Die Schau des Fremden

Ausstellungskonzepte zwischen Kunst, Kommerz und Wissenschaft

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INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

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Imagine yourself in a movie. Two scenes. The first frame, a young male dancer, the South Seas (Ill. 1); the second, a group of giraffes, Africa (Ill. 2).

The young dancer looks directly at us, proud, muscles tightened and slim body sweaty from dancing. His commanding gaze and unyielding demeanor put distance between him and us, a feeling heightened by the charcoal make-up that masks his face. And yet we feel attracted. His naked skin shimmers seductively, its soft bronze tone highlighted by the beige color of his vau bast costume (Ill. 1). Readv to perform “Te Vaka,” he will use his body to show us “How the ancestors came to Tokelau, navigating their canoes following sun, moon and stars.” Or so we are told on the website of Germany’s newest exotic resort, the “Tropical Islands Berlin-Brandenburg.”

New frame, second shot, a group of giraffes, Africa (Ill. 2). Against a bright yellow background, the curious animals look around attentively. Their heads twisting and turning, gesturing in all directions, some look at the viewer, some into an unknown distance, while the smaller, younger ones glance intrigued at a red sign hovering above them in a yellow sky: “African Village.” The bright red letters correspond to the orange color of the little elephant whose gigantic ear peeks into view in the lower right hand corner. Dwarfed by his long-legged, long-necked neighbors, the elephant stares straight ahead and ignores an advertising sign that promises an “African bazaar, culinary specialties, music and events, cinema and programs.” Perhaps the poster has already transported the elephant into an imagined Africa, has transported the gray pachyderm out of the Augsburg Zoo, where the animal actually awaits us – as did the African Village as well for a short time.

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1 Vau: Fiji term for the Hibiscus tiliaceus, also called tree or beach hibiscus; in French, Purau; see Book Islands Biodiversity Website homepage, launched in March 2003 and completely re-modeled in March 2005. For the resort, see http://www.my-tropical-islands.com/engl/; for the resort’s show “Call of the South Sea,” http://www.my-tropical-islands.com/ruf-der-suedsee/polynesien-e.htm. The costumes used in the performance seem to mix different Island traditions as customary in today’s tourist industry. I want to thank Dr. Markus Schindlbeck, curator at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, for this information. Unless otherwise indicated, all websites were last accessed July 30, 2005.

2 The African Village was a four-day fair held in the Augsburg Zoo and organized by max-Vita GmbH, June 9–12, 2005; for the program of the fair, see http://www.maxvita.org/
Cordula Grewe

Looking at these two stills, a shockwave of associations flashes by, images of adventure and lighthearted leisure time, of untamed nature and “primitive” cultures, of wild animals and tribal villages, associations made up from movies and advertisements, novels and news reports, associations that are both old and new, but always embedded in a long history of colonialism, collect-

III. 1 Dancer at the Show “The Call of the South Sea” (Mila Satia), website image from Tropical Islands Berlin-Brandenburg, 2005 (Courtesy © Tropical Islands)

Looking at these two stills, a shockwave of associations flashes by, images of adventure and lighthearted leisure time, of untamed nature and “primitive” cultures, of wild animals and tribal villages, associations made up from movies and advertisements, novels and news reports, associations that are both old and new, but always embedded in a long history of colonialism, collect-

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Ill. 2 Poster “African Village”, 2005 (Courtesy © maxVita)

The wealth of instantaneously available imagery reproduces the central role that visualization played in the intellectual and ideological processing of Western encounters with non-European societies. Since the early nineteenth century, a broad segment of Europe’s population gained its knowledge, experience, and understanding of these “exotic” societies through the practices of Völkerschauen, circuses, international exhibitions, world fairs (expositions universelles, Weltausstellungen), and, in particular, museums. These venues functioned as key spaces to articulate, communicate, and legitimize economic realities as well as ideological, scientific, and aesthetic assumptions. This close connection between collecting, displaying, and knowledge formation was furthered by the dependence of both museums and the

3 Völkerschau is perhaps best translated as ethnographic show.
emerging fields of anthropology and ethnology on the materiality of collections. Whether regarding human remains, which preoccupied nineteenth-century anthropologists, or objects of human fabrication removed from their original context of use, “the need to know was marked off and limited by the need to have.”\textsuperscript{4} Thus, as Daniel Sherman declared in a 2004 article on the colonial inheritance of French ethnology, “the collecting and display of indigenous objects has proved a stimulating ground for critical reflection on the nexus of imperialism, science, culture, and exchange.”\textsuperscript{5}

This volume is dedicated to such critical reflection, organized around a close examination of the functions, strategies, and discourses producing and produced by the visual articulation of this nexus as display. It combines a historical perspective with an inquiry into current museum practice, uniting historians, art historians, literary scholars, ethnologists, and museum curators. From different angles, both in terms of subject matter and methodology, the essays here explore the intersection of anthropology, museum culture, and art-making, as well as their relationships to mass culture, discipline formation, and the production of knowledge. Drawing a broad line from the 1827 opening of the Egyptian section of the Louvre Museum to the foundation of the Musée du Quai Branly, scheduled to be inaugurated in the summer of 2006, this volume as a whole seeks to map out underlying structures that continue to shape contemporary thinking and rhetoric. In so doing, it provides a forum to discuss strategies to reform and ultimately alter these structures. Beginning with an analysis of the Tropical Islands (opened in 2004) and the 2005 controversy over the African Village fair in the Augsburg Zoo, this introduction addresses some of the overarching issues further developed in the individual essays.

FROM THE “TROPICAL ISLANDS” TO THE “AFRICAN VILLAGE”: EXOTIC STEREOTYPES IN CONTEMPORARY GERMANY

As early as 1770, if we follow Gabriele Dübeck’s argument, European culture had produced a dualistic, dichotomous image of the South Seas that henceforth remained firmly embedded in its imaginary: the South Seas as paradise or hell, and its inhabitants as “noble” or “ignoble” savages.\textsuperscript{6} The latter were associated with cannibalism, a propensity toward tribal feud, head-hunting and human sacrifice; the former, with a life in paradisiacal abundance. The Western imagina-


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 674.

\textsuperscript{6} Gabriele Dübeck, ‘Samoa’ als insziniertes Paradies: Völkerausstellungen um 1900 und die Tradition der populären Südseeeliteratur, in this volume.
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...tion conjured up Tahiti as the mythical Island of Cythera, a myth that rested on images of harmony between man and nature, promiscuity and sexual freedom, and the notion of a world in which the community of goods prevented the development of social hierarchies. In the next century, as Dürbeck shows, these two images served as stable fixtures in the discussion of the South Seas, where-by emphasis shifted back and forth between paradise and hell without, however, modifying the basic figure of these stereotypes. The image of the young dancer (Ill. 1) on the Tropical Islands website picks up where Dürbeck leaves off and extends her story into the twenty-first century. For anybody versed in these stereotypes and the postcolonial critique of them, it is exasperating that the mythical South Seas continues to be evoked routinely.

Western longing is the essence of the Tropical Islands, as the text accompanying the image of the young dancer, tells us: The photo embodies “many of our longings – the dream of the unencumbered life, of white beaches, clear water and beautiful, friendly people,” all features that belong “inseparably to our idea of Tropical Islands.” This is at least the hope of the organizers. Accordingly, the dancer, nineteen-year old Mila Satia, remains anonymous on the website. He is but an exotic figure who appears as our guide to a non-Western paradise that now, conveniently, can be found not only on the other side of the globe but also right on the doorstep of Germany’s once-again capital. What could be more inviting, the program asks, than being transported to the South Pacific to watch the graceful dances and “swiveling hips” of the Polynesians, only “rarely seen in Europe”?

By expressing admiration for the diversity of Polynesian cultures and asserting that many of the performers are students, the program makes a weak gesture to offset the colonial stereotypes it so openly exploits. It also emphasizes the support the show received from the government of Samoa, suggesting legitimacy as well as authenticity. Hence, the eighty Samoan dancers and musicians who perform in the resort are meant to “bring an authentic South Sea feeling” to the German public. In the context of the resort, authenticity becomes reduced to a set of tropes that play a crucial part in constructing a fantasy world of pure leisure, relaxation, and lightheartedness for potential customers. The mechanism of this fantasy construction is regulated by the degree of saturation deemed necessary to produce a convincing phantasmagoria. In the Tropical Islands Resort, this drive toward saturation finds an expression in the haphazard amassing of a cultural hodgepodge, following the device: the more the merrier. Thus, the visitor is presented with a juxtaposition of a Borneo Longhouse, Sa-

7 I am grateful for the extensive information provided by Alexander Hess, Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Tropical Islands Management GmbH, Tropical-Islands-Allee 1, 15910 Krausnick, Germany. Quotations are taken from the official announcements issued by the Tropical Islands Resort or from the resort’s website.
8 Alexander Hess gave the name of the dancer in an email to the author sent on June 8, 2005.
9 In 1997, West Samoa, an independent nation since 1962 and UN member state since 1976, amended its constitution to change the country’s name to Samoa.
moa fales, Kenyan clay huts, and Thai architecture, all compressed in closest proximity around food courts, swimming pools, and an area of tropical plants. To set off the potentially disorienting effects of such an amalgam of architectural forms, this theme park of world cultures presents “original” structures, imported from their indigenous countries and reassembled – or, in the case of the clay huts, constructed *in situ* – with traditional materials and techniques by craftsmen native to the buildings’ homelands. Against the background of tropical vegetation, the individual buildings become a series of unpopulated dioramas. Their inhabitant, the paying consumer, thus experiences what Eric Ames has called “safe spaces of alterity.”

