dentro de la experiencia relacional compartida de la Modernidad. Para ello, destacamos desarrollos recientes en torno a la movilización del pasado colonial mediante la propuesta de políticas culturales como gestos simbólicos para abordar la injusticia social derivada del colonialismo en el primer caso, y la puesta en marcha de una serie de exposiciones en el segundo. Mientras que en Alemania los reclamos de restitución del patrimonio cultural robado parecen orientar la agenda de correcciones históricas y compensaciones simbólicas, en Brasil es la lucha por la visibilidad institucional de los grupos marginados y el reconocimiento de un intento fallido de homogeneización cultural lo que tiene lugar.

Palabras clave: Colonialismo, reparación, política cultural, exposiciones, Alemania, Brasil.

Thinking of developments in art from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, Juliane Rebentisch (2015) associates them with an increasing artistic critique against modernist narratives of progress. In this sense, 1989 represents the end of Cold War, as well as the threshold to a global-scale deregulated capitalism accompanied by an enhanced awareness, derived from postcolonialism, of “global non simultaneity” and “local specificity”. Therefore, the enlightened idea of single Modernity is still debated (Rebentisch, 2015, p. 237). Also, David Joselit (2020, pp. 8-10) points out that, whereas neoliberal economic expansion contributed to a detachment between places and transnational companies, it also engendered stronger ties between a locality and its culture, or, as he calls it: heritage.

For Joselit (2020, p.7), cultural and geographical inheritances in a historical frame can create aesthetic genealogies employing shared experiences and identities. As he points out, heritage as a matter for reanimating the past is employed by art producers from the Global South as a gesture of defiance against the
Wes’s intellectual and creative hegemony. Evidence of decentralized endeavors in favor of building stages of visibility for artistic production from the margins can be seen, at least since the 1980s, in the rising number of biennials and art fairs in countries located in the peripheries of power. Some of these events are explicitly focused on non-Western art, such as the Biennials of La Habana and Dakar (Iskin, 2016, p.10).

Yet, discussions on power relations in cultural and symbolic fields regarding the postcolonial situation seldom look within the borders of countries and ask how internal demands for recognition of heritages and reparation of colonial dispossession take place. As nation-states have proven to be anything but homogeneous societies, we believe it is necessary to consider multiple conflicting notions of identity within societies. Concerning the cultural sphere, Hal Foster (2020) envisions museums, universities, and institutions alike taking a particular role in addressing historical injustices and acting as discussion forums for contemporary social issues – frequently related to historical frames of exclusion and exploitation. However, demands for processing the past and correcting injustices do not come from institutions alone. Society is a crucial agent in proposing agendas through organized groups, social media, and press visibility.

Therefore, it is a matter of interest to examine cultural and institutional policies in two different contexts, in which claims for justice concerning a heritage – be it objects or historical events – have played a relevant role in addressing an enduring condition of subalternity. Therefore, we analyze recent developments in Europe and Brazil concerning the mobilization of a colonial past by means of implementing events and policies in the cultural field as symbolic gestures of reparation and recognition of enduring social injustice and its aftermath. On one side of the Atlantic, restitution claims of stolen heritage seem to guide the agenda of redress and compensations. On the other, it is the struggle for institutional visibility and recognition of a failed attempt at cultural homogenization.

We base our perspective on Enrique Dussel’s (1993) defence of Modernity as a European alterity-based phenomenon constituted in dialectical relation to non-European collectivities. Therefore, so-called peripheries are equally part of Modernity itself since this phenomenon was established in relational conjecture. Dussel (1993, p. 66) proposes that, whereas Modernity stands for the emancipation of the hegemonic group, it also produces the conditions for genocidal violence against its “Others.” Thus, modern colonial exploitative procedures and narratives raise the ambiguous relation of bringing prosperity for some at the cost of lives and cultures of those who supposedly do not belong to this relational process. However, despite a similar historical frame of violence, exploitation, and dispossession, speaking of Modernity and its aftermath demands plural narratives since its traits and outcomes differ depending on the region. In fact, using the plural noun “modernities” to emphasize
the various possibilities that the idea of Modernity implies in today’s debate would appear to be more appropriate.

Assuming contemporary demands for recognition and reparation of historical social injustice grounded on former colonial rule and its aftermath occur both in previous colonized and societies, we aim to expose and discuss a brief analysis of distinct developments based on employing the past for producing practical actions in the present.

