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Museums as Theme Parks: from the Informational Paradigm to the Reflexive Experience

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“Let’s pretend there’s a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let’s pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it’s turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It will be easy enough to get through –”

(Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1999 [1872] p. 4-5)

What is *Wonderland* but a reflexive experience? Like a dream, it transports and guides you every step of the way toward the fullest experience of the ‘self’ away from the frameworks of reality, and until you cannot differentiate fantasy from reality. In the land of unimaginable experience designed by fairy tale, or in the heart of a museum exhibition, fantasy, as an artifice of the mind, is responsible for the creation of new worlds of imagined meaning within the well-known reality. This significant breach between *real* and *surreal* is where the deepest social discoveries can be made.

Museums are supposed to be imagined and not just created or developed. They work like a story being told and they need creativity as a starting point. Thus, their whole existence will depend on the convincing enunciation of the teller. In most social analyses of museums, researchers are misguided to direct their focus to the power of the “truth” disseminated by these institutions. What misguides them, in fact, is the very power of the museums’ convincing speech. Nevertheless, museums are powerful, not for the assumed ‘truth’ we may ‘read’ in their material objects or for the information they carry. Instead, their power lies in the performance that makes the audience believe in the act that is being played: what we may call the *museum performance*.

The focus of this paper is the study of museums as social agents that produce performances. Distancing ourselves from a more informational and objective perspective – which may suggest a clear bond between museums and libraries, archives, or cultural centers for instance, and which approximates museology with information sciences – it would be preferable to think of museums in relation to *theme parks*, or carnivals, as in the North American institution.

The anthropologist Anthony Seeger (1990, p. 13) suggests that theme parks are important in the sense that they alter perception. Theme parks, as much as many museums, alter the perception individuals have of themselves, of their own bodies and space. In a Ferris wheel, we are allowed to have different perspectives of space when we go up and down. In a Fool’s House, we are confronted with our own image in a distorted mirror. As in a traditional carnival, one is made to feel that the social rules do not apply there. The cultural performance establishes a permanent state of drama and play that allows the audience to relate to social order in a different, imaginative

level of the social reality. However, a particularity of theme parks must be stressed: while most amusement parks are, in fact, noisy, chaotic, and subversive, a *theme park* tends to be conceptualized as an organized performance that is offered to the audience as a playful breach from social order – deceiving chaos by presenting a different version of lived reality.

Defined by Victor Turner (1988, p. 22) as “the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting ‘designs for living’”, the cultural performance instates a reflexive perspective to the social order in which, like in many successful museums or musealized sites, the audience is allowed to confront its place in history and in society. In this sense, a performance is often a critique of the social life it grows out of or “an evaluation (with lively possibilities of rejection) of the way society handles history” (Turner, 1988, p. 22).

By comparing museums with theme parks and highlighting the value of reflexive experience, the present analysis aims to deconstruct the notion of museums as informational institutions and to propose a new frame for museology’s subject of study. As a result, Museology, as a discipline oriented to the study of what is produced by museums or of what produces them (sometimes called ‘*museality*’ or ‘*musealization*’), is progressively proving to be closer to a human or social science than to its traditional approximation to the information sciences, as some of the past theorists of these disciplines have insisted.

The specificity of Museology’s subject of study: overcoming the informational paradigm

Museology has long been submitted to an epistemology of the information sciences. As a discipline that was originally conceived as a ‘science’ by authors from Eastern and Central Europe since the 1960s, museology has been placed side by side with other applied disciplines such as archival studies and librarianship, being itself defined as an *information science* in the 1980s and 1990s:

Information sciences include: information sciences in a narrow sense, documentation, communicology, theory of classification systems, general theory of systems, librarianship, bibliology, science of science, archivistics, MUSEOLOGY, lexicology, theory of artificial languages, theory of solving nonnumeric problems, cryptology, etc. (Maroević, 2004, p. 15)