Overall, the website, show programs, and resort layout employ just enough specialized knowledge that they go beyond a Disneyland concept of an exoticism of mere outer form. Yet they also preclude true expertise. When asked for information about the picture of the dancer, the resort’s press department described him simply as “a Fiji warrior” with war paint, adding that “the inhabitants of the Fiji Islands are perfect hosts and entertainers. If it were possible, life would consist for them only in festivals, sport, and games.” A follow-up request for more ethnographic detail received the response “Unfortunately, I cannot get hold of more information about that.”

In contrast to the money and attention put into the buildings’ material origins, educational instruction is not part of the business plan. It is obviously not deemed necessary for the production of an “authentic feeling” and therefore does not serve the enterprise’s main goal: to attract paying tourists to the Niederlausitz, Berlin’s economically weak hinterland. Instead, the team of Colin Au, the resort’s Malaysia-based creative father, fully subscribes to an unabashed use of exoticism’s typecast allure. “For a long time,” Tropical Islands Resort states, “these far-away island paradises have nurtured the fantasy of Europeans and their imagination of life in paradise. The indigenous peoples of these distant paradise islands are renowned for being exceptionally friendly and welcoming – as well as for describing themselves as the happiest people in the world.” Do tourists, one wonders, ever read the news?

Even a quick consultation of the website of the Australian Government’s Overseas Aid program shows us how problematic if not simply false such proclamations of eternal happiness are. Samoa is prone to cyclones, which caused immense damage and severe economic setbacks in 1990, 1991, and 2004. “With slowing economic growth, an increasing population and a deter-

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11 Author’s email communication with Alexander Hess, June 9, 2005.
12 Born in 1949 in Telok Intan, Malaysia, Colin Au studied chemistry engineering and graduated from the University of Birmingham, Great Britain, in 1972; he then pursued an MBA at the Harvard Business School, graduating in 1974. After working for Exxon Chemical (now ExxonMobile), Au entered the resort business in 1978 and emerged as one of the industry’s leading personalities. His holiday resort and casino projects in-
between Art, Artifact, and Attraction

oration of traditional cultural obligations, Samoa is challenged to meet its development needs. Approximately 20 per cent of Samoans are estimated to be living below the basic needs poverty line... and 8 per cent below the food poverty line.” Moreover, health care services are poor, obesity is endemic, and lifestyle diseases – particularly Type II diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension – are increasingly prevalent. Does this make for a carefree life? One could say much more about this, but in the context of this volume, I want to highlight two ideological aspects that make this invocation of two-hundred-year old stereotypes so objectionable: First, it assumes and tries to ensure that these fantasies are still operative. Second, its rhetoric sits squarely within a colonial discourse that rapidly developed with Bougainville’s 1771 travel log *Voyage autour du monde* and Captain Cook’s 1773 discovery of the Pacific Islands that now carry his name.

With its mixture of commerce and exoticism, stereotyping and technical prowess, alterity and modern consumerism, the resort’s capitalist logic inevitably – even if only involuntarily – perpetuates strategies first established by its colonial forbearers: world fairs, *Völkerschauen*, and “the pygmy in the zoo.” Lately, these associations have further been strengthened by adding a Ferris wheel. This popular attraction, invented by the Pittsburgh engineer of the same name, was first introduced at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which celebrated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of America. The Ferris wheel at the Tropical Islands Resort allows the visitor to rise above the amalgam of world cultures and marvel at the gigantic size of its shell, a 66,000 square-meter structure formerly used as aircraft hangar. A mammoth edifice, the hangar would easily accommodate New York’s 93-meter-high Statue of Liberty. The organizers never tire of highlighting the technical achievements that made this Berlin South Pacific possible; just as with world fairs, the experience of technical spectacle belongs centrally to the spirit of the Tropical Islands. This is but one example how tourism, untainted by modern postcolonial critique, unabashedly plays with the yearning for a “place in the sun” include the Adelaide Casino in South Australia, the Burswood Resort & Casino in Perth, West Australia, and the Foxwoods Resort and Casino in Connecticut, USA, which was mentioned in the Guinness book of the records as the largest entertainment place in the world. Mr. Au initiated also the enterprise Star Cruises, the prominent cruise line in the Asian-Pacific area, which later took over the Norwegian Cruise Lines operating in the USA. Colin Au holds 25 percent of the Tropical Islands shares; the other 75 percent are owned by the Malaysian firm Tanjong PLC (www.tanjongplc.com).

15 The hangar is 360 meters (1,181 feet) long, 210 meters (689 feet) wide and 107 meters (351 feet) high.
like that which Emperor Wilhelm II felt so proud to have conquered in 1901.16

CONTESTED SPACES: DISPLAY AS PROXY

Today, such references no longer escape contestation. Minorities, once deemed only subjects, not citizens,17 speak out against stereotypes that, formed in the era of colonialism and imperialism, continue to carry racist connotations. The controversy surrounding the Augsburg African Village vividly illustrates the issues at stake in such protest. The assertion of a voice has also marked the reform and renegotiation of museum displays, as “stakeholders once left behind after their objects were brought to the metropole have mobilized themselves. They are pressuring museums to repatriate their patrimony.”18 In the fight of minorities and formerly colonized people for social, legal, and cultural equality, museums, as several of this volume’s essays show, have become important battlefields, as objects are “proxies for people”19 and launching points for identity politics. With more social groups gaining legal rights, new voices are claiming participation in the production of exhibitions’ meaning.

The Tropical Islands, a massive South Sea bubble that towers over the thinly populated Brandenburg forest, has so far provoked little political discussion in Germany. The same cannot be said for the 2005 African festival in the Augsburg Zoo, which sparked a controversy that drew fuel from broader German debates about issues of multiculturalism, the formation of so-called parallel societies, and questions of cultural integration. With 600,000 visitors per year, the Augsburg Zoo ranks among the best-attended cultural institutions in its region. The zoo participates in a preservationist breeding program for ibexes, mountain goats, and amur leopards. Its highlight is a three-hectare Africa panorama, which houses Baringo giraffes (also known as Rothschild or Uganda giraffes), Watusi cattle, ostriches, and Grevy’s zebras.20 This panorama seemed an ideal background for the type of African festival that Medhat Abdelati, an Egyptian-born businessman, has been staging with great success in Austria and Germany. On the website of Abdelati’s company, maxVita, these “African Days” are described

16 “In spite of the fact that we have no such fleet as we should have, we have conquered for ourselves a place in the sun.” Wilhelm II, Speech to the North German Regatta Association, 1901, in: Christian Friedrich Gauss, The German Emperor as Shown in His Public Utterances, New York 1915, pp.181–83.
17 Nélia Dias, ‘What’s in a Name?’ Anthropology, Museums, and Values, 1827–2006, in this volume.
19 Ibid.
As “Veranstaltungen im Kulturbereich” (cultural events) and are presented side by side with listings for design and crafts shows, a Mediterranean festival, and the 2005 Christmas market in the Prater.21 The program of maxVita’s African festivals combines the selling of traditional and contemporary African products with music, dance, and presentations from Africa and the African diasporas.22 The events also function as platforms for aid organizations such as the Förderverein Afrika Kultur München e.V.23 The success of maxVita’s fairs proved compelling to Augsburg Zoo director Barbara Jantschke, who values mass entertainment as a means to boost the zoo’s attractiveness.24

Even before it opened on June 9, 2005, the fair prompted a fierce reaction. European black communities protested angrily, echoing the concerns they had raised about the neo-colonial and racist implications of the 2002 exhibition of a pygmy village in Yvoir, Belgium.25 In an open letter dated May 16, 2005, members of the German black community highlighted the historical dimensions of staging African culture in zoos. They depicted the event as reproducing the “relationship of the colonial gaze, in which black people can be observed as exotic objects, as non- or subhumans existing in intimate unity with the animal world in an apparently timeless village life.”26 The event’s catchy title, “African Village,” certainly evoked associations with Völkerschauen and world fairs. By subsuming the entire African continent under the image of a single savannah

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21 http://www.maxvita.org/index.htm. The company also plans to organize events about health-related issues, addressing themes such as healthy diet and depression, beauty surgery, alternative medicine, and civilization illnesses.