**Restitutions of heritage: Processing the past for envisioning the future**

Since 2017, the restitution of cultural heritage to former colonies has received widespread attention in Western Europe and in African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. Commissioned by France’s President, Emmanuel Macron, writer Felwine Sarr and scholar Bénédicte Savoy (2018) delivered a survey report on the number of African objects in European ethnology museums and examined the legal conditions for restitution in France. Proposing to reverse the burden of proof, the authors recommended that France accept restitution requests of objects acquired in the following cases: as spoils of war by the French or foreign army; as items donated to French museums by colonial administrators or their families; as donations occasioned by “scientific expeditions” in Africa; of objects acquired after former French colonies gained independence, if attested illicit conditions of trade; and of loans by African institutions never returned from France (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 61).

As Bénédicte Savoy (2021) shows, the return of material culture – transported notably from Africa under legally and ethically questionable conditions – to former colonies has, since the 1960s, been demanded by intellectuals, politicians, and museum professionals from newly independent countries. At the same time, major holders of African heritage like France, the United Kingdom, and Belgium started deploying legal measures to keep the objects in their museums by turning them *de facto* into inalienable state property. Germany – a former minor colonial power, but holding extensive non-European collections – was then split between East and West, being one of Cold War’s main stages, so that the extent of museum collections was one of the numerous points of rivalry between the emerging ideological power axes. Berlin’s prominent Ethnological Museum was under the Federal Republic of Germany’s sovereignty and early demands for permanent loans made by Nigeria, for instance, were promptly denied and kept quiet (Savoy, 2021, pp. 41–43).

Curiously, although commissioned by France’s President, the Sarr-Savoy Report provoked a broad debate in Germany concerning its cultural policy for ethnological collections, especially given the country’s current cultural ambitions. Launched in 2020 in Berlin, the Humboldt Forum is a major cultural centre project dedicated to displaying Berlin’s ethnological collections, among other exhibits. Throughout the decades between the Forum’s inception and its ope-
ning, the status of objects acquired under colonial rule came under public scrutiny, notably after repeated criticisms concerning the Forum’s setting – a reconstructed imperial palace housing objects from early colonies – as well as its low regard for provenance research.

In this way, Germany’s cultural authorities began to envision the restitution of heritage acquired under colonial rule. In March 2019, a framework document signed by various government institutions proposed a series of joint initiatives to regulate the treatment given to objects from colonial contexts. It was recommended that federal bodies formulate the required legal conditions for restitution, besides promoting dialogue with states and communities under former colonial rule in order to provide information about objects in German collections, including advice concerning possible returns. Finally, there was a requirement for German institutions to proactively undertake provenance research even without formal restitution requests (Framework Principles, 2019, pp. 6–8). Furthermore, from 2018 to 2021, the advocacy and consulting group Deutscher Museumsbund (German Museum Association) published three editions of a guidelines series for museums holding objects from colonial backgrounds, aspiring to improve the treatment of such items and encouraging partnerships with specialists and institutions from communities of origin.

As the Humboldt Forum simultaneously holds German’s most extensive ethnological collection and has its mission to be a place for cultural exchanges and debate at a global level, it also stays in the spotlight regarding the promises of reparation and recognition of colonial injustices in the cultural realm. Discussions mainly concern its collection of Benin Bronzes, the second largest of its kind in Europe, most of which was purchased in the English art market at the beginning of the twentieth century after the British punitive expedition against the Kingdom of Benin – currently part of Nigeria – in 1897 and the plunder of the Royal Palace. Parallel to recent public announcements of negotiations envisioning the restitution of part of the collection of Bronzes, the provenance of other pieces of Berlin’s Ethnological Museum stays under suspicion.

**Brazil’s fragmentary anti-colonial gestures**

Whereas in multicultural, diasporic post-war Europe, claims for restitution and critical provenance research play a significant role in the postcolonial debate for the recognition of heritages and reparation of colonial damages in the cultural realm, in Brazil, disputes primarily concern the achievement of broader visibility of political minority groups amidst complex discussions surrounding notions of identity.

Brazilian cultural politics during the twentieth century were engaged in promoting a simplistic notion of a culturally united country through the idea of a successful integration and mixing between three “races”: Indigenous, European and African. Supported by respected intellectuals like Gilberto Freyre, with his 1933 magnum opus *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves), this
conciiliatory approach helped to hide social inequality and to expand white dominance in the cultural field, since the institutional presence of artists with African and Indigenous backgrounds was minimal. The development of social indicators laying bare the disadvantages of non-white groups gradually eroded the view of so-called racial democracy and successful miscegenation in Brazil (Costa, 2001).

Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1995) demonstrated that the long-lasting colonial system and its rush for territorial expansion was based not only on the systematic killing of local rebel communities but also on the exploitation and transplantation of an enslaved labour force of Indigenous and African origins. Moreover, the working population in the colony was further increased by forced sexual intercourse between European men and Indigenous or African women. Ribeiro represents the view that the growing population of so-called *mamelucos* and *mestiços* forms the basis for an authentic Brazilian culture, distinct from the originating others. Unlike in Haiti, Brazil’s independence in 1822 did not necessarily change the status of enslaved black people; it took another 66 years for slavery to be abolished. Besides the wars against colonial settlers and enslavement, Indigenous peoples suffered from diseases brought by European colonizers. Thus, their population was drastically reduced over centuries of expansion.

In reactionary political times, when historical narratives are a topic of dispute, the notion of a harmonious miscegenated society still helps to overshadow claims for recognition of divergent subjectivities, as well as reparations. Nevertheless, actions opposing a singular view of Brazilian society contribute to complexifying the discussion on identity and creating a fragmentary and non-consensual itinerary of exhibitions, policies, and cultural institutions committed with voices from the political margins – such as urban peripheries and social groups underrepresented due to race or gender. Different views on how to engage cultural and artistic endeavours reflect on different uses of terms and classifications. Among them are the outlines of what *Afro-Brazilian Art* can be.

Curator Hélio Menezes (2018, p. 590) states that the term *Afro-Brazilian Art* had been used to encompass artists of Afro-Brazilian origin and to admit a wider production based not exclusively on the phenotype of artmakers but on the themes explored in artworks. However, he points out that, even if *Afro-Brazilian Art* can not be defined strictly according to the artists’ skin color or artworks tackling blackness, *Afro-Brazilian Art* as a political topic is easily identifiable when thinking of the representation of black artists in institutional collections. A similar parallel can be traced to the Indigenous presence in art museums beyond acting as models for westernized depictions in previous centuries. However, the interplay among temporary exhibitions in art museums and the few museums specializing in African and Indigenous

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heritages have contributed to amplifying visibilities and increasing demands for recognition.

**The Afro-Brasil Museum and Emanoel Araújo’s legacy**

With a collection of over 6,000 Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, and African objects ranging from the eighteenth century up to contemporaneity, and also a library, the Afro-Brasil Museum was founded in 2004 at the Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo and showcases Brazil’s African historical roots and its influences on society’s formation. The axes on which the permanent collection of this public institution is shown mobilize Brazil’s African heritage throughout art, religion, popular culture and festivities, labor, and slavery. The display of objects generates value and turns injustices and claims for reparation visible: a variety of elements that make the museum a historical, ethnographic, and artistic one (Menezes, 2018, p. 586). Located close to the São Paulo Biennial Pavilion and São Paulo’s Modern Art Museum (MAM/SP), the Afro-Brasil Museum broadens the view of Brazilian culture and roots in a privileged arena of international visibility.

The museum’s ensemble is based on the personal collection of its curator and director, the artist Emanoel Araújo (b. 1940). His career as an exhibition-maker prior to the creation of the Afro-Brasil Museum contributed decisively to his approach to addressing aspects of and exhibiting the art made by artists of color in Brazil. This practice targets converting social agendas related to inequality and exclusion as a permanent part of the institution programme. Since 1988 Araújo has been engaged in numerous exhibitions mobilizing either the creations of black artists in Brazil or, in a broader sense, the presence of blackness and Africanness in Brazilian art. Being director of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo – the city’s oldest art museum – between 1992 and 2002 contributed to giving Araújo a higher profile and facilitated dialogs with political decision-makers as well, which resulted later in the transformation of his collection into the Afro-Brasil Museum. However, it is noteworthy how this museum lacks transparency regarding the confusion over Araúj’s role as director and curator of the institution and his status as collection’s owner – or former owner; this is also unclear – which is maintained at a public building.

Beyond the city of São Paulo, other places in Brazil maintain institutions specialized in African and Indigenous heritage with programmes targeting their local communities. Some of them are the Afro-Brasileiro Museum of Bahia’s Federal University, the Afro-Brasileiro Museum of Sergipe, Pierre Verger Foundation in Salvador, and the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro, to name a few.

