European Museums in an Age of Migrations

From 2011-03-01 to 2015-02-28, closed project | MELA Website

Objective

“Migration” is a key word that indicates a complex condition of contemporary society, in which mobility doesn’t only pertain to people, but to objects, information and knowledge too. Hence, the “age of migrations” that MeLa adopts as its framework reflects a set of global processes that do not only involve the transnationalization of labor, but also the refashioning of the cultural and political spheres under the impact of today’s global mobility. In this context, the main objective of MeLa is to define innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of the contemporary processes of globalization, mobility and migration. To succeed in its intentions MeLa will devise strategies for museums to enhance the European cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and turn it into an effective agent of shared forms of citizenship and identity building. At the core of the MeLa research, in fact, lies the idea that shared values, memories and identities can drive a change in European museums and turn them into crucial venues for the contemporary age of migrations. This process implies a redefinition of the museums’ ways of organizing and representing their collections in order to encompass a complex variety of voices and subjects. This strategy brings out the concepts of multiplicity (of voices, points of view, theories, etc.) and hybridity (of forms and physical expressions in architecture and exhibition settings) that operate in contemporary culture, and exploits them to create truly democratic forms of European citizenship.

On an operative level, MeLa is characterized by an innovative research methodology that entails the use of both traditional and experimental research tools, like brainstorming sessions, “research by art” and “research by design” activities. The project involves nine European partners with different yet complementary fields of expertise: five universities, two museums, a research institute and a small company—they will all participate in the research activities with a collaborative approach. Public events and art exhibitions will be organized to provide stimuli to the research activities and share their process findings, bringing together experts from different museums sectors, scholars and artists. Beside resulting in traditional critical reflections, the theories, methodologies and proposals developed by the research will be tested in experimental pilot projects of virtual or real exhibitions. The research findings will finally coalesce into scientific publications and policy briefs for the use of the European Union and the museum community.

(“Mela” is the Sanskrit word for “gathering” or “meeting”; today it is referred to intercultural encounters, intended as opportunities for community building).
Report Summaries

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Subjects

- Education and Training - Social sciences and humanities

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