26 Letter to Barbara Jantschke, May 16, 2005, from Peggy Piesche (Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaftlerin, Black European Studies, Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz), Nicola Lauré al-Samarai (Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaftlerin, TU Berlin), Tahir Della (Vorstand ISD-Bund e.V. / München), Jasmin Eding (Vorstand ADEFRA e.V. / München); the letter has been posted on many websites, for example, http://www.etuxx.com/diskussionen/foo319.php3.
village, the title erased the event’s claim to be a multifaceted presentation of African and Africa-related products and cultures both past and present. Instead, it tapped into prefabricated fantasies long propagated within literature, visual culture, and, in particular, movies: visions of bare-breasted women and painted male bodies, of feet stomping in the hallucinatory rhythm of wild drum beats, of sexual tension stirred up like the hot clouds of dust hovering over the scene.

Inevitably, the African Village poster taps into the same pool of colonial fantasies that modern advertising keeps unscrupulously exploiting. It shares the aesthetic and ideology of promotions such as the concurrent campaign for a scavenger hunt launched by the battery company Varta in the summer of 2005 (Ill. 3). Set in the South African province of Mpumalanga, the ad features the gigantic iris of a single eye whose retina mirrors an African landscape. From the black pool of the pupil, the long neck of a giraffe protrudes, facing the viewer frontally. Its head is framed by a pair of gigantic Varta batteries, hovering in mid-air, and the disembodied head of an African, whose harsh features are tightened in a scary grimace, full of anger or perhaps contempt. The man’s elongated neck, adorned with ring after ring of shiny copper bands, projects through two tire-like loops whose colors match the bright red and blue of the Varta batteries. Africa, the advertisement suggests, equals adventure, equals raw primal nature. Yet the dangers of the bush, the advertisement promises at the same time, can and will be conquered by modern technology, a technology given to the white participants who appear inside of the postcard fold-out, available in
local supermarkets, that urges us to “Apply Now.” Pitched against a bright orange background, the logo floats as a gleaming sun above the black silhouette of an African landscape. Small black figures, equipped with spears and shields, suggest a tribal gathering. On the inside page of the leaflet, happy young Caucasians drive Range rovers, load mobile phones with new batteries, or stare through binoculars at the silhouettes of trees, animals, and indigenous people. Advertisements such as this resonate with the arguments advanced against the zoological location of the African Village, which its opponents interpret as an expression of the “alarming, unbroken repression of historical continuities, whereby the gobbling up of allegedly exotic places and people can be renewed again and again.”

The vehemence of the objections to the African Village took the zoo’s director by surprise. Involuntarily but tellingly, her first reaction affirmed the critics’ apprehensions. “These days,” Jantschke insisted, “African culture and products should be brought closer to people.”

Naturally, colored Africans manage these, and eagerly so – we have more demands for stands than we could satisfy.... This event should in contrast foster tolerance and understanding among peoples [Völkerverständigung] and bring the Augsburgers closer to African culture. You can be assured that there was no planning failure.... For I think that the Augsburg Zoo is precisely the right place in order to mediate the atmosphere of the exotic.

For Jantschke, skin color determines the vendors’ Africanness and thereby the fair’s legitimacy. From an economic perspective, she then justifies the sphere of exoticism and otherness as the ideal background to attract visitors and assure commercial success. While the second point is undoubtedly true, the first part of her line of reasoning is flawed on two accounts. First, it fails to distinguish adequately between the cultural and the commercial. And second, it ignores the potency and significance of names, images, and discourses as carriers of complex and deeply ingrained stereotypes with socio-political meanings. The fair consists not only of the number of booths it hosts, it is also defined by its denomination: It represents what it evokes by its name. With respect to the first point, it seems important to differentiate between the cultural and the commercial, as the African fairs do not aim to present African culture but to sell it. In this sense, the exhibiting vendors are modern business people – like Colin Au, though on a much smaller scale – who sell a commodity, namely “African culture,” that they knowingly package according to the consumer taste of their European audience. The fair itself already presupposes a successful transformation of the cultural multiplicity of the African continent into an easy-to-market product, which erases all inherent conflict, whether among the African constituency itself or in its relationship

27 Ibid.
28 Jantschke’s letter has been posted as an addendum to the letter by Piesche/Lauré al-Samarai/Della/Eding http://www.etuxx.com/diskussionen/foo319.php3.
to the dominant “white” culture. This process of economic acculturation makes use of an astute economic expertise gained through the participation in the global capitalist market economy.\textsuperscript{29} When defenders of the zoo’s fair thus allude to the willingness of blacks to participate in the event, they overlook the clear-headed economic rationale that come to the fore in comments such as those of Senegalese Marieme Dia in an interview with \textit{Süddeutsche Zeitung}: “I display my wares, not myself; I don’t feel that I am an object.” And she adds, “We too have to earn something.”\textsuperscript{30} Similarly, the Samoan government can have little interest in challenging the Tropical Islands Resort’s perpetuation of the myth of the South Seas as paradise, because tourism – which currently accounts for 25 percent of GDP – is a growing and increasingly important factor in the country’s weak economy.\textsuperscript{31} This, however, cannot be the perspective of those who are concerned with the cultural, not mercantile consequences of evoking stereotypes. An assessment of cultural costs and social impact should also be at the core of the institutional thinking of a state-funded organization such as the Augsburg Zoo. Its status as a public institution demands an awareness of its embeddedness in history: History here encompasses not only the story of a particular establishment but extends to the history of the type of institution it represents – the zoo – as well as of the country it belongs to. Yet, the zoo’s head office insists that “80 years” are enough time to return to a state of normalcy that allows them “once again to offer such a thing fully innocuously.”\textsuperscript{32}

What makes the African Village so controversial is first and foremost this historical amnesia. Thus, my first objection is against the denial of historical responsibility so vividly expressed in the event’s location and designation. This brings me to my second objection, an objection to the disregard of the normative function of names and stereotyped images.

Taking her clue from George Stocking’s 1971 essay “What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1837–1871,” Nélia Dias reminds us of the importance of names, denominations, and designations. Far from being irrelevant, designations tell us how things are perceived and classified, and thus constitute fruitful means for historical and cultural analysis, Dias argues in her examination of the changing tags of Paris’ ethnographic museums. In a similar vein, \textit{Der Braune Mob} (The Brown Mob), an “Associ-


\textsuperscript{32} Quoted in Zekri, \textit{Skandal im Zoo}. The “80 years” presumably refer to the end of German imperialism in Africa.

\textsuperscript{33} None of the critics, as far as I can see, spoke out against holding African fairs per se.
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The organization rejects the designation “colored people” as a misleading normalizing euphemism, insisting instead on the term “Black Germans.”

Yvonne Frazier, an Ohio-born classical vocalist and opera singer who now lives and works in Germany, agrees. In the American context, she points out, the designation “black” – like “white” – acknowledges racial and cultural diversity, whereas the term “African American” limits such associations. Ultimately, Frazier objects to the use of such labels per se, for they support existing structures of cultural hegemony by perpetuating the assumption that all those not specifically classified – whether as black or, for that matter, female – are white males.

For Frazier, holding the African Village festival in a zoo attests to an “insidiously dangerous subtle racism,” even if the perpetrators are “often blissfully unaware of their racist actions.” “Racist acts are often defended as pure intentions not meant to demean, therefore dismissing any possibility that they are in fact demeaning,” she pointed out in a protest letter to Rhine McLine, the mayor of Augsburg’s sister-city, Dayton, Ohio. The pursuit of profit blinds enterprises such as Tropical Islands Resort and the African Village, the ethnic backgrounds of the organizers and participants notwithstanding, to the social costs of the thoughtless racism nurtured by the uncritical use of stereotypes.

THE TOURIST WITHIN: ALIENATION, OTHERNESS, AND THE PROMISE OF AUTHENTICITY

The relation of the West to the exotic other has, of course, long been sustained by a romantic yearning for the far away, the pristine, and the untouched as safe-havens from a social reality perceived as confining and suffocating. There is in this impulse a paradoxical combination of escapism and search for the authentic, a kind of flight whose ultimate goal is knowledge of self and world. Western culture has its share of legendary travelers who lost themselves to find themselves. The age of mass tourism continues to fuel this desire, even if it also engenders a dialectic that makes its fulfillment impossible: in the search for authenticity, modern man destroys what he desires.

The tradition of fairs and Völkerschauen are clearly part of this discourse of authenticity, as is the
tourism of the imagination, the “inner tourism” enabled by the inverted act of bringing the “world” to the traveler. Even the rather cartoonish Tropical Islands Resort continually repeats the promise of authenticity. A similar truth seems to weigh equally upon such explicitly commercial ventures and more serious efforts to display otherness: when the tourist exotic is shorn of the “lived” experiences within borrowed contexts that real travel can offer, the burden of the fiction of authenticity must be sustained by objects. And here, we have to ask to what “authenticity” refers. Is it the authenticity of the object or, in commercial contexts, of the product? Or is it rather the client’s possibility of reaching authenticity through the consumption of these objects or products?