Specialized exhibitions as temporary discursive instances

Since Brazil’s re-democratization in the 1980s and the exhaustion of the lingering idea of a homogeneous Brazilian identity amid deep inequality among the

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white and non-white population, identity debates occupied the cultural field within and beyond specialized museums. Recent large-scale collective exhibitions propose renewed discussions on identity and recognition of subjectivities other than the hegemonic, Westernized one. They all showcase juxtapositions of artistic creations belonging to different cultural, temporal, and geographical groups as a common curatorial feature.

Histórias Mestiças (Mestizo Histories) took place in 2014 at the Tomie Ohtake Institute in São Paulo. Curated by Adriano Pedrosa, since 2014 the artistic director of Museu de Arte de São Paulo (São Paulo Museum of Art – MASP), and Professor Lilia Schwarcz, author of several books on Brazilian history and social identity and today also part of MASP’s curatorial team, the exhibition scrutinized the formation of Brazilian society by means of examining the narratives and protagonisms in this historical sequence of events, as well as dismantling hierarchies and categories imposed on art and artifact. It showcased around 400 works from 80 national and international collections of art and material culture from the sixteenth century up to today. In the exhibition’s catalog, curators explicitly report that Histórias Mestiças took place in the wake of Emanoel Araújo’s previous shows A mão afro-brasileira (MAM/SP, 1988), Negro de corpo e alma (Mostra do Redescobrimento, Biennial’s Pavillon, São Paulo, 2000) and Para nunca esquecer: negras memórias, memórias de negro (National Historical Museum, Rio de Janeiro, 2001). Whereas Araújo’s exhibitions focused on the black experience and representation in Brazilian art, Pedrosa and Schwarcz expanded the scope by including the output of indigenous subject along with representations of Indigenous people in Western art.

The curators employed an innovative methodological approach through so-called “frictions” between views, subjectivities, and narratives. Friction was produced by removing chronological and geographical criteria within the seven thematic groups so that paintings from previous centuries depicting black and Indigenous subjects in racist and stereotyping manners could be compared with contemporary works of art exploring racial differences through other perspectives. Pedrosa and Schwarcz presented a critical view of the idea of a country peacefully miscegenated, and examined discursive changes on this aspect over time.

However, the Indigenous presence in Mestizo Histories deserves a separate comment. Between 2014 and the present day, Indigenous presence in Brazilian contemporary art has changed drastically regarding its visibility. Indigenous contemporary artists like Jaider Esbell and Denilson Baniwa take part in biennials and art events worldwide besides approaching contemporary art through Indigenous perspectives. Nevertheless, by the time Mestizo Histories took place, established art venues and contemporary art curators still had their eyes closed to these creations. The echoes of Jean Hubert Martin’s 1989 celebrated show Magiciens de la Terre at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris kept guiding non-Western art’s hand back, then, by focusing on formal aspects of traditional “tribal” artwork and less on its meanings. In Mestizo Histories, the
absence of contemporary Indigenous artists speaking for themselves and the massive presence of Indigenous material culture, plus two private ayahuasca ceremonies lead by Huni Kuin leader Leopardo Yawa Bane inside Ernesto Neto’s installation *Em busca do Sagrado Jiboia Nixi Pae* hindered producing “frictions” against stereotypical depictions of Indigenous peoples more successfully.

Moreover, removing hierarchies should not remove the tensions that generate them. “When coexistence is visually expressed primarily through the works available, there remains a risk of ignoring real-life conflicts whenever the work in question does not address difference.” In this regard, positioning Indigenous material culture alongside Westernized artworks, aiming to communicate cultural diversity, still contributes to the silence over the reality Indigenous communities and subjects face in Brazil.

Four years later, Pedrosa and Schwarcz continued their curatorial agenda with *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas* (*Afro-Atlantic Histories*), which took place simultaneously at MASP and Tomie Ohtake Institute. This time, the artist Ayrson Heráclito and curators Hélio Menezes and Tomás Toledo participated in the curation. Relevant to mention is that Pedrosa, Schwarcz, and Toledo are part of MASP’s curatorial staff and that the exhibition comprised an extensive one-year program with solo shows and symposia. Deepening a methodology similar to *Mestizo Histories*, *Afro-Atlantic Histories* showcased 450 works of over 200 artists from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. The curators focused on exploring black experience and diaspora from the slave trade until the present day with works of Faith Ringgold, Sônia Gomes, Rosana Paulino, and Nana Faustine, among other significant voices. This time, the debate went beyond the Brazilian context by establishing visual links with other former colonies, especially Jamaica with loans from the country’s National Gallery.