Some of the founding thinkers of theoretical museology from this part of the world – where an advanced theory for museology has been developed and disseminated – were responsible for placing the discipline among the “other” information sciences, mostly because they were trained and sometimes well-known researchers in that particular field of knowledge. According to them, these supposed ‘sciences’ within the field of information would be defined by dealing with “systematic study of the process of emitting, collecting, selecting, evaluating, elaborating, archiving, retrieval, transmission, distribution, explaining, using and protection of information” (Obrazloženje, 1982 apud Maroević, 1983 [2004]). As much as these subjects may be considered social processes related to the field of communication and directly connected to museum practice, we may argue that such an objective definition fails to include some of the

most *museological* processes, which are: creating, recreating, imagining, enacting, and playing, among others.

The central difference between museology and the information sciences – which we wish to stress in the present analysis – arises when one confronts the specific subjects of study. If one may consider the *archive* and the *library* (or their practical functions) respectively as the subjects of study of archival studies and librarianship, the same cannot be inferred about the *museum* in relation to museology.

The main reason lies in the fact that these social sciences and their particular researchers are studying mere informational relations – leaving human experiences and performances outside of their scope. This is not the case for museology. In a way, we may infer that museology studies reflexive processes in the form of cultural performances, i.e. the focus in this contemporary discipline is taken away from fixed, stable objects as carriers of information to the subjective human experiences and the very act of creating new worlds in which information may be produced and transformed. Having the museum as a stage in which these reflexive encounters take place – a stage that can be instituted or improvised – museology cannot be perceived as a discipline that is irrefutably attached to an institution.

From a different perspective, even the *museum* has been, to a great extent, distinguished from other informational institutions. For instance, libraries and archives treat information as the main object of the user's discovery while, on the other hand, museums have the *visitor* (viewed as a social actor) as an object in itself. Information centers are supposed to be transparent; museums are allowed to 'play' hide and seek with their objects, using lights, shadows, sounds, and theater to engage their visitors in a meaningful performance. Of course museums deal with information too, but in such a way that it is impossible for them to be defined by disciplines that study them solely through an informational approach. In other words, the subject of museology cannot be so objective if we intend it to be *human*.

If museums were all about transmitting data (as elements of reality), in the purest information sense, they would be deprived of imagination and wonder – subjective states that happen beyond the object. In that case, the museum context would replicate the traditional communication model (sender-message-receiver), and we know it is, in fact, a much more complex process than that. Musealization turns real things into representations of the things taken from reality. The museum represents things as objects, giving them a distinct status and value. Hence, the object is not in any case 'raw reality' but a complex representation. In other words, if we study performances, the stability of the museum (as a social category museologists are so attached to) vanishes in thin air. When taking into account the actors and its agencies, a researcher must consider that the object of a performative definition disappears when it is no longer performed, or, if it persists in the social order, then it means that other actors have taken over the relay (Latour, 2005, p. 37). That is how fugitive the empirical object really is.

In the past, the founding mothers and fathers of our discipline have already approached such a perception that leads to the relativization of museology's subject of study. Indeed, since 1965 in the former Czechoslovakia, Zbyněk Z. Stránský raised questions on the subject of study of museology, denying, for the first time, the museum as its

'scientific' subject matter (Stránský, 1965, pp. 30-33). The museum would be, according to Stránský, "only an instrument to perceive a certain way of *cognition* of society" (Stránský, 2005, p. 111 apud Baraçal, 2008, p. 70, italics added). He was responsible for the disconnection of the museology subject from the museum, as a historic institution, to *museality* – understood as a "specific aspect of reality". This notion would lead Stránský to conceive the cognitive intention of museology as the 'scientific' interpretation of an "attitude of man to reality" (Stránský, 1980 apud van Mensch, 1992). This reflection was possibly the zero mark for the development of a systematic thinking on museology and its analytical subject, first in Central and Eastern Europe, and later in other parts of the globe.