Crucial to the success of these discursive strategies is a belief in stable essences, in primal forms of identity that we can unearth if we find the right path to the secret cave of our true treasured self. When objects and artifacts achieve “a second life as heritage,” their display or performance is based on the assumption of an authentic realism; subsequently, they are presented as inclusive, seamless and unproblematic. This is evidenced in such spectacles as the staging of “everyday” Pilgrim life at “Plimoth Plantation” in Plymouth, Massachusetts, or of immigration at Ellis Island: “Destination culture” excludes the ironic and avoids addressing either the question of agency, or the re-created character of the experience. Why, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asks, does the drama of Anglo-European “pilgrim experience” occupy such a privileged place in late-twentieth century America? And who has authorized Ellis Island “to speak for all Americans” through what the New York scholar sees as a cleaned-up, consensual version of a much messier, more complicated story?37 Examining these questions inevitably lays bare the limited, necessarily incomplete nature of the history – as well as of the historical consciousness – that sites such as Ellis Island produce and interpret through their use of material and visual culture.

In her review of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s essay collection Destination Culture, Erika Doss notes Kirschenblatt-Gimblett’s doubts about whether we can ever “really understand another culture’s secrets.”38 That implies we can understand the secrets of our own culture. But can we? Do we possess a full cultural competence vis-à-vis our own society? And what would such fullness comprise? The desire for comprehension evokes what I consider a misguided longing for closure and a completeness of meaning, the possibility of which many of the Romantics were already questioning around 1800. It also presupposes a stability of significations at odds with the dynamics of cultural change inherent in all societies. It reveals a deep-rooted anxiety that open-
endedness might lead to fracture rather than enrichment. Instead of debating what might or might not be authentic, we may perhaps have to accept that these notions are themselves fluid. If this argument is taken seriously, however, and if, simultaneously, the notion of “primitive” cultures as primordial and primal is abandoned, the truth claims of the former “other,” too, must be subject to such relativism. For Maurice Godelier, this insight is crucial for the dialogue between Europeans and non-Europeans. Calling for a partnership between these societies in redesigning ethnographic museums, Godelier insists that one should not stylize what the non-Western societies say about each other and about themselves as some essential “truth.” Their statements, too, need to be contextualized. As in Western societies, the question is: who says what when to whom and why?

THE PARADIGM OF ATTRACTION: MASS SOCIETY AND CONSUMERISM

Having explored the continuities between contemporary theme park projects and earlier spectacles such as world fairs and Völkerschauen, it is time to turn to the differences. One decisive distinction lies in the much stronger connection of the earlier events to scientific research, academic discourse, and discipline formation. While the events of the twenty-first century have continued the tradition of dioramic environments, music festivals, and carnivals, they largely dispense with the elements of trade and industrial fair, art exhibition, and political manifestation central to the nineteenth century. Yet, today’s trend toward pure entertainment can itself be seen as a continuation of certain developments that already marked the nineteenth-century evolution of Völkerschauen. As Gabriele Dürbeck shows for the second half of the nineteenth century, these displays possessed “a ‘pedagogical’ as well as entertaining character.” While this dual educative and entertaining nature led to an initial cooperation of impresarios, ethnologists, and anthropologists, the accent increasingly shifted around 1890 toward a form of commercial entertainment with colonial-propagandistic traits. This process, spanning now two centuries from the decades around 1800 to the opening of the twenty-first century, reduced the encounter with foreign peoples to a popular stereotyping of the other. Ultimately, this led to the rise of the gift shop as the ultimate “destination

39 The case of the world fairs and their development in the twentieth century differs, of course, from the evolution of the theme park, but space restrictions preclude a detailed discussion of the modern “expo.” This topic is discussed, for example, in Färber, Weltausstellung als Wissensmodus.

culture.” Without instruction about the cultures displayed, particularly their contemporary reality, the gift shop has become the main focus for the twenty-first-century visitor, who acquires goods instead of knowledge. Anthropology turns into a commodity world, signified blatantly by Anthropologie, a Philadelphia-based retail chain “founded to bring the best of other cultures into our own, with party-style funky flair.”

The necessity in the nineteenth century for these non-traditional exhibition spaces to orient themselves toward a new mass audience fostered, as Alice von Plato and Bärbel Küster show in their contributions to this volume, a fundamental rethinking and far-reaching modernization of curatorial and exhibition practices. In the French context, von Plato argues, the world fairs opened up a space in which new forms of visualizing history could be explored and tested. The emphasis on daily life, so typical in the representation of non-Western people allegedly lacking histories and high cultures, contributed to an increasing recognition of France’s own indigenous traditions and folklore. Certainly, this focus clashed with the fairs’ major objective of presenting France as the prime representative and purveyor of “civilization,” a concept into which the culture populaire did not fit smoothly. Yet the diversified class structure of the world fairs’ customers no longer allowed for an exclusive privileging of the elites as the only component of the country’s patrimoine (culture heritage). Under the pressure of the public’s enthusiasm for exotic displays, exhibition makers such as Frédéric Le Play began to revamp their presentation of European folklore and employed strategies formerly reserved for exhibiting non-Western cultures such as theatrical productions and wax museums. In a paradoxical turn, the popular provided the experimental field for a new scholarly approach that had not yet found a place in the university setting. With its success at the world fair, however, it would subsequently enter academic practice.

Another example for the experimental possibilities opened up by world fairs is the transformation of the Palais des Colonies at the 1897 World Fair in Brussel-Tervuren into what Bärbel Küster calls “a total work of art of the Belgian art nouveau.” In Tervuren, major representatives of this arts and crafts movement received the commission to design the exhibit of Belgium’s main colony. This assignment gave them the opportunity to realize their demand that ethnographic exhibits should be aesthetically pleasing. The artists solved this task by focusing on the decorative qualities of the objects, which they absorbed into a Neo-Baroque design sensibility. The arrangements ornamented the objects as aesthetic patterns, and inscribed them into an aesthetic

41 “The store’s buyers and in-house designers troll bazaars and artisan shops in Europe, India, and the Far East for inspiration, and they adapt or reproduce apparel, accessories, home decor (think platters and comforters, for example), and gifts exclusively in their 20 U.S. stores.” Quoted from Frommer’s, http://www.frommers.com/destinations/philadelphia/829714.html; for the shop, a 1992 offshoot of Urban Outfitters, see www.anthropologie.com.
of affluence and abundance. This treatment of ethnographic objects sprang from an overall decorative commodity aesthetic (Warenästhetik) that, organizing products as ornaments, facilitated a decontextualization of the individual object, whether made for use or worship, whether rudder, spoon or statue, whether agricultural or industrial. Küster locates the success of the exhibition design of Tervuren’s Congo pavilion precisely in its ability to negotiate the Western and the non-Western.

THE ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM TODAY: PROBLEMS – PROJECTS – PROSPECTS

In the Belgian story that Küster relates, the demands of scientists and researchers won out over the new aestheticized approach to ethnographic presentation, which was abandoned when the Musée du Congo Belge was founded in 1910. Leaving aside the rather problematic politics of this museum that eventuated from the transformation of art nouveau exhibition into ethnology museum proper, it is noteworthy that such tensions still exist between attractive fittings, educational purpose and scientific research. At the end of the twentieth century, however, some curators were complaining that the power has shifted once again to the design department. Yet, this is not the only tension that shapes the articulation of ethnographic exhibitions. Another, even more fundamental antagonism has developed between the natural sciences and the humanities, the “culture war” C.P. Snow warned about in The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution (1959). The type of museum that houses ethnographic objects, Enid Schildkrout argues in her article “The Beauty of Science and the Truth of Art: Museum Anthropology at the Crossroads,” already prefigures the type of narrative into which they will be inserted.

For Schildkrout, ethnology has not managed to come into its own in the museum landscape of the United States. Schildkrout identifies the predominant location of anthropology within museums of natural history, an American peculiarity, as a prime reason for the field’s ambiguous and problematic status, because the displays in this museum type have for a long time been dominated by the idea of evolution. These exhibition paradigms had been challenged almost at the outset by Franz Boas. But although Boas influenced many anthropologists working in museums, he ultimately did not succeed in shifting the focus of anthropological displays in natural history museums. Only at the end of the twentieth century attitudes began finally to change as pressure mounted to repatriate the patrimony to those stakeholders whose material culture once was swept away into the display cases of the hegemonic strata of

society. Thus, museum anthropology has increasingly felt burdened by its historic associations with an evolutionary and often racist view of culture. Any rearticulation of this legacy demands a breaking down of the Darwinian, chauvinist logic of earlier dioramas.