If, on the one hand, these shows initiated meaningful discussions about identities and recognition of alternative subjectivities other than the hegemonic Western point of view, more recent shows elaborated on this perspective and have been far more successful in providing space for the “others” to contribute to the debate by their own voices.

*Vaivém* (*To-and-Fro*) was curated by Raphael Fonseca in 2019. On this occasion, the former curator of Niterói’s Contemporary Art Museum investigated the relationship between sleeping hammocks and the construction of Brazilian national identity. The show traveled through major cities in the country, given it took place at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil – a network of cultural centers run by Brazil’s public bank. The exhibition derives from the curator’s doctoral project and transforms the thesis into a tridimensional discourse. As Fonseca puts it:

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It is up to us, while obliged by the dissemination and polysemy of the images, to continue to engage in their analysis and deconstruction of common sense and the stereotypes that revolve around the notions of ‘Brazil’, ‘Brazilian’ and ‘Brazilianness’. Strangeness is necessary — without this action, we are not able to write new stories for our future. (Fonseca, 2019)

Also inspired by shows such as Mestizo Histories in expographic design terms, Vaivém juxtaposes artists from different realities, ethnic groups, and Brazilian regions. In the catalog, there are guest writers from social groups with less representation in the artistic system, such as Naine Terena, curator, educator, and artist of the Terena people; Ailton Krenak and his ethnic group; and Amanda Carneiro, a black curator who is dedicated to producing mainly Afro-Brazilian themed exhibitions. The other collaborators are representative of Brazilian universities and curators associated with institutions within the main axis Rio–São Paulo, such as the Pinacoteca do Estado, Rio Art Museum, and MASP, indicating a predominance of institutionalism discourses. This phenomenon reflects the hegemony of the Brazilian artistic mainstream circuit, which still resists including a more diverse range of voices. The only exception seems to be Aldrin Moura, as representative of the Federal University of Pará, a state belonging to the Brazilian Amazon. The other academic collaborators come mainly from the State University of Campinas, where the curator’s doctoral project was carried out. In this sense, the maintenance of a focus on the Rio–São Paulo axis is perceived as the need to legitimize curatorial discourses that aim to challenge specialized hegemonies by the local artistic system itself.

Two issues that seem particularly interesting to us here are: 1) the diversity of works and artists supported by extensive research; 2) the way in which this exhibition failed to share curatorial authority among other authors while remaining within a safer place of single curatorial authority; on the other hand, how it widened the arena of debate for other subsequent exhibitions to actually take bolder steps in that direction.

À Nordeste (To the Northeast) (2019) was an exhibition organized by Northeastern curators Clarissa Diniz, Marcelo Campos (who was the main curator at the Museu de Arte do Rio – MAR and present in the Vaivém catalog), and Bitu Cassundé. The show was based on challenging clichés and stereotypes about this countryside region, often of a pejorative character. The curators recovered collections of obscure Northeastern museums, collections, and modern artists – little known in the Rio–São Paulo axis, if known at all – and combined this history with contemporary art of different forms, including digital art, web art, street art, and design. The show at SESC 25 de Maio, an art and culture centre maintained by the São Paulo trade association, prompted a social discussion that directly touched the North-eastern immigrant community, which integrates
the leading labour source for the wealthier strata established in the city of São Paulo. The shared curating and the social theme, with critical content about the culture of the city in which the exhibition took place, showed a selection of modern and contemporary art produced in the country’s Northeast by a marginal bias to the hegemonic narratives of local historiography, bringing in artists not recognized by the dominant artistic system established in São Paulo. This exhibition was successful both in its powerful critique of the artistic system and even the historiography of local art, replacing hegemonic agents, points of view, and approaches.

Finally, Véoa, curated by Naine Terena and with the support of Fernanda Pitta, curator of the Pinacoteca do Estado, managed to reach an ideal place regarding what we now expect from institutions in the light of the culture of native peoples. The museum offered Terena museological support through its in-house curator and production teams. For the first time in the museum’s history, the exhibition presented three rooms with works by 23 contemporary indigenous artists and collectives from different regions of Brazil, resulting in the incorporation of works by two prominent artists in the current scene: Denilson Baniwa and Jaider Esbell. Terena, the curator, stressed the importance of showing indigenous creations through an indigenous curatorship. In the words of Esbell,

> Every exhibition of indigenous art is above all a denunciation of all the crimes that are taking place. We wanted to bring to this art stage positive issues that are related to our knowledge, technology, our cosmogony. Although we have not stopped going through violence as an obligatory path, [we want] to take this struggle further through the artistic stages⁴ (Zanon, 2021, online).