A "specific relation" or a reflexive experience?

Anna Gregorová, a Czech author influenced by the gnosiological references introduced in museology by Stránský, defined, after him, the museological subject of study as "*specific relations of man to reality*" (Gregorová, 1980, p. 19). With this vague definition, Gregorová emphasized the fact that the subject in the relation realizes the totality of reality and at the same time differentiates itself from the object of observation. He/she differentiates the part from the whole, assuming a *museum attitude* towards the observed reality.

The focus in many definitions presented in the first theoretical approaches to museology was on the cognitive notion of the "relations of man to reality" conceived by Stránský and Gregorová. This philosophical assertion reifies the separation of man from reality and presupposes the existence of a (*material*) reality that is divorced from society. According to a critical analysis, those are two sociological errors that should be adamantly avoided in a museology that should be more concerned with a wider range of associations among the different agents composing society.

First, we may recall that the breach between subject and object is, in fact, fabricated by a particular appropriation of reality. It was first conceived as an important part of Descartes' *cogito*, according to which subjects as 'minds' exist as completely separated entities from physical reality. This conception of a mind that is even detached from a physical body and exists beyond any materiality lies in the foundation of idealistic philosophy. It was further explored by Kant and discussed by Hegel. But it is only since the Enlightenment that Rationalism would translate it into politics, becoming a central part of dominant ideologies in the West. In the case of museums, this breach is a historic phenomenon that distinguishes Modernity and characterizes a certain *a priori* for the existence of this *institution*.

Therefore, according to the *Gregorovian* assumption, museums are places where this separation is given between a subject that thinks and conceives the world as a mind and objective reality. As an institution that simply applies a *specific relation of man to reality*, museums are socially and philosophically outdated.

Equally influenced by Stránský's thinking, in 1981, the Brazilian museologist Waldisa Rússio defines the subject of museology as the *museum fact*, or the *museological fact*, understood as "the profound relationship between man, the cognizant subject, and the object" (Rússio, 1981, p. 42). This theorist separates, once again, the subject of reason – under the clear influence of the *cogito* – from the object of knowledge, "that part of reality to which man belongs, and

over which he has the power to act”, both parts considered in the museum fact.

The very definition of the subject of study of museology as a relation between parts that differentiate themselves, creating an asymmetry, is an error in the sense that it ignores how asymmetries and differences are created socially. There is no such thing as a ‘relation’ if we conceive the social world as a network of associations that generate constant transformation. The contemporary anthropologist Bruno Latour states that it is precisely because it is so difficult to maintain asymmetries, to durably entrench power relations, or to enforce inequalities, that so much work is being devoted to shifting the weak and fast-decaying ties to other types of links (Latour, 2005, p. 66). ‘*Relations*’ are a deceiving kind of link that reifies the social reality. In addition, the ‘social’ in itself is here perceived as “a type of connections between things that are not themselves social” (Latour, 2005, p. 5), or as a movement of re-association and reassembling (Latour, 2005, p. 7), according to Latour’s actor-network theory.

What we propose in the present text is the dislocation of the epistemological problem of museology from the subject of study to the cognitive frames we use to interpret it. In other words, the museological *problem* is not having the museum as subject matter, but understanding the museum exclusively by a dated philosophical assumption (the Cartesian *cogito*), limiting all thinking processes. As we will sustain, the subject of museology should not be defined unidimensionally by the subject-object relation forged in the West, but instead should consider all kinds of possible associations among subjects, objects, relations, subjects behaving as objects, objects behaving as subjects, etc. These roles are performed by people and things in reality and are reified in the museum theory produced over the last fifty years. They are simply parts played by the most different types of elements, and they can be modified, inverted, transformed, or translated in different ways, forming what we call the *museum performance*.