Schildkrout adds to this task the stipulation that new exhibition strategies also highlight the multifaceted nature of objects. Labels should not confine them to one specific classification to the detriment of all other possible readings. The Willamette meteorite at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, discussed in detail by Schildkrout, poignantly illustrates the polyvalent character of categories such as art, artifact, religious object, and scientific specimen. A centerpiece of the display in the museum’s Rose Center for Earth and Planetary Science, it is for the astrophysicists a spectacular example of planet formation. For the Clackamas, the meteorite is Tomano-wos, a sacred object, neither art nor artifact, and definitely not a scientific specimen. Under the pressure of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in Oregon, the New York museum finally agreed to call attention to the object’s double meaning within two different discursive systems: science and culture. In my eyes, the new display satisfies neither agenda. Amid a clutter of objects and interactive stations, it provides only piecemeal information about the contrasting views of the meteorite. Nonetheless, the struggle over the interpretation of the meteorite has fulfilled an important function insofar as it has fostered the production of new networks of meaning. Godelier stresses this network-formation as an important and positive effect in his discussion of what he considers overdrawn anxieties and fantasy projections unleashed by repatriation claims. There is no danger, he maintains, that Western museums will suddenly be emptied out, but a great chance to use these moments of contestation for gaining closer contact and deeper mutual understanding.

Accordingly, critical reassessment of ownership – whether cultural or factual – should not aim to establish new claims of exclusive proprietorship that again privilege one particular reading of meaning. Rather, the rearticulation of cultural territories should ideally highlight and unsettle preconceived notions about the relationship between the sciences and the humanities or about otherness and selfhood.

One example of a successful rearticulation of this sort was the exhibition “Body Art: Marks of Identity” held at the American Museum of Natural History in 1999. Through a long history of world fairs, colonial expositions, and circus sideshows, the display of the decorated body – tattoos, scarification, lip plugs, elongated necks and heads – became exclusively associated with non-Western practices and the “primitive,” and traditionally served to define the normalcy and civilization of the West. “Body Art,” in contrast, approached

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44 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Reflections, p. 7.
the topic from a historical, cross-cultural perspective that integrated examples from Asian, African, Australian, American, and European societies. Especially the inclusion of contemporary Western material, which made up at least 20 percent of the exhibition, defined the anthropological experience outside of the classical categories of “us” as normal and “them” as strange.

The programmatic disruption of prevalent expectations about “other” and “self” has also guided the reorganization of the ethnographic exhibits in Berlin’s Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Museum of European Cultures). Founded in 1999, the new museum brought together the European collections of the Ethnological Museum (founded 1873) and the Museum of Folklore (1889). The process of consolidating, redistributing and renaming Berlin’s ethnographic collections mirrors the ideological underpinnings of Völkerkunde (ethnography) and Volkskunde (folklore) that marked German intellectual culture since the late nineteenth century. Arguing against this tradition, the museum’s vice director, Elisabeth Tietmeyer, has supported a fusion of these different scholarly and disciplinary approaches to guide the new museum’s work and exhibition practice. The use of the plural, that is, of “European cultures,” in the museum’s name implies not only the diversity of each country’s or nation’s cultural expression but also the need to take into account their interweaving, interdependency, and cross-fertilization. As an example for the new approach taken by the Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Tietmeyer offers the concept of the museum’s inaugural exhibition Kulturkontakte in Europa: Faszination Bild (“Cultural Contacts in Europe: The Fascination of the Image”) that was on display from June 1999 to April 2005. Instead of focusing on individual artworks, or employing traditional categories such as art versus artifact, this installation highlighted the cultural function of images, for example, their adoption in daily life, use in religious practice, or magical connotations. Tietmeyer perceives this concept as a call for more interaction between European and non-European collections. To follow a conclusion reached by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the issue is not “representation per se, but how difference is structured, spatialized, and temporalized, inside, outside, and across disciplines, institutions, collections, exhibitions, and stakeholders.”

**DISPLAY STRATEGIES: OBJECT VERSUS NARRATIVE?**

But how can difference be displayed? How can a display convey a more complex message? How can audiences be encouraged to engage with more challenging displays? And, finally, what status should and could objects themselves assume in this project?

Experience has taught us that the war between the natural sciences and the humanities shapes not only intellectual but also visual expectations. Exhi-
Exhibition strategies are for the most part institutionally defined according to knowledge paradigms: from art, science, and history museums to the many kinds of special interest museums, each type of museum is already embedded in a fixed ideological structure that determines the visual mediation of its collection. Enid Schildkrout illustrates this point by quoting an advertisement for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which entices its members to use their membership discount cards “at museums when you think art; at concert halls when you think music, at learning centers when you think science.” This understanding of science, history – or, for that matter, children’s – museums as “learning centers” replaces object-orientation with conceptual approaches: It favors sequential “narrative” media, such as video or computer-based interactive programs, or textual media such as labels, wall-texts, diagrams, timelines, etc. over material culture.

This dematerialization, so to speak, of exhibition spaces represents the diametric opposite to the object-based epistemology that dominated in America’s Gilded Age. As Steven Conn argues, “the intellectual architecture used to build the museums of the late nineteenth century was predicated on the assumption that objects could tell stories ‘to the untrained observer.’” From this perspective, objects were seen – at least as much as texts – as sources of knowledge and meaning.47 Yet even in that heyday of an object-based epistemology, objects began to lose their priority over texts, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues in her exploration of late nineteenth-century museum settings. The shift in outlook is illustrated by the example of historian of science and ichthyologist George Brown Goode (1851–1896). From 1887 until his death, Goode was the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and in charge of the National Museum. He privileged the instructional value of labels while relegating the objects to an auxiliary role of illustration. For him, “an efficient educational museum may be described as a collection of instructive labels, each illustrated by a well-selected specimen.”48 This approach was ultimately to lead to today’s museums without collections and exhibitions without objects, such as the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel-Aviv and the many so-called virtual museums online. They remind us that the term museum, well before it designated the public institution as we know it from the nineteenth century, could be applied to a book, a cabinet, or a room.49 Yet, is the contemporary tendency to represent “culture” instead of displaying “objects” a viable alternative for museums of mankind broadly conceived?

48 On Goode, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Destination Culture, p. 30ff., quote p. 31.
The museum practitioners who have contributed to this volume answer this question in the negative; for them, the object-oriented context remains central, whether in the archive or the exhibition. Yet the problem remains of trying to reconcile museographic requirements with the complexity of ethnographic themes, because the presentation of objects always has a double context: the objects’ in situ fabrication and use, on the one hand, and, on the other, a curator’s selection of objects for a museum collection. With this double context in mind, Michel Colardelle proposes three strategies to make ethnographic museums work: first, to base ethnographic museums on long-term educational goals; second, to create a modern ethic based on the materiality of objects; and, third, to unite scientific study with material objects. Their display should take into account what he calls the modern “zapping effect,” which destroys a holistic approach to exhibitions or, to hark back to Schildkrout’s argument, the linearity of the narrative advanced in natural science museums. “Permanent” exhibits thus should be changeable because a museum is a whole whose parts are in constant dialog. If ethnographic museums and musées de société in particular want to survive, they have to present a varied, balanced, and nourishing museological repast to the public. To accomplish this goal, Colardelle advocates a mediation personnalisée or live interpretation of exhibits, which could “un-virtualize” the museum, and teach visitors to “read” objects themselves. Moreover, the necessary outreach to a broad audience has to take the museum beyond its own walls to a larger public. Only when museums are multidisciplinary and public-oriented and combine enjoyment and study, Colardelle maintains, can they realize the agenda of “democratizing” culture against exclusion across class and race lines, attack the academic rejection of material culture as a minor element of cultural systems, and fight the advent of new technologies that displace objects.

ART OR ARTIFACTS?
OBJECTS BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND DESIRE

One commonly chosen way to rethink the ethnographic object is to reclassify it “Art.” From the very beginning, debates about the epistemological status of objects performed a key function in the formation of both anthropology and ethnology as fields of knowledge. Right up to our day, debates about the position of objects – their aura or lack thereof – have been closely tied to overarching definitions of disciplines, inside and outside the academic world. In the nineteenth century, museums contributed greatly to the disciplinary discourse by helping to create the research fields “disciplinary objects,” which, once constituted, served to consolidate and secure the institutionalization of particular branches of learning.50 Andrew Zimmerman vividly illustrates this

50 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Reflections, pp. 2–3.
process in his discussion in this volume of the shift “From Natural Science to Primitive Art.” Focusing on Berlin, Zimmerman sheds light on the ideological framework that allowed objects to be presented as “specimens” in the Berlin Royal Museum of Ethnology (Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde) at the end of the nineteenth century but to become art works in the decades after 1900 and be appropriated as such in Emil Nolde’s work.