### Final considerations

The case studies presented here demonstrate how cultural heritage grounded in the colonial experience of Modernity’s two sides – that of the colonizer and that of the colonized – has been currently activated within the institutional contexts and local contingencies of two different geopolitical scenarios. Revisiting the colonial past and re-evaluating its aftermath engends demands for correcting injustices in multiple ways that blur the lines between material reparations and symbolic gestures of sharing power. Actions taken in each place are subject to local particularities regarding their differing communities, museum collections, and exhibition programs.

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⁴. Translated by the authors
In Brazil, unlike in other geographic–political realities, the challenging of established narratives via exhibitions exploring identity content or even guided by diversity, is timely. This reflects the same position on the part of academics dedicated to the visual arts, who are still groping for ways and strategies to produce plural interpretations and observe from points of view based on approaches that address difference. In this sense, we notice the lack of continuity in curatorial programs so that diversity could be sustainably transformed into institutional policy. A recent and paradigmatic case of this problematic situation is the current MASP exhibition program. Before dedicating its annual projects to themes related to the inequality of representation of social groups in the museum itself, in 2021, the museum decided to devote its exhibition program to the history of dance.

Although the museum’s mission is quite broad, emphasizing its objective of being a “diverse, inclusive and plural museum” and “to establish, in a critical and creative way, dialogues between past and present, cultures and territories, based on visual arts”, it does not clearly embody its destabilizing bias of hegemonic narratives promoted during its 2018 and 2019 exhibition programs, when there was a clear demonstration of a confrontational attitude towards such narratives. The question that should be asked is: Why this sudden change to a less combative and energetic direction, discontinuing a program of undeniable success with the public, with effects on its educational and institutional activities, and its contribution to art studies locally? One wonders how the strategies developed in Afro-Atlantic Histories and Feminist Histories: Artists After 2000 (2019) could have been maintained, even when addressing a more general topic like Histories of Dance (2020).

Considerations such as these would need a separate article to be better discussed. In any case, we pointed out the fragility caused by the lack of continuity and, therefore, the need for incorporating policies that effectively promote inclusion and challenges hegemonic narratives. Therefore, we understand that while there is no organization of public and private institutions collectively to promote this desired diversity, exhibitions that strive to offer inclusive paths end up having ephemeral effects that reverberate as potent polemics, however temporary. We understand that although the Brazilian State has developed inclusive policies that mobilized the spheres of culture and arts in past administrations, institutional strategies still do not seem to have been established in the form of continuous exhibition programs, for example. Even so, the potential of the exhibition initiatives such as the ones we’ve discussed must be emphasized, although they cannot replace an effective transformation in institutional exhibition programs that can be maintained regardless of different managers or budget limitations.

In Europe, the more the status of cultural heritage from regions under former colonial rule gains visibility in the public sphere, the more the states are constrained to act envisioning reparations and critically processing the colonial past through inclusive and dialogical approaches with communities.
of origin as well as with diasporic groups in the continent. In this sense, and indeed motivated by the controversies behind the ambitious Humboldt Forum, Germany emerges as the country with a great opportunity to play a leading role in this issue – especially after the acquired expertise with restitution of art stolen or misappropriated by the Nazi regime. As the official responses have shown, the federal decentralized bureaucratic structure of the country hinders a national restitution policy, for local juridical systems are required. In this sense, official institutional movements were no more than recommendations, intentions, and formal commitments. On the other hand, one finds in Germany policies like Museum Global, funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Cultural Foundation), which aims at engaging collections of German modern and contemporary art museums encouraging dialogical approaches with non-European production, either through temporary exhibitions or new acquisitions. The durability of such interventions opens a new horizon for future investigations. Museum Global as a public policy is what we missed in Brazil’s fragmented acts of recognition.

After all, dealing with material culture whose provenance goes back to colonial times still raises fear of dismantling collections and threatening European cultural hegemony. Thus, developments take place slowly. History is being written day by day and demands openness from cultural institutions and constant surveillance from groups of interest. Correcting the modern-colonial ambiguity outlined by Dussel includes a redistribution of resources and symbols, for objects and their provenances are irrevocable sources of history and cultural identity.

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