A performance theory for Museology

Presenting the problem of museum and reality – reality as the museum object – Gregorová reaches an ontological problem at the core of museology, i.e. the explanation of reality in itself, as a carrier of a gnoseological value and potential (Gregorová, 1980, p. 19), or of a *museum value* also known as *museality*. By disconnecting the question from the museum in relation to the reality that ‘is produced’ by it, Gregorová points out to the fact that there is something between man and reality, something beyond the object and matter that is worth being studied. This thing, which is philosophically presented as a *property* of the museum object, is created by what can be called *the museum performance*.

Cultural performances are always connected to ‘real’ events, but they are not simple expressions of culture or even of changing culture. Considering some cultural forms as not so much *reflective* as *reflexive*, Victor Turner points out that here the analogy is not with a mirror but rather with a reflexive verb (Turner, 1988, p. 24). In that sense, culture – like verbs – has at least two ‘moods’ – indicative and subjunctive – in most languages, and these moods are most hopelessly intermingled. As Turner explained, when society bends back on itself, it

meanders, inverts, perhaps lies to itself, and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice. (Turner, 1988, p.25)

By doing that, society works in a state of supposition, desire, and possibility, rather than stating actual facts. This arrangement of things dissolves what were once factual components of reality and instates a more playful spirit. A 'reflex', on the other hand, presupposes 'realism'. But of course, even in the context of a museum or in art and literature, realism is only a matter of artifice and what is real is a result of cultural definition. For Turner, the genres of cultural performance are not simple mirrors, but rather "magical mirrors of social reality", because they are capable of exaggerating, inverting, re-formatting, magnifying, minimizing, and even falsifying the known chronicled events (Turner, 1988, p. 42).

What we aim for, with the separation of the museological subject of study from the strict man-reality relation to a broader, sociologically founded unit of analysis, is to demonstrate that a relation between philosophical entities – man-reality, subject-object – constitutes a type of performance, in fact. This way we distance ourselves from an empirical system of relations to reach a system of associations that study actors in their agencies instead of a Cartesian equation.

In that sense, 'man' cannot be considered the only actor in a 'relation'. For the actor-network theory (ANT), defended by Bruno Latour, if we stick to the decision to consider the actors through their agencies, then anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference is supposed to be an actor (Latour, 2005, p. 71). Thus, there is no hierarchy established to differentiate subjects from objects. A *thing* is also studied as an actor in the subject-object equation – or, at least, an actant, if it has no figuration. Of course, this does not mean that these participants 'determine' the action, that "hammers 'impose' the hitting of the nail". According to Latour:

"In addition to 'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action', things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on." (Latour, 2005, p.71)

This also does not mean that objects do things 'instead' of human actors. Latour argues that no social science can exist without first exploring the question of who and what participates in the action. This primary empirical question could mean – as it certainly does for museology – letting in the so-called "non-humans" (Latour, 2005, p. 71). The human-reality relation, then – limiting of the subject of museology – could begin to be perceived as a relation between associations, and, in that sense, it could be fully studied by a human science.

For a more realistic sociological perspective, we have to accept that the continuity of any course of action or relation will rarely consist of human-to-human or object-object connections, but will probably zigzag from one to the other (Latour, 2005, p. 75). The simplistic triangle between man, object, and institution that traveled through all museological theory so far is sociologically barren. The museum performance, in which the three roles of the 'public', the 'object', and the 'museum' are socially enacted, should no longer be perceived as a true social relation, in order to be systematically studied as a performance of the social – or of the *museum*.

Furthermore, this new perception implies that if the museum is a thing that performs the relation of man to reality, then *musealization* is the action towards which we should direct our interest – as social scientists or researchers of associations. Because associations prevail, we can conceive of, for instance, calculation without a calculator, acceleration without a car, or even education without a school. Musealization, then, exists beyond the museum. It is the subjective experience that makes the theme park, not the attractions by themselves. It is the subject reflected in the distorted mirror who is experiencing the distortion.

Just as the hammer does not ‘impose’ the hitting of the nail, museums do not impose musealization. In fact, museums are the mediators and not the main actors of this process; they participate in the action, but they cannot configure, in any conceivable way, the sole subject of museology.