The distinction between art and artifact played a central role in anthropologists’ early self-definition as scientists who study nature, i.e. “natural people.” As nature, these people could not possess history, culture, or writing. Nor were they deemed able to make art, as art signified a representational mastery over nature and thus separation from it. From this perspective, “primitive art” had to be an oxymoronic concept. “That the objects of the colonized were not art but rather anthropological objects was not merely a personal aesthetic view of ethnocentric German scientists.” Zimmerman claims. “The primitive art/scientific object binary was rather an opposition that grounded the very possibility of anthropology as a natural science of humanity.” Zimmerman traces the transformation of this view in response to changing economic circumstances. At first, the classification of non-Western objects and societies as “natural” coincided with an exploitation of the colonies as untapped resources. Later, however, colonial authorities began to regard their subjects a potential labor force that needed to be brought under control and trained: colonized peoples thereupon ceased to be timelessly “natural” in the colonizers’ eyes and became “primitive,” which suggested they were capable of progress and advancement. Nolde’s recovery of the primitive was inscribed into this new economic outlook, and, significantly, he entered German New Guinea as part of a “medical hygienic” expedition enlisted to explore ways of improving the indigenous labor force.

With his economic explanation for the shift from static to primitive, Zimmerman focuses on external factors that may be brought into a fruitful dialogue with the internal factors that also contributed to this shift, including theoretical debates advanced by anthropology, ethnology, and art history. This brings to mind the work of Franz Boas and his concept of cultural relativism. In Primitive Art (1927), Boas argued that differences between the production of “primitive” and Western artists were due to constraints imposed by culture rather than any lack of ability, thus redirecting attention from the psychology of the individual to the needs and traditions of the group. Taking both internal and external factors into account allows us to trace the complex interactions and interrelations between the different actors in the story this volume tells.

51 Ibid.
An important moment in this story were the decades between 1900 and World War II, when the reclassification of ethnological material as art guided some of the most progressive minds, whether the Parisian *équipe* of the *Musée d’Ethnographie*, then located in the *Trocadéro*, or the Berlin critic Carl Einstein, who published a series of journalistic articles on the topic in the 1920s. In her essay here on the “apprenticeship” of George Henri Rivière, Nina Gorgus chronicles this important moment of establishing new forms of “ethnomuseology.” She considers the solutions developed by Paul Rivet, George Henri Rivière, and their team as exemplary for subtly balancing the display of non-fine art objects between a valorization of the aesthetic worth of the pieces and their social function. The most pressing task for Rivet and Rivière was to draw together museography and research – the presentation of objects and the production of knowledge – into a *musée-laboratoire*.

The idea of a *musée-laboratoire* also stood at the center of Carl Einstein’s 1926 reflections on the reopening of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology. In these writings, he advocated the collaboration of museum ethnologists with research and teaching facilities “so that visitors can gain an adequate picture of the elements that make up the cultures and the population districts.” Einstein asserted the need for such a “living educational whole,” because the entry of an artwork into the museum meant to him its “natural death” and “the attainment of a shadowy, very limited, that is to say an aesthetic immortality.” This position was the result of an intense occupation with the nature of non-Western objects, which led Einstein, as Uwe Fleckner shows in his contribution to this volume, from an exclusively aesthetic comprehension in his 1915 *Negerplastik* to a more inclusive and interdisciplinary viewpoint in the 1920s that linked ethnological and art-historical methods. Like Rivet and Rivière, Einstein called for a balance between the aestheticism of museum displays that emphasizes the formal beauty of individual artworks and their ethnographic contextualization.

Museums are still struggling to find this balance. The issues at stake in the “ART/artifact” opposition – even after extensive debates in countless exhibition catalogues, books, articles, symposia, and even films – remain central to the newest initiatives in the construction and conceptualization of anthropology museums, *musées de société*, and *Folkloremuseen*. While the “science” model of museum anthropology has come under attack for its implicit

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54 Einstein, *Das Berliner Völkerkunde-Museum*, p. 588.

hierarchies of values, the opposite solution of adopting the museum-of-Western-art model has unleashed equal criticism.56

FROM THE MUSÉE D’ETHNOGRAPHIE DU TROCADÉRO TO THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY

For the fine-arts model for the new African-Amerindian-Pacific wing of the Louvre Museum, the French state decided to adopt the art museums’ “white box”: simple displays of meticulously positioned pristine objects, limited label information and wall text, and theatrical spotlighting in an expansive, architecturally refined space. Following the strategy employed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in its Rockefeller Wing, the Parisian institution highlights the objects’ undeniable formal beauty. In so doing, it encourages the perception – and consumption – of the objects as works of fine art. Consequently, it risks the erasure of the specificity of the non-European material, which is completely absorbed into a Western mold. To counterbalance this threat, Maurice Godelier and his staff created in the Louvre gallery what they call “interpretative rooms,” providing thereby opportunities to study the geographic, religious, and historical circumstances that led to the production of these chefs d’œuvre de l’humanité once stored in the Musée de l’Homme. While critics have rejected the separation of showroom and learning center because, for them, it still privileges display value over the ethnologic, Godelier points out that the mental map of connections that the Louvre team tried to establish extends beyond a dualistic relationship between exhibit and interpretative room. Rather, a CD-ROM expands the interaction between object, ethnographic information, and visitor into a transportable dimension that transcends the spatial experience – and thus spatial confines – of the museum and pluralizes its accessibility. While this solution deserves praise for its didactic possibilities, a gap still remains between aesthetic object and virtual learning tool that needs to be bridged.

In our critical examination of conceptual and design issues, however, we should not lose sight of the factor that rules over their realization: the pragmatic matter of securing funding. As Godelier’s article pointedly shows, critical rethinking becomes moot if political and financial support for implementation are lacking. Godelier’s account of his personal participation in the project of the Musée du Quai Branly thus vividly demonstrates the difficulties of balancing the economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic demands of such an assignment.57

56 Maurice Godelier discusses the arguments against both a treatment of ethnographic objects as “art” and the adoption of a museum display style commonly used for Western art works in his article Die Vision: Einheit von Kunst und Wissenschaft im Musée du Quai Branly, in this volume.

57 Not everybody was satisfied with the balance achieved. In his polemic “Arts premiers in the Louvre,” Raymond Corbey, for example, criticized the path taken by the planning commission as a whole. Assessing critically both the aesthetic approach taken by
To achieve such a balance is the overarching goal of this projet muséologique, to quote Germain Viatte, who was the museum’s directeur du projet muséologie from 1997 until assuming the position of conseiller auprès du Président for “muséographie” in 2005. In his essay in this volume, Viatte outlines the history of the project, which began in 1996 as a collective effort between the Musée de l’Homme and the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie. Viatte’s goal is to create a “dual nature” institution that engages in both research and museographic display. This twofold approach strives to overcome the longstanding tendency to separate natural history, ethnographic, and art collections. In the spirit of the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Musée du Quai Branly aims to create a network based on the collections in their material form and the knowledge they contain and engender. The museum hopes to shape the communication of this knowledge in such a way that it can reach out to a spectrum of recipients, not just the significant constituency of school children; thus, the museum strives for a multidisciplinary and multigenerational presentation. For Viatte, the museum has a duty to recognize and represent the historical significance of each of its particular collections. He believes, moreover, that the Musée du Quai Branly must see its collections as an accessible resource and must address the question of its responsibilities to the heirs of the cultures whose heritages have been transferred to and de-contextualized by the museum. In attempting to do so, the museum understands itself as a space in which contestable knowledge can be shown, thus stimulating a discussion of this knowledge.

For Lorenzo Brutti, this concept is an attempt to square the circle. Describing his own perspective on the project as that of a “participating observer,” Brutti stresses the ambiguities that have arisen from the decision to fuse two of the largest Parisian museums dedicated to non-Western societies. The Branly museum, he reminds the reader, is not and cannot be a “new” museum in the strict sense of the word, and he sees the project suffering from the implicit assumption that it can fuse universalistic and particularistic approaches: the universalistic approach of a certain kind of specialist of non-Western art and the more particularistic view of the anthropologist, who understands material culture as a form of expression of a social organization. The specificity of the French case resides in this very tension between an acknowledgement of cultural specificities and the defense of universalistic tenets. A look at the history of the Parisian scene sheds light on the historical dimension of Brutti’s critique. From the 1880s onward, a continuous friction has characterized the relationship between anthropology and museums in France. It seems hardly coincidental that several ethnographic museums are currently being refurbished or radically transformed.

Kerchache as well as the close ties between the Musée du Quai Branly project and the world of galleries, private collections, and auction houses, Corbey regarded it as unlikely that “the project is or ever will be as resolutely postcolonial as Godelier wishes it to be.” Anthropology Today 16, no. 4, 2000, pp. 3–6; quote p. 6.
In her discussion here of “What’s in a Name? Anthropology, Museums, and Values,” Nélia Dias analyzes the underlying cognitive as well as political and ethical dimensions of Parisian ethnographic museums by examining their changing names. As the debate over the Museum Europäischer Kulturen shows, this issue has international relevance and reality. Dias begins her account with the establishment of the Louvre Museum’s ethnographic sections in 1827 and traces the story of institutional naming from the creation of Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, France’s first ethnographic museum, in 1878 and its redesignation as the Musée de l’Homme in 1937 to its latest reorganization and renaming as the Musée du Quai Branly. These changing designations reflect a succession of agendas, which begin with the aspiration to exhibit “cultural difference,” followed by a notion of “cultural diversity,” and, currently, a stress on “artistic equality.”