Thus, the study of museum performances intends to reach realization of the fact that objects as well as subjects *are made*. Objects.Subjects.Reality. Social categories constructed in the museum performance instead of absolute truths constitutive of this institution. Masks that museums enact in a specific moment of our history. Museology, as a social science, cannot be limited to them in order to define its field of study.

The museum as theme park: museology, exploring reflexive experiences

What is most telling about a theme park performance is how it responds to the audiences’ needs to escape reality and individual demand to experience the ‘self’ in a different state. In general, spectators are very aware of the moment when a performance takes off. When the performance begins, and you are inside the known limits of ‘fantasyland’, a presence manifests itself. Something has ‘happened’. The performers have touched or moved the audience, and some kind of collaboration, a collective special theatrical life, is born. Through this collaborative force that is instated when the audience believes in the performance of the performer, the audience is *transported* to the new world created with the performer.

In the performance, once the audience crosses the gates of the theme park or reaches a state of *museality*, the boundaries between staged reality and the social order disappear, as well as the constructed limits that separate the subject from the object. The ultimate goal of museum performance is liberating the audience from its regular ties to reality and transforming the subject in the object of its own reflection. Suppressing the separation predicted in the *cogito*, the performance creates a brand-new type of relation for the ‘self’ in the musealized stage.

As in the theme park, museum visitors are taken to a level of reality where they are allowed to “play” with the many elements present, with the visitor acting him/herself as one of the elements being “played” in the reflexive experience. Play, which in English can relate to a game or dance, also has the sense of an “exercise of oneself” (Turner, 1982, p. 33). Play in ritual or theater manifests itself through work and by actors involved in a shared activity. In museums, when the audience becomes the actors, the performance of the selves involved in a shared experience results in the expression of true

identities – and in the notion that identities are also practical categories. At the same time, in a theatrical act or “social drama” (Turner, 1988), the individual is at once himself and another. The individual is divided between being and not-being, in a reflexive and subjective experience.

As we have demonstrated, the breach between subject and object, human and non-human, society and heritage, etc., is indeed an artificial one, and museums cannot be considered to be reduced to this traditional relation of “man” to “reality”. That is because, as anthropology has confirmed in several studies, persons can be things and things can be persons in many different contexts, situations, and performances. The present paper is an invitation for museology researchers to think of museums, things, concepts, and experiences as if they were deeply bound to persons, subjects, and societies, because in fact they are.

Redirecting museology towards *metamuseology*: the configuration of a reflexive human science

In 1983, at the ICOFOM annual symposium in London, John Hodge exclaimed:

What we need is someone to outline a theory in finite terms which we all understand. Its philosophy, its statement of propositions used as principles of explanation for phenomena etc. needs to be clearly stated with concrete examples so that there is no misunderstanding of what is meant. Only then will we be able to have progressive discussion. (Hodge, 1983, p. 61)

In the very moment when social sciences are questioning their fundamental principles and confronted with the ‘truth’ that there are no ‘truths’ in empirical studies, thinkers inside ICOFOM seemed to claim a single truth capable of providing an immediate systematic theory for museology.

According to Joanna Overing (1985), who explores the recent crisis of faith in philosophy over the empiricist’s paradigm of rationality, within systematically analytical studies, the idea of a “single world” is being challenged. Turning to look at themselves and their own actions, social scientists reveal that the world – from the perspective of our knowledge of it – is how we view it through the paradigms we create. These researchers, differing from philosophers who are not usually asking social questions, are asking about “*moral universes*” – in Overing’s terms – their basic duty being to understand the intentions and objectives of actors within particular social worlds (Overing, 1985, p. 2). Contrary to modern Western ‘science’ and the attendant proposition that truth is amoral and facts are autonomous from value, facts and truths can be analyzed as being tied to different sets of social, moral, and political values. Thus, all truths have their moral aspect; to hope to find universal and independent criteria for truth has proven to be an unreachable goal that suits only thinkers who are still defending their control over reality construction.

The cognitive powers of Western thought in controlling and knowing the material world are at the base for museums, but they cannot be the foundation of contemporary museology. Gradually, what is being perceived with the possibility of a ‘science of the science’ is the fact that Rationality works as a limiting tool for the analytical viewpoint

over the Others and especially over him/herself. The Western fetishism for epistemological objects such as 'reason', 'truth', and 'knowledge' – or even the 'museum' – is little by little demolishing the ways we relate to moralities and epistemologies different from our own.

Throughout most of the 20th century, in the early years of the development of museology around the world, the thinkers of the 'museum' were not separated from their supposed subject of study. Museum professionals were the ones conceiving 'museology'. The separation between researchers and their subject of study – which is usually constructed by specific methods – has not been fully accomplished in museology, and maybe still isn't to this day. Perhaps the reason we are still unable to define the subject of museology is that we are so close to museums we remain their faithful hostages.

What differentiates, though, 'museology' from 'museum theory' or 'museum studies' is the desire of the first to be acknowledged as the systematic approach in the context in which this term is being used. In order for that to happen, a methodological distance must be created between researchers and their subject of study. The theory of museology produced in the past forty years is neither a product of museum practice nor the mere expression of a few philosophers' ideas disseminated from Eastern Europe. In fact, the theory is the result of a *reflection* developed by these thinkers confronted with certain museum practices in the different contexts in which they acted.

Methodologically speaking, the agents who make museums, and their agencies, must be studied by the theoreticians and researchers of museology today. Nevertheless, when the same people play both roles – the empirical researcher who is also the museum professional – objective distance will depend on exercising *reflexivity* on his/her own museum practice. Here the *museum* will be clearly separated from the *museological* with the artifice of performance.

The first works on museology, by *ICOFOM* theorists, were just theory and not systematically analytical studies because they consisted of mere reflections – lacking the reflexivity that is, in part, the acknowledgement of performance in the constructed truths. The study of museum performance today allows any analytical researcher to see him/herself as an actor on the stage of the museum representations. Such *reflexivity* in the making of social science may reveal itself to be a process that includes self-knowledge and the revision of paradigms.

Over the years, the invention of unilateral relations or realities that can be "touched with a finger" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 228) has long been common for social scientists, who preferred to deal with these well-defined concepts instead of with the overall conception of the concepts. In museology, the invention of philosophical truths has caused a series of misunderstandings among theorists. This confusion was due to the limited empirical reality behind the associations considered by those who made these assumptions.

After the early 1980s and the first superficial attempts to summarize a theory for museology, some authors (Teather, 1983; van Mensch, 1992) pointed to a more realistic solution for a methodical museology. *Research* was the answer. The truth of the matter is that

no philosophical 'magic' would create a social 'science' or its subject without a considerable amount of empirical and theoretical research.

What substantially prevents the existence of a 'science' called 'museology' remains the fact that its theoretical production and methods are marked by the Cartesian idea of the 'museum', designed – as a metaphor and literally – in the rationalist system of knowledge fabricated in Western Modernity. In this 'museum' that organized objects and ideas – or ideas as objects – *things* were created to be put on the shelves of knowledge in order to be observed, organized, counted, weighed, and measured by the encyclopedic empiricist. *Man* was very much separated from *things*, and things were fully dominated as passive objects in the gnosiological relationship.

Museology, born in the interior of this kind of museums, and conceived by the professionals working in these institutions, has inherited their dogmas. For subjects that strongly desire to control their own part of reality – as with human sciences in general – the notion according to which human beings invent their own reality is debated with certain difficulty even today.