To understand this tripartite periodization, Dias guides us back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when French society considered anthropology to be a wide-ranging science, a natural history of mankind that incorporated physical anthropology, prehistoric archaeology, and ethnography. As a result, French anthropological and ethnographic collections constituted, until the 1920s, spaces that presented human difference and, in particular, human inequality. By exposing human remains—skulls, brains, skeletons, and the like—ethnographic and anthropological museums such as the anthropological gallery of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris legitimized racial inequality as well as gender difference. In the 1930s, new trends in anthropology and the questioning of the notion of race resolved this tension. The names of the two museums founded in this period expressed two major trends within the new current of thought: On the one hand, the name Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro expressed the close link between museum and discipline formation, a characteristic trait of the nineteenth-century museum context. By contrast, the name Musée de l’Homme, directed against various articulations of racism, paid tribute to humanistic values by emphasizing the unity of mankind as underlying the diversity of societies and cultures. Then, in 1996, when the French government decided to create a new ethnographic museum, several names were suggested: Musée des Arts Premiers, equating the non-European and the supposedly primordial; Musée des Arts et des Civilisations or Musée de l’Homme, des Arts et des Civilisations, which, Dias argues, implied a sharp distinction between arts and civilizations and left open the question of how far arts could be distinct from culture and civilization. To circumvent the pitfall of a value-laden name, the government ultimately decided in favor of neutrality and chose a name based upon the new museum’s location in Paris.

Yet the decision to produce cultural and artistic equality by emphasizing the objects’ aesthetic appearance carries its own ideological burden. For one thing, as several essays in this volume emphasize, the aestheticization of objects does not necessarily overcome the long-standing exclusion of European collections from ethnographic museums. The Musée du Quai Branly perpetuates this and thus enforces rather than subverts the separation between “us” and “them.” Europe remains a self-contained space left behind at the doorstep of the ethnographic museum, and even if particular exhibitions sometimes succeed in restructuring traditional spatializations of cultural territories and thus of cultural understandings, the institutions that host these shows often lack the flexibility and mobility necessary to integrate these impulses into their permanent exhibits.

At another level, as Nélia Dias argues, the presumed universality of perceptual qualities is far from neutral. It suppresses the historical and cultural nature of human modes of seeing and downplays the significance of time- and site-specific behavior with regard to perception or attention. Neither form nor style nor whatever we consider beauty can transcend culture barriers. Indeed, by encouraging the discovery of affinities between modernist appropriation of non-Western material and “tribal art,” universalism threatens to “confirm the colonial extraction of the tribal work (in the guise of its redemption as art) and [to rehearse] its artistic appropriation into tradition.” This remark by Hal Foster resonates with Brutti’s observation that ethnographic (art) objects, presented aseptically under Plexiglas, are popular with some of the very people who in daily life feel bothered by the presence of members of the cultures that produced them.

In his critique of the show “Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern” held at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1984, Hal Foster scrutinized the mechanism behind the erasure of difference through aesthetic assimilation. “Here,” he states, “universalism is indeed circular, the specular image of the modern seen in the mask of the tribal.” What is at stake ideologically, he asks, “when the ‘magical’ character of tribal work is read (especially by Picasso) into modern art, or when modern values of intentionality, originality, and aesthetic feeling are bestowed upon tribal objects?” An answer to the question might be found in Alfred Gell’s remark that the desire “to see the art of other cultures aesthetically tells us more about our own ideology and its quasi-religious veneration of art objects as aesthetic

61 Lorenzo Brutti, Die Kritik: Ethnographische Betrachtung des Musée du Quai Branly aus der Perspektive eines teilnehmenden Beobachters, in this volume.
62 Foster, The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious, pp. 50–51.
talismans, than it does about these other cultures.\textsuperscript{63} Godelier, on the other hand, sees this quasi-religious, receptive attitude also as an opportunity. Taken as a starting point, it might furbish a dexterous museography with an effective means to lead the visitor into the ethnographic world that forms the objects’ cultural background and socio-political context. Then, the \textit{plaisir des yeux} becomes a \textit{plaisir de l’esprit}.

\section*{ART, ARTIFACT, AND THE AVANT-GARDE: ARTISTIC APPROPRIATIONS OF THE OTHER}

The affinities between “tribal” and modern art claimed by the 1984 MoMA exhibition conceal hegemonic assumptions implicit in the absorption of the non-Western into European and American art. The early avant-garde’s fascination with the former’s primal, purportedly irrational nature and aura of “authenticity” participated in the mainstream “imperialist consciousness of their times, despite their rebellious challenge to bourgeois mores and values.”\textsuperscript{64} The modernist transgression merely reasserted Enlightenment dualist thinking, which posited rationalism, light, and logos against irrationality, darkness, and feeling. “The primitive becomes a figure of our unconscious and outside (a figure constructed in modern art as well as in psychoanalysis and anthropology in the privileged triad of the primitive, the child, and the insane).”\textsuperscript{65}

The entrenchment of the avant-garde in the era’s colonial mindset also manifests itself in the dualistic reworking of the primitive as either the incarnation of a state of grace or a spectacle of savagery. The latter view also determines “The Ethnographic Vision of Max Klinger” that Marsha Morton presents in her article. Objects like the “Slave-Killer” weapon from the Northwest Coast Nootka tribe inspired an imagery that aimed to lay bare modern man’s barbarism, a barbarism that Klinger believed was alive under the thin crust of civilized behavior and social rules. In his prints, the primitive functions as a metaphor for the universality of mankind’s animal instincts. “As a fetishistic recognition-and-disavowal of difference, primitivism involves a misconstruction of the same.”\textsuperscript{66} In this context, it is significant that not only a thorough reading of Darwin, but also the curatorial practices of the emerging anthropological museums shaped Klinger’s attitude.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Forster, \textit{The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} See the online journal Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide, 2/2, special issue: Linda Nochlin and Martha Lucy, eds., \textit{The Darwin Effect: Evolution and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture}, Spring 2003, \url{http://19thc-artworldwide.org/spring_03/}. 
What role, then, did avant-garde intervention play in the collapse of the distinction between primitive art and the object of anthropological natural science, a process visible in Emil Nolde’s work? For Andrew Zimmerman, none; rather, it followed the dissolution of the colonial situation that had allowed anthropologists to create the distinction between art and artifact, between natural and cultural people, in the first place. For others, like Wendy A. Grossman, modernism’s contribution is more complex.

The repercussions of the intense interaction between scholarship and art, museum aesthetics and the avant-garde, are the focus of Grossman’s essay “Photography at the Crossroads: African Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Taking her lead from Malraux’s famous dictum that “art history… has been the history of that which can be photographed,” Grossman looks at the early decades of the twentieth century when photographs of African objects hovered between being recognized as autonomous artwork and serving as subservient documentation. It was at this stage in the emergence of an incipient modernist practice that photographs of African art functioned – through a reciprocity between object and image – to elevate the status of both the medium and the “message.” In other words, Grossman shows “how photographs operated in the engendering of ideas about African art in the West and, conversely, how African objects acquired new meanings through the legitimation of photography as a vehicle of modernist artistic expression.”

Inherent in the “co-constitutive relationship between photographic image and African object” was another symbiosis, namely that between the making and the marketing of art. The proliferation of photographic reproductions not only helped photographers, painters, and print-makers in their efforts at self-promotion, but also served the efforts of museums and dealers in the early twentieth century to promote African objects as fine art.

LOOKING AT EACH OTHER: CONTEMPORARY ART IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

The effect of economic strategies on artistic practices is the focus of the final essay in this volume, Till Förster’s examination of the market for contemporary African art. Here, we find heterogeneous practices that negotiate the local and the global in terms of traditions, expectations, materials, genres, and marketing strategies. Förster’s typology illuminates the technical and iconographic variety of this body of work. The diverse mixture of types could again raise the question of the art-artifact opposition – not in terms of the science-culture chasm, but rather the classical Western distinction between high and low culture. This methodological view, however, is foreign to Förster’s eth-

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nographic-economic perspective; instead, he observes as a matter of fact: “If a signboard does not end up with a European or North American collector, it remains advertising art and is therefore transitory.” Here, it is the market – not scholarship – that decides the individual object’s classification and fate. This fact once more confirms the insight into the fluid nature of an object’s epistemological status.