The discussion of a specific method for museology raises two fundamental questions: first, "how does museology mold the practice?" and second, "how does the practice mold museology?" Certainly, museology cannot be the discipline that studies the limited and undefined universe of the museum. The very concept of the 'museum' used to explain heterogeneous experiences, to which theorists refer as a "phenomenon" related to the terms "museology", "museography", "theory of museum", "museistic" (Stránský, 1980, p. 43), and so on ..., is flagrantly an artifice of method, created to justify the existence of an empirical museology.

Beyond this tautological conception, the practice available for actual research escapes any kind of 'museum' characterization. By considering the study of the mediations that formalize the wide process of musealization – which may be mistaken for the process of declaring heritage, when we accept the viewpoint of a "*heritology*" – we then have a concrete empirical field for museology.

It is thus clear that an effective social science may conceive musealization as an agency and all the persons and objects involved in it as agents. To find the tracing of these associations would be the work of the museologist (who is not the museum professional but the *social scientist*). As the epistemologist who thinks about "the meaning of meaning", or the psychologist who thinks about how people think, the museologist can be seen as the one who thinks about the museological "thinking" – and in this sense Stránský wouldn't be wrong for suggesting the existence of "meta-theoretical problems" for this "science" (Stránský, 1980, p. 44). The clear path to a reflexive museology would be, in our perspective, understanding *metamuseology* as the *consciousness of museology*, working in a philosophical way to pose museological questions and to interrogate the different realities where 'musealization' (whatever it is called) is conceived.

By focusing on the study of performances and associations, this area of study becomes less attached to the 'museum' as an absolute object and more concerned with the *construction of museums' representations*. The museum performance would work as a

measurement or standard representation to be studied in the different contexts in which it is evoked, from the Louvre to the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, which share a belief in this historically idealized categorization.

If the study of museology *is* museology, thus the classical rationalist pretension of the museum's absolute objectivity must be left aside, making space for a relative objectivity that considers the museum representation according to the agents' agencies. Furthermore, it is mandatory to accept that the museum as a philosophical entity depends on the specific categories and institutions from the West, and that universalization of the concept is not realistic. From the gnosiological paradigm introduced by Stránský and Gregorová, we depart towards a *reflexive* paradigm that supposes the re-evaluation of the very constitution of paradigms.

As other human sciences, museology must be reassembled as a subject of mediations in order to act on the transition between its own representations and the representations of the actors it studies.

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Abstract

This paper discusses the definition of museology as a form of information science and analyzes the accepted definitions for museological study. It intends to point out some inconsistencies in the philosophical *Stranskyan* museology in order to reformulate the notion of its subject of study. This debate will require revision of a philosophical perspective through a sociological viewpoint in light of the actor-network theory proposed by Bruno Latour. Finally, the paper maintains that the man-reality relation forged in the West as a hegemonic museum performance should not define museology's subject. Otherwise, it should consider all kinds of possible associations among the different roles that are played, evolving from a *corpus* of reflections on the museum to a reflexive museology that has musealization in the center of its studies.

Keywords: Museum, Museology, Information sciences, Reflexivity, Performance.

Resumen

El artículo discute la definición de la museología como una ciencia de la información y analiza las definiciones conocidas del objeto de estudio museológico. El texto se propone a marcar algunas de las inconsistencias en la museología filosófica *stranskiana* en la búsqueda de reformular la noción del suyo objeto de estudio. Ese debate exigirá una revisión en esa abordaje filosófica por medio de un punto de vista sociológico teniendo en cuenta la teoría actor-rede propuesta por Bruno Latour. Finalmente, el artículo aboga que la relación hombre-realidad construida en el Occidente como una performance museal hegemónica no debe servir para definir el objeto de estudio de la museología. Por el contrario, la definición debe considerar todos los tipos de asociaciones entre los diferentes papeles interpretados, avanzando de un *corpus* de reflexiones sobre el museo para la museología reflexiva que tiene la musealización en el centro de los suyos estudios.

Palabras clave: Museo, Museología, Ciencias de la información, Reflexividad, Performance.