The art market turns out to be the true test of what the international art world thinks about contemporary African art.69 “It’s not significant now in sales percentage terms,” Ray Hughes, a leading dealer, muses, “but in the long term it will be.” Hughes’s estimate seems on target, given the remarkable success of exhibits like the 2004 event “Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora” organized by Laurie Ann Farrell of the Museum for African Art (New York) and the “Africa Remix” show that traveled from Düsseldorf (2004) to London and Paris (2005) and, finally, Tokyo (2006).70

Both shows addressed the issue of globalization and tried to come to terms with the meaning and effects of cultural migration. “It was in fact the enormous diversity among this generation of young African artists that prompted me to set up this exhibition,” explains Jean-Hubert Martin, the general director of Düsseldorf’s museum kunst palast and a member of the exhibition’s curatorial team. Martin and his colleagues took the seminal exhibition “Magiciens de la Terre” (1989) as their point of departure for their attempt to chart the development of contemporary African art without confining it to Western categories of modern art. “The attribute ‘Remix,’” Martin writes, “is intended to mean a reshuffling of cards, to show that our present situation is hybrid in character and therefore a reflection of globalization.”71 The show’s subtitle, “Contemporary Art of a Continent,” notwithstanding, many of the 88 artists exhibited not only


71 In his contribution to the catalogue “Africa Remix”, Martin examines the connection between the two exhibitions. He inserts this discussion into a broader survey of African art movements since the 1940s and their reception in the West. Central to Martin’s argument is the question how African contemporary art relates to and challenges Western practices; see Jean-Hubert Martin, Die Rezeption zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst und ihre Entwicklung, in: Njami, Afrika Remix, pp. 33–43; quote from Afrika Remix, Zeitgenössische Kunst eines Kontinents 24.07.04 – 07.11.2004, Pressemittteilung, http://www.museum-kunst-palast.de/dt/sites/662216.asp.
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Born 1951 in Sudan, Africa, Musa now lives in Domessargues, Département Gard, France. Musa is one of the artists represented in the exhibition “Africa Remix.”

Quoted after Irving, Behind the mask.

Ill. 4 Hassan Musa, Great American Nude, 2002, ink on textile, 204 x 357 cm (Courtesy © Hassan Musa)

travel frequently but also actually have several places of residence and often commute between Africa and other continents. No distinction is made between artists living in Africa and those in the so-called diaspora.

While these exhibitions clearly attest to the growing importance of contemporary African art and certainly question many of the existing stereotypes, it seems doubtful that they can escape the discursive framework that history has bestowed upon them. Faced with the hegemony of Western-style capitalism, contemporary African artists seem forced to market their Africanness in a way that closely resembles the strategies of the vendors at the African Village in the Augsburg Zoo. In 2000, Hassan Musa poignantly reflected upon this aspect of his artistic existence.72 “As an artist born in Africa, but with no urge to bear the burden of the African artist,” he writes, “I know that the only opportunities open to me to present my work outside Africa are of the ‘ethnic’ type, where people assign to me the role of ‘the other African’ in places designed for the kind of seasonal ritual where a certain kind of African is ‘in favor’.”73 This awareness of stereotypes plays itself out in Musa’s Great American Nude (Ill. 4), which couches his political comment about the clash between Islamic fundamentalism and American-style capitalism in a pastiche of iconic images that superimposes an emblem of French Rococo sensuality, François Boucher’s pedophile nudes, onto a bedspread of patterned African fabrics, which, in return, mirror the stripes of the American flags.

72 Born 1951 in Sudan, Africa, Musa now lives in Domessargues, Département Gard, France. Musa is one of the artists represented in the exhibition “Africa Remix.”
73 Quoted after Irving, Behind the mask.
Instead of breaking up preconceived notions, the art market actually tends to recycle old labels when they appear to be advantageous. This leads to positions such as that of Jean Pigozzi, a Swiss entrepreneur and important collector of African art. His refusal to lend his collection to ethnographic museums springs once more from the distinction between fine art and ethnographic artifacts that he deems crucial. It thus seems that we have still to go a long way before we finally break with a much used and abused vocabulary of “otherness” and instead achieve a level of complex reflection – upon self and other – which allows us to create identity without too rigidly fixed border work.

With his ironic, playful and campy self-portraits, Samuel Fosso has begun this journey. Imagine yourself in a movie. Last scene. An African “Chief,” naked except for his leopard-skin loincloth and scarf, bejeweled with a cascade of gold chains, of sparkling bracelets and shiny rings, adorned with a Mobutu-style conical fur hat and a celebrity sunglasses made of white plastic (Ill. 5). Holding a large bunch of sunflowers instead of a scepter, he displays himself, staged in a box of colorful, even garish nature prints. He looks as if he might be the “love child of Dame Edna Everage and Emperor Bokassa.”

“The Chief who sold Africa to the Colonists,” made in 1997, is proud, pleased to bathe in our attention, pleased to advertise the exhibition of “Africa Re-mix” and its accompanying CD. In so doing, Samuel Fosso’s self-portrait is “mordantly subversive of both Western and African self-delusion: presidents who affect the costume of tribal chiefs; foreign leaders misty-eyed at grateful, dancing natives in colourful ethnic dress; European art critics full of patronising enthusiasm for their ‘native primitivism’. Fosso mocks the complicity of Sorbonne and Oxbridge educated dictators who strip Paris boutiques to their bare walls, visiting dignitaries who are actually part of an arms sales delegation and dancing natives who are really students, moonlighting in fancy dress for beer money.”

Fosso’s recycled reportage of images’ political function and underlying discourses is the self-conscious, self-reflexive, ironic mirror of Mila Satia’s photo (Ill. 1), the advertising image of a dancer in the Tropical Islands Resorts, which represents the unbroken abuse of used images.

It seems as if African art, past or present, will continue to be judged according to different standards than Western art if the debates advanced in the fields of ethnography and “folklore” do not shatter the established hierarchies of the Western art museum. Nobody seems upset that we do not learn that much about medieval piety or religious practice when we stare at a Jan van Eyck altarpiece. Sketches and finished paintings are exhibited in equally precious frames, and rarely does a major museum bring up from its cellar those dusty academic paintings that were once famous and all the rage. The social

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74 Ibid. Bokassa was the dictatorial ruler of the Central African Empire who spent the equivalent of the country’s GNP on his elaborate coronation as emperor in 1977.

75 Ibid.
and cultural history embedded in the transformation of canons and taste remains largely banished to the basement, academic history books, fan-club websites, or specialized institutions like the Dahesh Museum in New York. Mostly, however, the famous museums of the Western hemisphere present Western paintings of all eras as decontextualized “masterpieces.” The ethnographic lens seems constantly turned away. Anthropology has no space in a world in which “quality,” not religious evocativeness or spiritual potency, is the single measure of value. Except perhaps in their “period room” displays, art museums leave the function, use, or religious meaning of objects (Western

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76 A beautifully designed example for such a fan-club website is “Art Renewal Center,” a polemic site devoted to a rejection of modernism that features good quality images of nineteenth-century academic art and earlier work; see http://www.artrenewal.org/.
and non-Western alike) largely unacknowledged. One wishes that the ubiquitous audio-tours might alleviate this situation; but even in this medium, museums rarely opt for an in-depth, scholarly, and multidisciplinary approach.

OUTLOOK

The meaning of objects is shaped by presentation and representation. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett summarizes, “representation,” refers not only to imaging, but also to inclusion. And, not only to inclusion, for it is the structuring of inclusions and not inclusion per se that is critical. The question how representation – as both mental operation and material presentation – can be restructured so that it creates new patterns of inclusions and challenges enshrined notions of otherness runs through the essays in this volume. Thinking about representation, as this volume as a whole illustrates, has its own history, which any rethinking of representation in the present has inevitably to take into account. The ongoing discussion of the epistemological status of ethnographic objects is but one example of the enduring life of historical categories – and stereotypes – and the difficulty of changing established discourses and practices. In sketching an arc from 1827 to 2006, this volume tries to bring historical and contemporary perspectives into dialogue, and to deepen the understanding of the history of conceptual questions and institutional practices that still factor into the development of today’s exhibition spaces.

The essays on contemporary museum practice presented here also highlight the role of economic considerations, as curators have to negotiate conceptual issues and pragmatic strategies if they want to realize new ideas in practice. The market remains a crucial player, whether for collectors, contemporary artists, or museum fundraising departments. Far from being enclosed in an ivory tower, displays are caught up in a complex world of exchange and remain embedded in a dense thicket of intersecting fields of knowledge. Breaking down disciplinary borders emerges as a crucial prerequisite for the possible opening of current discursive patterns. One might wonder whether the need for change is indeed as urgent as this volume suggests. Given events like the African Village in Augsburg, it is clear that many who should know better – including some directors of public institutions, journalists, and tourism officials – have yet to engage in critical thought on the issues the essays here  

77 Examining the same set of objects in different display situations, the richly illustrated case study of the 1999–2000 traveling show “Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids” by Victoria Newhouse provides a visually compelling example for the way in which display settings change objects’ meanings; Victoria Newhouse, Art or Archaeology: How Display defines the Object, in: Art and the Power of Placement, New York 2005, pp. 108–141.

78 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Reflections, p. 15.
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raise. It can hardly be surprising then that broad parts of the public remain oblivious to continuing effects of historically freighted stereotypes and racist assumptions. That leaves no doubt that museums and other exhibition spaces still have an important function in the field of public pedagogy. It also underscores the need for creative and critical thinking about museums as conceptual and physical spaces if we are truly to enhance that function. This volume hopes to contribute to this effort. 79

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